

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Idealizations of the *Kleinhaus*: On the Typology of the Small Single-Family House in Germany, 1920s–1960s

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In the 20th century, detached single-family houses proliferated in Germany. Continued publication of built houses as idealised, model homes in magazines for non-professional housebuilders contributed to the popularity of detached single-family housing, influenced the architecture of single-family homes, and contributed to shaping the culture of habitation. Through their customer magazines, aimed at non-professional housebuilders, German building societies played a crucial role in the constitution of self-provided detached housing. With a focus on the *Kleinhaus* (small house), this paper uses mediated representations of built houses to trace the evolution of single-family houses in Germany from the 1920s to the 1960s, as they were represented in *Mein Eigenheim*, a customer magazine of the Wüstenrot — Gesellschaft der Freunde (GdF) building society. During the Weimar era (1919–1933), the GdF magazine highlighted the affordability and modest size of the *Kleinhaus*. Following the financial crisis of the late 1920s and the rise of Nazism, the economy of self-sufficiency, centred on vegetable gardens, became a popular theme. During the 1950s, under the influence of increasing material progress, the significance of the *Kleinhaus* changed. The gardens lost their economic function and became extended living spaces. In the late 1950s, the *Kleinhaus* lost its dominant position on the housing market, with the emergence of new building types such as the bungalow and larger homes with two full storeys, which better catered to the desires of an affluent and increasingly individualised society.

Introduction

In the 20th century, as detached houses became affordable for middle- and working-class households in Germany (Kurz 2004), numerous books and periodicals were published that offered advice on the design of individual single-family homes for self-organised, individual housebuilders. Among these, the customer magazine of building societies is a particularly important genre, as it depicted actual houses, which were presented as both idealised, model dwellings and highly desirable forms of habitation. From the late 1920s, German building societies (*Bausparkassen*) provided loans for *Bausparer*,¹ individuals who subscribed to the programmes established by building societies to save the money required to repay the loan. Customer magazines, which were mailed to subscribers free of charge, not only influenced the design of individual homes (*Bausparkassenhaus*), but also shaped ideals of domestic living and leisure and contributed to the culture of self-organised house construction in Germany.

This paper studies representations in customer magazines of single-family homes as model houses for people who wanted to build their own homes and looks at the mechanisms through which built space is produced in these magazines. The German term for this form of housing, *das Einfamilienhaus*, reveals the link between

the building type and the family as the targeted household form, while the synonym, *das Eigenheim*, refers to its form of tenure, the owner-occupied house. The term '*Einfamilienhaus*' is similar to the North American term 'single-family house', which conveys that link between the building and its occupants, while the British terms 'detached house', 'semi-detached house', and 'terraced house' convey the degree of the building's separation from adjacent constructions. In this paper, therefore, the term 'single-family house' will be used whenever the German denotation of the dwelling needs to be conveyed, while the British expressions will be used to provide precise descriptions of the residential building types. The notion of 'home' will be used to describe dwellings which have already been shaped by habitation practices.

The detached single-family houses of this study are primarily those found in the customer magazine *Mein Eigenheim* (My Own Home),² published by Wüstenrot Gesellschaft der Freunde (GdF) (Association of Friends) between 1924 and 1939, and then from June 1949 to the present. Wüstenrot GdF was the first German building society that, from the very start, set out to influence the way in which the houses of its customers were constructed and designed. In each edition of the magazine, one or more actual houses built by GdF subscribers were presented through text, photographs, and diagrams, usually floor plans, with careful consideration of each material. One specific formal house type popular in *Mein Eigenheim*, the *Kleinhaus* (small house), features a steeply

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pitched roof, a ground-level floor, and an attic floor above, beneath the pitched roof. The layout of this type of small house is highly optimised. In a *Kleinhaus*, every interior volume above the cellar is used as a living space. The attic floor of a small house, which previously functioned as storage space or to regulate the temperature, is now used as living space. Inhabitants would have to get used to the pitched roof and dormers when conducting their daily activities.

While detached dwellings and suburban areas in different countries share many characteristics, the historical development of detached homes has been shaped by contextual factors such as local traditions, urban development policies and relevant actors. In Germany, a particular set of conditions arising in the late 19th and early 20th century, as well as in the interwar period, specifically industrialisation, the rapid expansion of cities and housing shortages, fuelled the growth of new suburban areas for the affluent middle class, as well as for the less well-off city dwellers (von Saldern 2006). New forms of public transport and cheap land on the urban periphery following the demolition of medieval city walls (Jonas 2006) drove the proliferation of single-family homes to the outskirts of cities. During the early 20th century and the period of the Weimar Republic, many cultural and commercial facilitators, including well-known architects, master builders, and various reform movements, encouraged people to live on the urban fringes in detached and semi-detached houses with gardens (von Saldern 2006; Kafkoulou 2013). German housing policies in the interwar and post-war years sought to relieve the housing shortage by means of continual state interventions, including emergency decrees, subsidies and tax exemptions (Schulz 1986).

The construction of detached homes in the outskirts of German cities during the interwar period was in part informal (Harlander, Hater and Meiers 1988; Harlander 1997; Kuhn 2001), and in part a municipal and state-initiated effort to remedy the acute housing shortages both following World War I and in the wake of recurrent economic crises. The suburban development was driven by the Homestead Act (*Reichsheimstättengesetz*), which allowed the construction of houses on municipal land (Kornemann 1996; Pergande and Pergande 1973). An ordinance on small settlements in suburban areas was introduced in 1931 within the framework of the Third Emergency Decree (Hafner 1996: 565). The goal of these state interventions was to provide small, low-cost houses with gardens, to encourage self-sufficiency and to help solve the housing question. The target groups were the unemployed and workers' families on low incomes, and, at least initially, war veterans, war widows, and large families (Harlander, Hater and Meiers 1988; Hafner 1996; Kornemann 1996). This policy continued during the period of Nazi rule (Harlander 1995; Rauch 2010). However, housing construction in homestead estates significantly decreased from 1937 and ceased altogether in 1939. After World War II, subsidies and housing policy initiatives in the Federal Republic of Germany had to address housing shortages due to wartime destruction, as well as the problem of accommodating a large number of refugees and

displaced and homeless persons (Zimmermann, 2001). Until 1956, social housing was the dominant form of residential construction (von Saldern 1997: 265–66). Housing construction increased dramatically after the currency reform of 1948. During the early post-war era, municipalities and non-profit housing associations built settlements of single-family, semi-detached houses. When the Second Housing Act was adopted in 1956, the promotion of owner-occupied dwellings was established alongside social housing (von Saldern 1997: 268).

Much of the existing scholarly literature on the German single-family house has focused on the analysis of the above-mentioned urban developments and on the influence of planning and housing policies. Petsch and Petsch-Bahr (1989) provide the most comprehensive historical overview of the single-family house. A more in-depth exploration of the typologies of the villa and the single-family house appears in *Villa und Eigenheim. Suburbaner Städtebau in Deutschland*, edited by Tilman Harlander (2001). This volume includes several case studies that explore early forms of housing initiated by municipalities on the urban fringe. Another contribution to the themes of homestead settlements and owner-occupied detached homes is that of Thomas Hafner (1996: 559–97), who considers the historical development of small residential estates (*Kleinsiedlung*) and the production of detached houses based on the provisions of the Homestead Act (*Reichsheimstättengesetz*) adopted in 1920. However, research into the transformation of the spatial layout of individual homes during the 20th century is scarce. Also, most research is focused on settlements realised by building cooperatives, leaving aside the production and design of self-provided individual homes. This study of the *Kleinhaus* and its gradual transformation until the end of 1960s, therefore, will not only uncover the historical process of re-casting actual single-family houses as reproducible homes in building societies' customer magazines, but it will explore the impact of the GdF building society on the production and media presentation of ordinary detached housing.

Saving Collectively, Building Individually

The idea behind a German building society, or *Bausparkasse*, is simple: If one person needs ten years to accumulate sufficient funds to build a house, a group of ten can enable one of them to build the house immediately (Krahn 1955: 11). The first building societies, functioning on the principle of mutual mortgage loans, were established directly after the German hyperinflation in 1924, when private homebuilders were unable to obtain loans from established credit institutions such as mortgage or savings banks. The pre-war system, based on an institutional mortgage market (*Realkreditmarkt*), had collapsed during the period of hyperinflation and was subsequently burdened by unaffordable interest rates after the monetary reform of 1923–24 (Müller 1999: 69). Fuelled by the spirit of collective self-help in the lower middle classes and inspired by the land reform movements, the first building society, the GdF, appeared in 1924 in the village of Wüstenrot, near Heilbronn. The next society, the Deutsche Bau- und

Siedelungsgemeinschaft (DBS; German Construction and Settlement Society), appeared in 1925 in Darmstadt (Müller, 1999: 71). Through subscribers' regular payments and deposits, the pre-war building societies were able to form a separate loan capital market and to grant private housebuilders mortgage loans with interest rates much lower than on the established markets. After a period of regular payments, thus accumulating capital, subscribers were granted a fixed interest rate loan, initially allocated through a lottery. Allocation of loans through lottery was later replaced by complex actuarial principles (*bauspar-mathematische Berechnungen*) (Kohlhase 2012: 291). In the pre-war era, building societies' savings plans were only available to the more affluent members of the working and middle classes, as a steady income was required to meet payments on a regular basis (von Beyme, 1987).

In the second half of the 1920s and the first two years of the 1930s, when several new building societies copying the principle of GdF and DBS were founded (Müller 1999: 85), these self-help enterprises were 'intruders' who boldly claimed the territory of well-established institutions such as banks, insurance companies and mortgage brokers (Kohlhase 2012: 290).

From 1924 to 1931, as the building societies slowly but steadily grew, there was an ongoing effort to establish a legislative framework and a regulatory body. This goal was accomplished in 1938 when the amendment to the German Banking Act (Kreditwesengesetz) was adopted, and the building society was recognised as an institution in its own right in the mortgage market, specialising in the so-called second mortgage, which was subordinated in the real estate register (Müller 1999: 240). Between 1933 and 1939, private and public housing construction stagnated. From 1939 to 1945, in the wartime economy, building society savers continued with their regular payments (Müller 1999: 243–56). After World War II, building societies were disbanded by the authorities in the Soviet occupation zone (Müller 1999: 270–71). In West Germany, where housing policy began to actively endorse home ownership for less wealthy people, building societies became increasingly important in financing private housing. The Second Housing Construction Act of 1956 (Zweites Wohnungsbaugesetz) in West Germany prioritised home ownership over tenancy (von Beyme 1999: 107). The governmental promotion of savings plans with building societies had been introduced with the adoption of the Housing Construction Savings Plan Benefit Act of 1952 (Wohnungsbau-Prämiengesetz), which granted every subscriber a non-repayable subsidy (Pergande and Pergande 1973: 182–83). Through mortgage loans for owner-occupied properties, building societies continue to be an important actor in housing finance in Germany. Under this act, building societies are financial intermediaries, based on subordinated loans in a separate capital market for home loans with lower interest rates (Müller 1999; Kohlhase 2012).

Unlike homestead associations, whose organised and collective self-help served to establish physical and social neighbourhoods (Hafner 1996), collective self-help in building societies was not bound to a physical location.

Once the subscriber repaid the loan, membership in that community of savers ended. The savings plans of building societies are linked to the acquisition of personal assets; the collective nature of capital acquisition disappears once the individual home is built. Initially, the building society offered just one product, a single outcome of the savings plan: mortgage loans for the single-family house. The detached house, therefore, advertised this savings plan for a mortgage.

In 1924 the GdF building society of Wüstenrot began to publish the magazine *Mein Eigenheim* for its customers. The first edition of *Mein Eigenheim* was launched with a slogan that matched its title, translated as 'My own home': 'For each family, a house of their own', coined by Georg Kropp, the society's founder and the magazine's first editor (1924a: 1) (Figures 1 and 2). To this day, *Mein Eigenheim* remains one of the leading customer magazines in Germany, with a print run of 1.5 million and a readership of approximately 2 million. Other building societies were soon producing similar magazines; for instance, *Bau und Wirtschaft* (Construction and Economy) was first issued by Bausparkasse Mainz in 1930.

The majority of the houses financed through the mortgages of building society subscribers were privately built homes in suburban and rural areas. Unlike social housing estates funded by state subsidies and small settlements linked to building cooperatives, the *Bausparkassenhaus* is generally not part of a larger coordinated development or settlers' association. While building societies are recognised for their importance in financing new housing (Kuhn 2001: 179–80) for standard housing types in homestead settlements and post-war planned developments (Jessen and Simon 2001), the existing literature offers no investigation of the self-initiated production of detached houses that is a typical trait of the housing built by building society subscribers. Self-provision, a term first defined by Duncan and Rowe (1993), designates self-organised activities by households to initiate the construction of their house. In this way, they act as developers of their own homes. Households seek out the necessary finance, buy the building plot, commission architects and handicrafts workers, and supervise the construction of their owner-occupied house (Duncan and Rowe 1993: 1332–33). According to Duncan and Rowe, self-provided houses were more affordable than commercial developments. Costs would be saved through sweat equity, meaning that owner-occupiers could avoid paying profits and overheads to builders and developers (1993: 1337).

In Germany, the majority of suburban single-family houses built in the second half of the 20th century were self-provided and, to a large extent, even self-built (Duncan and Rowe 1993). From the outset, the mode of self-provision has been crucial for homebuilders who employ saving plans. The principles of the Wüstenrot building society were to finance and support self-provision in house construction, and the notion of self-help has therefore always been an important issue for GdF. Articles in early issues of *Mein Eigenheim* include arguments against the public provision of housing through fiscal means. Instead, collective financial self-help is endorsed as a voluntary choice.

Das erste G. d. F.=Haus.

Der erste Bauverer, dem die Gemeinschaft der Freunde das Baugeld für sein Eigenheim zur Verfügung stellen konnte, war Herr Josef Kümmel, Kraftwagenführer aus Heidenheim. Sein Haus, mit dessen Bau er am 1. März d. J. begann, ist nun so weit fertiggestellt, daß wir an Hand der diesem Hefte beigelegten Abbildungen einen Rundgang durch es machen wollen. Sein Eigenheim steht auf einem Eckgrundstück, hat auf einer Seite einen Vorgarten, während an der anderen Seite die Straße vorbeizieht. Durch die Gartentüre an der linken Seite des Hauses gelangen wir über einige Stufen zur Haustüre und betreten den Vorplatz. Vom Vorplatz aus können wir in jedes Zimmer, zur Küche und über die Treppe auch zum Obergeschoß. Besichtigen wir mal erst die Waschküche, indem wir durch eine Tür unter der Treppe zu derselben gelangen. Hier ist gleichzeitig auch die Badegelegenheit, während außerhalb der Waschküche eine Holzlege und ein gewölbter Keller unter dem Elternschlafzimmer bald auch ihrem Bestimmungszwecke dienen werden. Wir sehen von der Waschküche aus noch den tiefer gelegenen Garten. Doch gehen wir wieder in das Erdgeschoß. Abort mit Wandkasten für Besen und dergl. befindet sich gleich am Eingang. Am hinteren Ende des Vorplatzes liegt das Reich der Hausfrau, die Küche mit Herd für Kohlen und Gas, Wasserstein, Speisekasten, Küchenbüffet und Tisch. Vom Wohnzimmer aus, das wir durch den Vorplatz betreten, gehen wir durch das Elternschlafzimmer wieder auf den Vorplatz und betreten nun das Obergeschoß. An einem hellerleuchteten Vorplatz links und rechts sind die zwei Schlafkammern, in denen jeweils zwei Betten Aufstellung finden können; auch in der zwischen diesen Schlafzimmern liegenden Kammer kann noch ein weiteres Bett untergebracht werden, da sie durch das im Dachaufbau liegende Fenster sehr gut beleuchtet ist. Es hat also eine große Familie im Hause Platz. Durch die Kammer, in die eine Treppe eingreift, kommen wir zum Dachraum, der infolge seines reichlich großen Platzes zum Aufhängen von Wäsche und Unterbringen von Hausrat bestimmt ist.

Wir sehen, daß trotz der geringen Ausmaße der Grundrisse alle Räume des Hauses unmittelbar von den Vorplätzen aus betreten werden können; und kein Zimmer muß als Durchgang benutzt werden. Es war der Wunsch des Erbauers, das Elternschlafzimmer im Erdgeschoß unterzubringen. Wer sich aber mit weniger als vier Schlafräumen begnügen kann, wird wohl auf das Schlafzimmer im Erdgeschoß verzichten und lieber zwei Wohnräume daselbst einrichten, die man, will man ein Uebrigtes tun, durch eine Flügel-türe zu einem großen Raum vereinigen kann. — Wem das Baden in der Waschküche nicht behagt, kann im Obergeschoß über der Küche ein Badezimmer anbringen, allerdings auf Kosten der Größe des dort befindlichen Schlafzimmers. Es ist natürlich möglich, unter Beibehaltung des Grundriffes die einzelnen Zimmer größer anlegen zu lassen, was einen entsprechenden Einfluß auf die Baukosten hat. Die Baukosten stellen sich auf 12 000 Mark; für die Gartenanlage mit Umzäunung, sowie für weitere unvermeidliche Auslagen, wie sie jeder Hausneubau mit sich bringt, werden noch weitere 500 Mk. bis 1000 Mark gerechnet werden müssen.

Figure 1: Description of the first GdF house, built by Josef Kümmel in Heidenheim, explaining the spatial layout, from the first issue of *Mein-Eigen-Heim* (Kropp 1925b: 101).

In GdF's liberal approach, home ownership is preferred over renting, as only homeownership offers 'a true sense of freedom and true autonomy' (Kropp 1924c: 54).

GdF supported the self-provision of housing not just through loans, but also by offering advice to future homeowners, including planning advice and useful information regarding traditional house construction and optimised design. It can thus be argued that GdF was an important actor in initiating and shaping the culture of self-provision in Germany, which has the highest share of self-provided housing in Europe (Dol, Lennartz and De Decker 2012;

National Self Build Association 2011). While saving and thrift are well-established German virtues (Reagin 2006), GdF did not promote saving for saving's sake, but rather to achieve the end goal of home ownership. The financial value and construction quality of the home played an important role during the repayment phase of the loan, as the house and its underlying plot guaranteed the mortgage. After the experience of hyperinflation in the early 1920s, the stable value of real estate, which secured the savers' invested capital, became a persuasive argument in favour of building societies (Kropp 1924b: 9). GdF

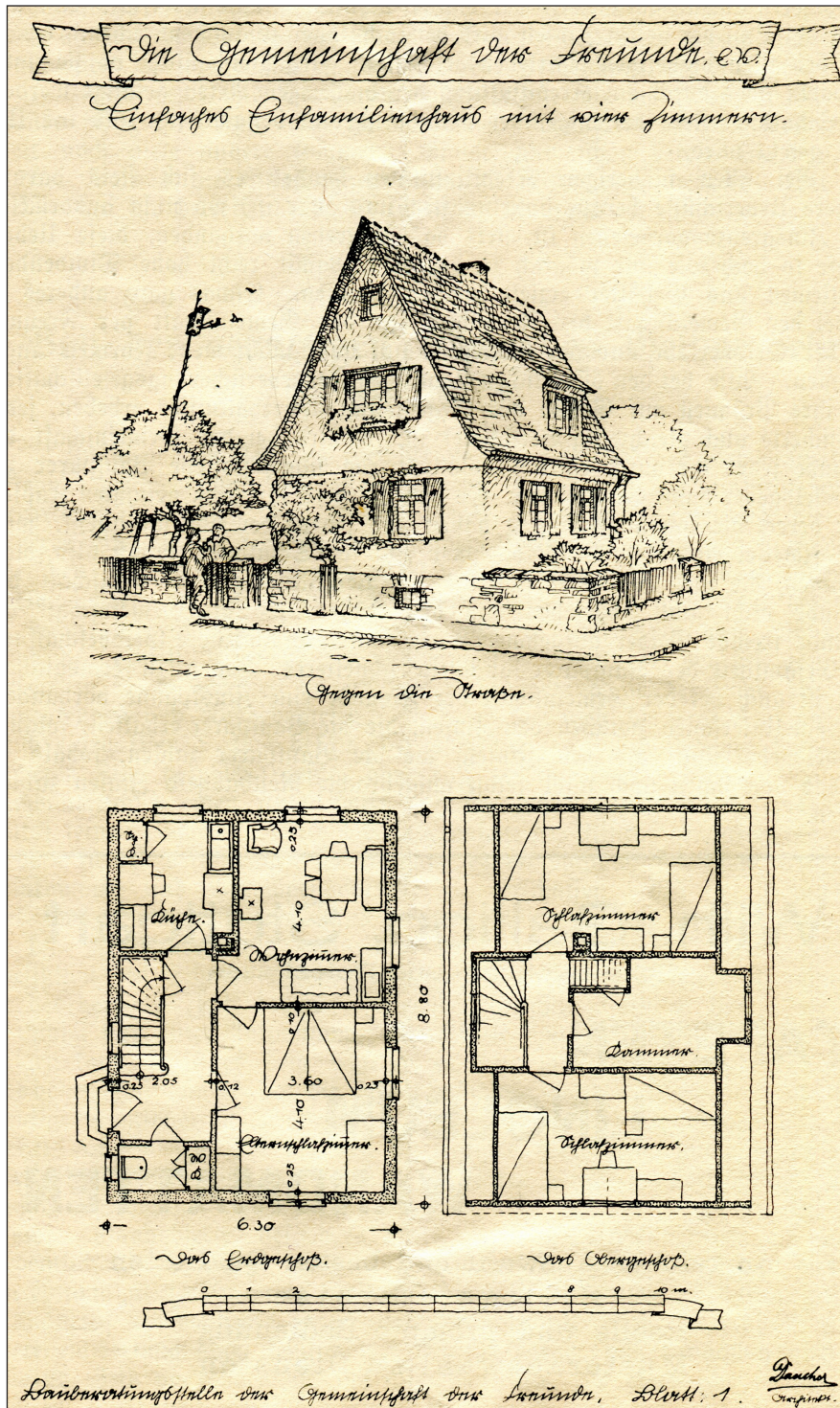


Figure 2: Drawings of the first GdF house, by architect Gustav Daucher, from the first issue of *Mein-Eigen-Heim* (Kropp 1925b: 104).

endorsed thoughtful, optimised design and robust construction that would result in both a stable investment for its savers and affordable homes. To achieve these goals and to ensure a well-organised process for its customers, GdF adopted three strategies: the use of typified plans, the provision of consultancy, and the publication of a customer magazine with practical information on house construction.

Mortgage contracts prescribed the use of standardised plans provided by GdF. A set of twelve homes designed

by architect Gustav Daucher, for example, was published in 1926, showing a collection of plans, interior views, photographs of actual homes and descriptions of conceptual designs, all of which anticipated the structured representations of model homes later published in *Mein Eigenheim*. If subscribers submitted their own designs, the building society would appraise the plans and cost estimates, and the building society then provided further advice, via consultants, during the construction phase (Kropp 1924a; Kropp 1925a). These consultants were

located at information centres that GdF established for its subscribers. In 1925 Daucher was appointed the head of the first building consultancy centre (Kropp 1925a), and by 1929 five such centres (including one in Austria) had been established (Fröhner 1929: 102). The publications – magazines and books, begun in the early 1920s – supplemented the personal assistance the consultants provided and were a crucial instrument for educating subscribers in the design of affordable and functional homes. Eventually, these realised homes became the main content in the publications, while a standardised format for their presentation became established.

The Kleinhaus as a Type

From 1926 to the early 1960s, the *Kleinhaus* was one of the most common types presented in the guidebooks and customer magazines published by the Wüstenrot building society. The format for portraying and promoting single-family homes remained unchanged until the end of the 1960s: visual information, including photographs and floor plans, and short descriptions. By the mid-1960s, additional formal housing types had begun to appear in the magazine, and eventually larger homes and bungalows came to replace the small house.

The frequency and variation of house types that occur in the magazines demonstrate that owner-occupiers of the GdF were more interested in certain types, including the *Kleinhaus*, than others.³ The articles highlighted specific design features such as traditional construction, the modesty of size, and the intertwining of gardens and living. The curatorial choices the magazine editors made to present these types, from an abundance of comparable built examples, show how formal types were reframed through abstraction and standardisation. Over time, with the continual representing and reshaping of distinct features and selected residential types, actual buildings were transformed into model homes. But how does customer preference and curatorial choice affect the eventual creation of model home types, and which comes first?

Both groups of actors, the homebuilding/inhabiting owner-occupiers and selecting/abstracting/showcasing editors, are part of an ongoing process of ‘type operations’ first described by Schneekloth and Franck, who investigated how building types evolve and continue to exist through use (1994: 23). They identified three aspects of a building type involved in the process of differentiating and creating types: material, imaginal and conceptual (1994: 18). Material place types are socially constructed and materially present but not always physically constructed (1994: 18). Imaginal types, which do not exist materially and which correspond with ‘ideal types’ in architectural theory, nevertheless influence our interactions with material places (Schneekloth and Franck 1994: 20). The conceptual aspect of type is integral to the discursive, representational and classification actions applied to material and imaginal types (Schneekloth and Franck 1994: 21–22). The material, imaginal and conceptual types operate when dwellers occupy, name, image, invent, modify and represent buildings types. In the case of the homes of the GdF owner-occupiers, owner-occupiers first establish material

place types through the initial construction of detached houses. By inhabiting and engaging with symbolic ‘home-making’, owner-occupiers establish the imaginal aspects of type. And finally, the continued portrayal of built examples as model homes in print constitutes the conceptual aspect of types.

Guggenheim and Söderström elaborate on the process of ‘type operations’ by pointing out that ‘the mere existence of buildings used in a certain way does not constitute a building type, because types only exist through type operations’ (2010: 5). A type operates ‘in two directions: initially through abstraction and then through exemplification (and back to abstraction, ad infinitum). As such, they are abstractions both of built forms and of human activities’ (2010: 5). As an ongoing process within the production and habitation of dwellings, the representation of buildings plays an important role in type operations. The long tradition of customer magazines for building societies indicates that depictions of model homes influence homeowners’ preferences for specific building types and domestic spatial arrangements. The changes in how these homes are depicted over time correspond with changes in the houses, too.

The Emergence of the Self-Provided House with Garden, 1924–1930

The main goal of housing policy during the Weimar era was to resolve the housing shortage by boosting the stock of affordable and adequate dwellings. That policy also intended to create jobs in the construction sector and provide housing subsidies, although during this period, the promotion of home ownership was not on the political agenda (Ruck 1987: 97). Throughout the 1920s, the main topic of *Mein Eigenheim* was how to reduce the construction costs of the *Kleinhaus* and make it as affordable as possible. Recommendations include the careful consideration of housing requirements. The magazine points out the importance of precise building specifications and architectural plans, and that detailed specifications should be used when commissioning a building company under a fixed price contract.

Descriptions of the *Kleinhaus* in the magazines of this time reveal an emerging set of desirable features. One of the first small houses published in the Wüstenrot magazine presents a somewhat modest façade, and yet it features a bay window, a relic of the typical elaborate façade of the traditional urban villa. Later, even though the houses retain traditional features such as tiled and steeply pitched roofs and windows with shutters, the general forms are very much reduced in complexity and devoid of an avant-corps. The layout of the houses featured in the magazine is now based on simple rectangular or square shapes, but rather than favouring a continuous open space, the plans show a separation of space into rooms that are each accessible from a central hallway. Kitchens, lavatories and small walk-in spaces are distinct from larger rooms. Bedrooms are located both on the ground floor and in the attic. The function of a room and the space within it is defined by symbols for furnishings and fittings as well as room names. A garden is added because it complements the

modest house size, though again, the plans convey a very clear separation of indoor and outdoor spaces: the garden, which can only be accessed from the main entrance, is not on the same level as the ground floor.

The houses are clearly the primary object of interest in the photographs; the houses fill the frame, and the the context appears to be mostly cropped out. The front gardens are barely visible, and the pavement and road are just detectable in the foreground. The occasional family photographed in front of their home seems small compared

to the size of the house. Some of these images were probably taken by the homeowners, rather than by professional photographers, which may account for the issues of scale and lack of context (Figures 3 and 4).

1931–1939: The *Kleinhaus* Prevails

From 1931 to 1939 *Mein Eigenheim* continued to provide information on the building society and to report on a few houses, but it also included articles promoting Nazi ideology. The primary way model homes were published

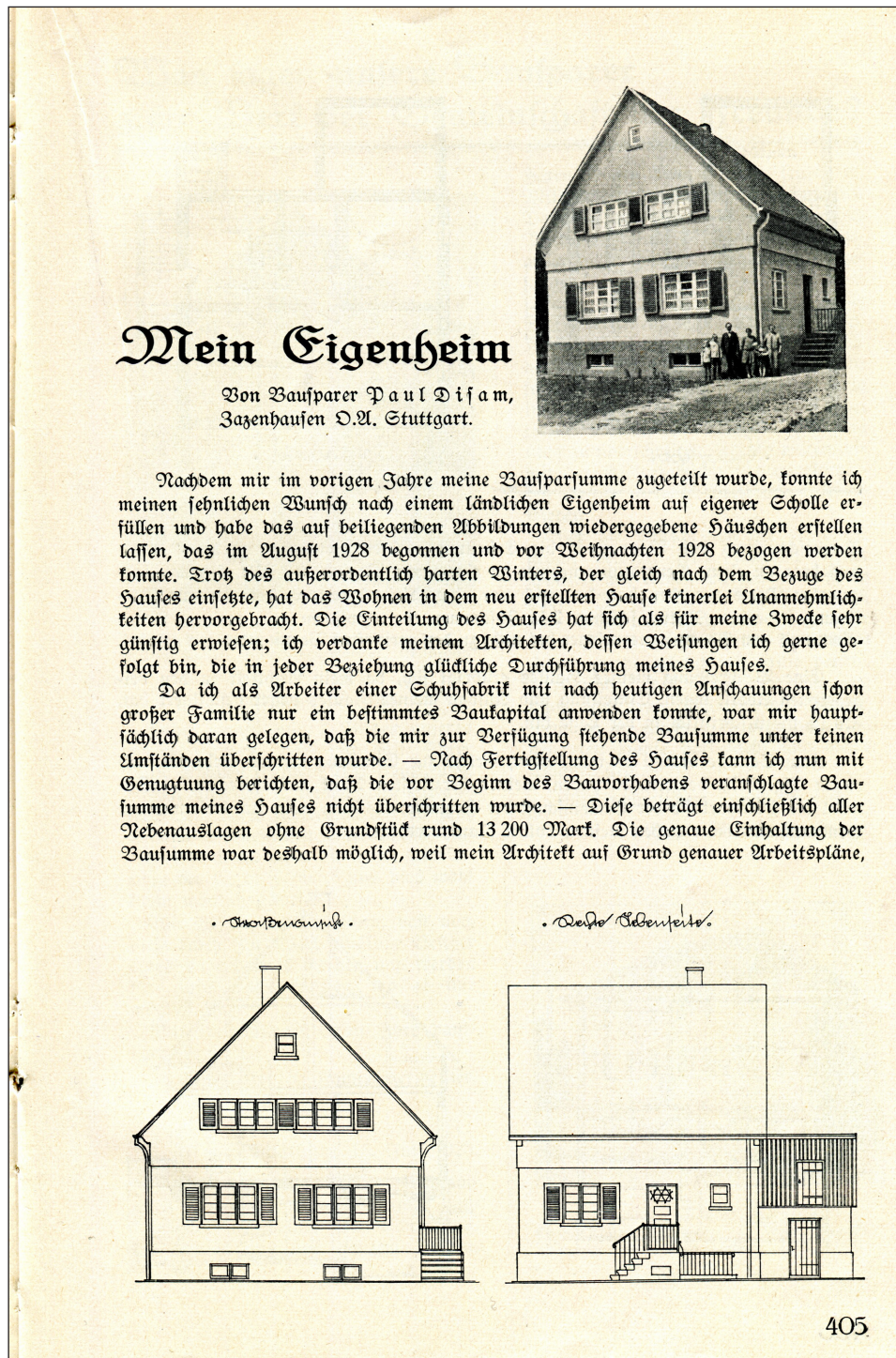


Figure 3: The house of building society member Paul Disam, Zazenhausen (near Stuttgart), accompanied by the owner's description, from *Mein Eigen Heim* (Disam 1929: 405).

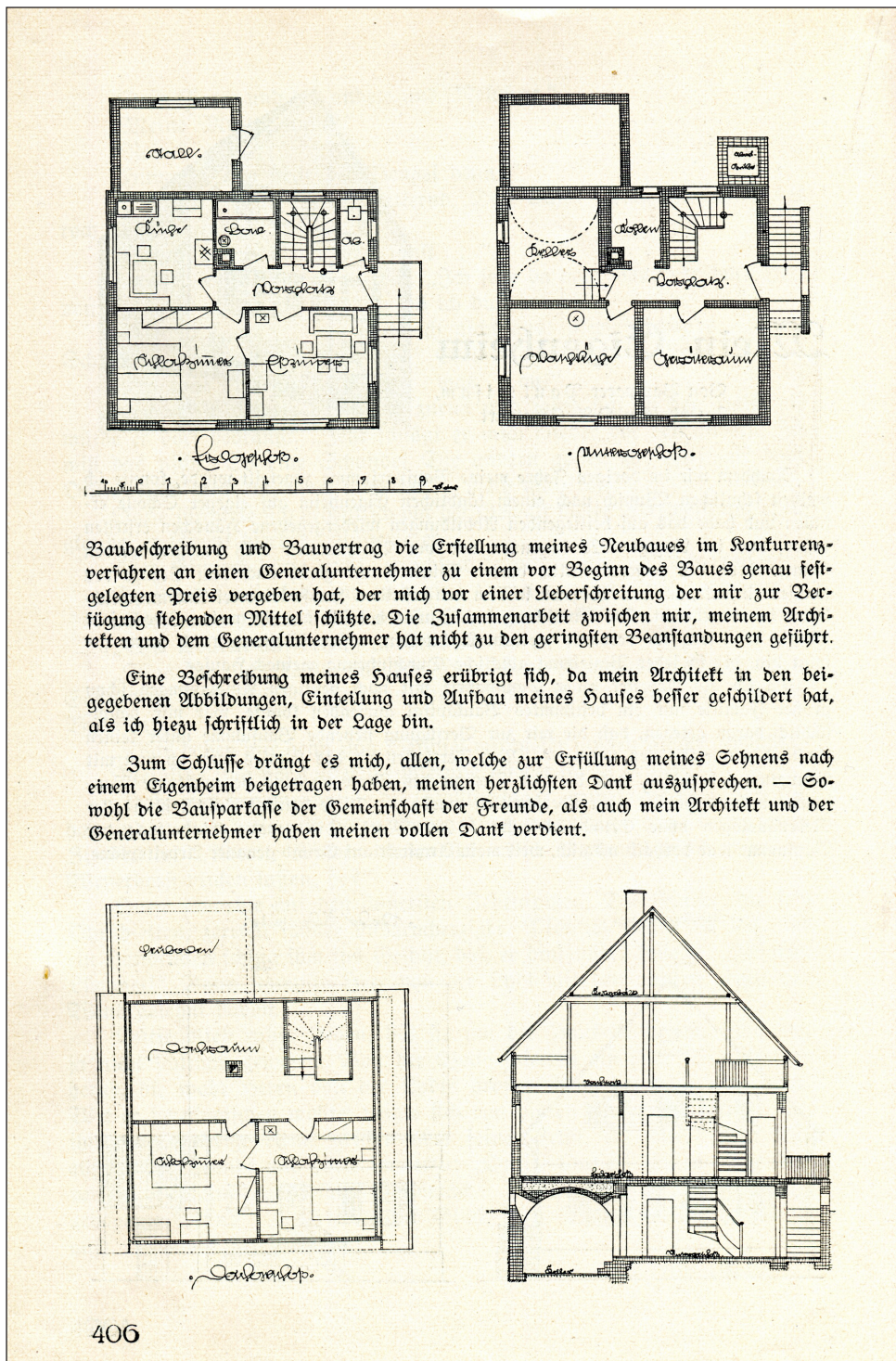
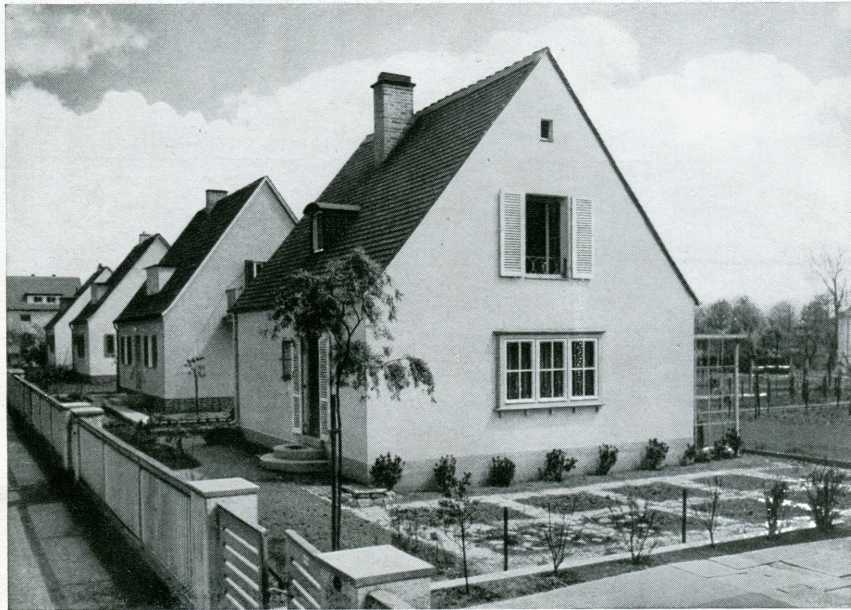


Figure 4: Description, floor plans and a section, Paul Disam house, from *Mein Eigen Heim* (Disam 1929: 405).

during this period was instead through books, compendiums that feature up to fifty dwellings. Each model home is allocated several pages and presented through photographs of the exterior, usually on the first page, along with short paragraphs of text and then section diagrams and plans (Figure 5). The houses are no longer the dominant subject in the photographs; more context is provided, with particular agendas. Photographs are composed with buildings in the centre, surrounded by gardens and vegetation. The rural landscape is visible in the background of some images, while others show houses as part

of a larger settlement. With rare exceptions, however, streets continue to be excluded from view. The photograph of a house with a garden for subsistence farming and showing men working in the fields illustrates that settlements are also for the unemployed. This new concept of a 'homestead house', with a large garden for growing produce and raising small animals, is immediately visible through the plans, text, and photographs.

The text, in addition to providing advice on how to reduce construction costs, itemises the rooms on the ground floor, describing their position in relation to

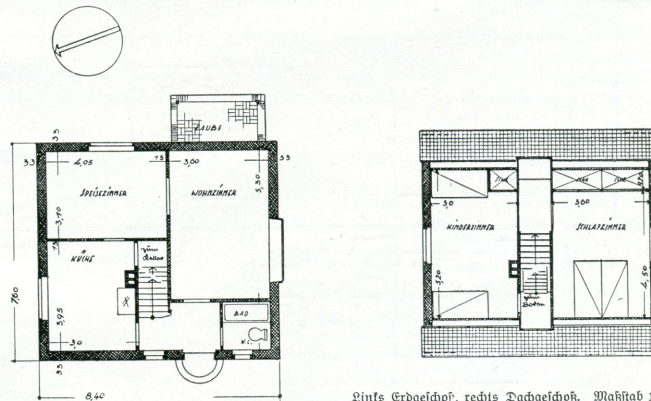


Kleines Eigenheim in Dresden-Lockwitz

Architekt: Carl Friedrich Buchta, Dresden-N. 20. Umbauter Raum 380 cbm. Baukosten im Jahre 1934 10 000 RM.

Dieses inmitten einer Kleinhauskolonie errichtete Eigenheim enthält im Erdgeschoß Wohn- und Speisezimmer, Küche, Bad und Klefett, im ausgebauten Dach 2 Schlaf- räume mit eingebauten Schränken. Zum geräumigen Spitzboden, der als Trockenboden dient, führt vom Kin- derzimmer aus eine festeingebaute Treppe. Das Haus

ist halb unterkellert und hat Ofenheizung. Die Dach- eindeckung besteht aus Ziegeldoppeldach aus massiv- braunen Bieberjchwänzen. Die Fassade ist hell getrichen, die Läden sind farbig abgeleht. Das Wohnzimmer hat nach Süden ein großes Blumenfenster.



Links Erdgeschoß, rechts Dachgeschoß. Maßstab 1: 200

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Figure 5: A house in Dresden Lockwitz, built in 1934. Reproduced with the permission of Wüstenrot AG (Faerber 1940: 23).

other rooms and the access to the different parts of the house. The text also explains the floor plans, so the reader understands the spatial arrangement of the houses. The distinction between common rooms on the ground floor and individualised intimate space in the attic, which had been introduced in the late 1920s, disappears. The ground floor plans contain both common rooms and bedrooms, and the functional specification of spaces is now less pronounced. Many floor plans only show room names and symbols for fittings.

1948–1955: The *Kleinhaus* Persists

After World War II, house building was severely limited, and in some federal states, the Allied forces even forbade it (Lüning 2005: 231). The housing market in West Germany only began to revive following the currency reform of 1948. In June 1949, after a break of ten years, Wüstenrot resumed the publication of *Mein Eigenheim* in the Federal Republic of Germany; during this period, in fact, the East German government did not promote the construction of single-family houses.⁴

The houses presented in the magazine between 1948 and 1955 are similar to the pre-war house types. However, photographs, floor layouts and descriptions all show that the house designs, while still modest, are no longer driven by considerations of subsistence and thrift. The fruit and vegetable garden is transformed into a decorative garden featuring flowering plants, and is increasingly seen as forming a continuous unit with the house (**Figures 6 and 7**). The outdoor space features canopied terraces, small courtyards and, in some cases, even garages. Similarly, the floor plan, garden layout and description all emphasise the garden as an extension of indoor living areas. This continuity between outdoor and indoor space is highlighted by the graphics in the drawings for the ground floor plan.

Icons for vegetation and patterns for paved surfaces, open to the air and next to exterior walls, suggest an intertwining of house and garden. The ground floor, with several interconnected common rooms, is conceived as a gathering space for inhabitants. While the reports still refer to familiar topics such as affordability and construction costs, the descriptions also include one novel use of the single-family house: to entertain business partners in the private atmosphere of the home.

1956–1968: Self-Provision Takes Hold

Mein Eigenheim began to feature colour photography in the mid-1950s (**Figure 8**). In the period that followed, the template for presenting model homes became more



Figure 6: Title page, showing the terrace of the house ‘for upmarket requirements’, built in 1951. Photograph by Heddenhausen. Reproduced with the permission of Wüstenrot AG (Bausparkasse Gemeinschaft der Freunde Wüstenrot 1951).

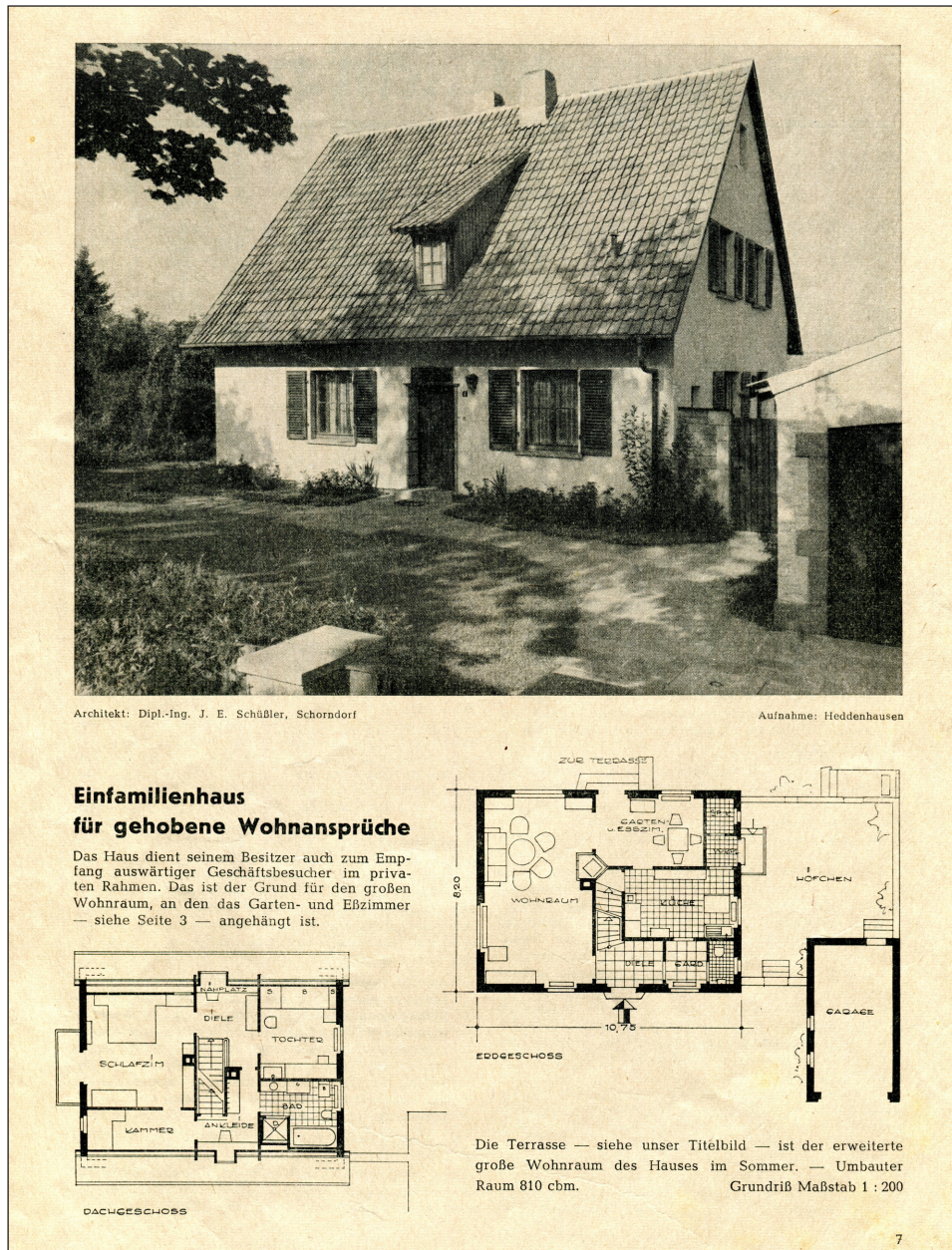


Figure 7: Presentation of the house 'for upmarket requirements', built in 1951. Photograph by Heddenhausen. Reproduced with the permission of Wüstenrot AG (Bausparkasse Gemeinschaft der Freunde Wüstenrot 1951: 7).

standardised and sophisticated. The photographs, in particular, are now carefully staged, relying not on simple images of houses but focusing on their attractiveness. The house moves into the background to make room for the garden as the dominating visual feature. Flowers are shown in full bloom in the foreground, sometimes accompanied by specific household items signifying leisure time, such as lounge chairs and parasols. The houses and gardens are, with rare exceptions, all photographed during spring or early summer, thus capturing flowers and trees in their optimal state. Some images from the late 1950s portray houses as solitary structures, positioned in front of attractive natural backgrounds, such as pastures and forests or distant mountains. Unlike early presentations, which usually featured only one black-and-white photograph of the exterior of the house, the presentations of model homes from the 1950s also include images of the

interior. Family groups are rarely shown in these pictures. Instead, people alone, in pairs or in groups sit at a table inside or outside or relax on a lounger. They are involved in leisure activities, reading or simply sitting at the table and chatting. Household tasks such as gardening, cleaning, cooking or maintenance are not shown.

While pre-war photographs conveyed the message that owning a house is an accomplishment in itself, by the mid-1950s the focus of the illustrations turned to the amenities and lifestyle activities linked to home ownership. The images suggest that homeowners enjoy a wealth of spare time to spend in their gardens and living rooms. Moreover, one novel exterior element appears in the photographs: the balcony on the gable wall. These two factors — leisure time and outdoor spaces not intended for use of several people, such as balconies, which are attached to individual rooms — reflect larger societal shifts. During



Figure 8: 'Two female teachers built their home on the city outskirts'. A *Kleinhaus* built by two retired sisters and planned by architect J. Haberland. Photographs by H. Lütticke. Reproduced with the permission of Wüstenrot AG (Bausparkasse Gemeinschaft der Freunde Wüstenrot 1957b: 180).

these boom years, the working week became shorter, and house owners could afford to build outdoor spaces, such as balconies and loggias, not intended for family use, in addition to the garden, which was used by all household members. Floor plans show that the ground floor is now used exclusively for shared household activities, while the attic is reserved for private bedrooms and bathrooms. The division between shared activities and representational spaces (spaces for display or for entertaining only) on the ground floor, and intimate, individual spaces on the upper floor is now firmly established. Similarly, the layout of the ground floor is determined by the spatial arrangement of different rooms. While rooms are still enclosed, the general character of the home is spatially more open. The

direct access to the garden from the living room is a novel feature. The use of graphics in ground-floor plans highlights the continuity between outdoor and indoor space, and icons for vegetation and patterns for paved outdoor surfaces next to the exterior walls seem to suggest a closer integration of house and garden than was seen in the previous decade.

The Media of Representation: From Real Houses to Model Homes

The consistent inclusion of three elements – photographs, descriptions and particularly floor plans – is crucial to the presentation of the individual detached house. While the photographs from the early period are simplistic, with

little consideration for composition, later photographs of the houses are carefully arranged, presenting the garden as the chief attribute of the single-family home, along with specific artefacts such as garden furniture and parasols to evoke an atmosphere of leisure.

The text accompanying the photographs does not convey messages about proper living or anything about family constellations, however, but instead matter-of-factly explains how to reduce construction costs and to better communicate with the architect. The text also works as a guide for the average homeowner to understand the parameters of a house, although not the size and location of the plot. Many publications provide information on building volume and the cost of construction. They also include descriptions of the functional uses of different rooms and the organisation of the circulation. To architects, accustomed to 'reading' floor plans in a specific manner, able to easily identify room designations and to analyse access and circulation, the explanation of the floor plan may seem superfluous, but for non-professional house builders, these narratives act as instructions for decoding the complex diagrams. Especially after 1950, the spatial arrangement of rooms is also frequently restated in the main text, where the functional specifications of the house are emphasised. The text reveals that the functions of different levels and rooms and the continuities or divisions of space are predefined, all aspects that are also illustrated by the more technically presented floor plans.

These plans are highly abstract and standardised, in drawings that could, in fact, be classified as diagrams. From the outset, floor layouts are used in a systematic way – the design brief for the house, the programme of the building. The majority of plans include designations of the intended function of rooms and symbols for furnishings and fittings. The floor layout also presents a specific arrangement of rooms, zones and circulation areas, along with the location of building services. In the case of the single-family home, the plan even allocates certain members of the household to certain rooms, assigning tasks, duties and roles to each family member.

In 1957, the magazine reported that the *Mein Eigenheim* editorial team received a constant flow of plans (Bausparkasse Gemeinschaft der Freunde Wüstenrot 1957a: 49). However, the process of selection was not disclosed, and it remains unclear how the photo-shoots on location were organised, or if the plans provided by homeowners were redrawn. Careful study of the articles in the magazine nevertheless reveals a coherent approach behind the selection and presentation of model homes: The aim is to transmit educational messages and to deploy marketing goals. Each of the three elements – plans, photographs and descriptions – are perceived differently. The narrative of the texts gradually unfolds in a linear way. The photographs can be grasped instantly, an effect Roland Barthes calls '*punctum*', or acknowledged through a more thorough reflection, which Barthes calls '*studium*' (2000: 25–27). Floor plans are recognised through a process of gradual decoding comparable to reading but are also perceived through immediate and measured effects similar to the cognition of photographs.

The three elements, texts, plans and photographs, reframe the real house as an idealised, model home. The descriptions and plans are educational instruments, transmitting the notions of preferred house design and ways of construction that the GdF endorsed. Their message is practical: if the model homes, which the magazine articles frame as affordable and well designed, are replicated, home ownership will become a feasible option in a not-too-distant future. But the photographs of houses, gardens and interiors appeal to readers' imagination, enabling them to envision themselves inhabiting a new well-furnished house, and enjoying leisure time on terraces surrounded by blooming plants and green lawns.

Through representation in the magazine, the editors transform the actual home a building society member builds; the editors choose it, present it and discuss it. As a model home, the house then not only becomes a marketing tool to sell more mortgages, but it also acts as an educational instrument, indirectly depicting successful practices which are to be reproduced: saving, learning to read floor plans and planning for, calculating and eventually enjoying the benefits of homeownership. The *Kleinhaus* is a perfect vehicle for this strategy. Unlike the sensory impact of actual buildings, which is immediate and unfiltered, the influence of published presentations of homes on potential owners is gradual and takes place over time. As Alison J. Clarke's ethnographic research in London has shown, for inhabitants 'ideal homes' and 'real homes' meld, and consequently the material culture simultaneously embodies the ideal and the actual (2001: 27). Together, the three forms of presentation provided by building society magazines – visual, verbal and diagrammatic – transform actual buildings into generalised formal types, which are reproduced in material space as well as in the dwellers' everyday practices and their use of space.

German Self-provided Housing and Consumer Choice

While the GdF statutes explicitly allow the building of homes in homestead settlements, the majority of house types (and not just small houses) presented in *Mein Eigenheim* were built individually and based on the principle of self-provision. Tax relief provided after World War II served to incorporate the saving plans of building societies into the official housing policy of West Germany, thereby providing a high share of financing for detached housing (Kurz 2004). GdF and other building societies not only established the tradition of self-provision in Germany but also influenced consumer choice with regard to formal house types and residential designs.

The typological changes observed during the evolution of the *Kleinhaus* from the 1920s to 1960s are predominantly incremental. Intimate and individual spaces (bedrooms) are gradually isolated from shared living areas. Over the years, the representative living space grows, and the bedrooms are more commonly assigned to the upper floor (attic). Such increased functional diversification reflects the growing affluence of households. In times of economic crisis and housing shortage (from 1931 to 1939 and again from 1945 to 1956) this distribution of

functions is abandoned, and by the mid-1950s, the basic design becomes more open. The ground floor layout, now exclusively devoted to shared use and family gatherings, is more often arranged to allow free movement. Similarly, intimate spaces become more individualised. Each child is now allocated their own room. However, the institutional base of the family, i.e., matrimony, is persistently represented in the textual descriptions through mention of the master bedroom (the German word, *Elternschlafzimmer*, literally translates as 'parents' bedroom'). Only rarely does the text discuss space for work, thus confirming the well-known exclusion of paid work from the single-family home.

By 1955 the notion and image of the single-family home solidifies into a detached house surrounded by a garden. At this point, a standardised scheme for presenting homes is established: short descriptions, several photographs of the exterior and interior, and all floor plans. Carefully staged photographs showing artefacts associated with recreation, or people involved in leisure activities, reinforce the connection between the detached house and free time. The house is no longer merely a shelter to protect the dwellers and to accumulate wealth; it has also become an asset to be enjoyed. The bourgeois way of living is finally within reach of all members of society. The crucial, explicit message of customer magazines is that by saving, careful planning and paring back some requirements, every household can afford to build a house of their own.

Conclusion

The single-family home is permanently being reproduced through the construction and habitation of its formal building types. The representational reframing is a part of how building types are constituted and operate, as observed in the transformation of the *Kleinhaus* type. From the mid-1930s to 1965, the small house was the dominant formal type presented in GdF publications. Obviously, the *Kleinhaus* is not a design exclusive to building societies. Not-for-profit housing cooperatives and corporations such as GAGFAH and GEHAG also build certain types of small houses, predominantly within the framework of the Homestead Act (GAGFAH 1928).⁵ The types of small houses constructed by such housing corporations are mostly standardised semi-detached or terraced buildings within planned suburban settlements, and they often involve some degree of organised self-building (Henderson 1999; Schäfer 1985). In comparison, the *Kleinhaus* types presented in *Mein Eigenheim* are usually detached houses.

From 1924 to the mid-1950s, the range of housing types is largely limited to the *Kleinhaus*, a type that had undergone incremental changes over the years, including the gradual introduction of the principle of open space and the dissolution of the division between the garden and the house, mainly affecting the ground floor. However, in 1949, when GdF Wüstenrot organised a competition for 'realistic and practical housing designs', the building society itself had claimed that the *Kleinhaus* type was obsolete (Völkers 1949: 4). The architect Otto Völkers, the editor of the publication and a member of the jury, listed several

shortcomings of this type, including timber used in the roof – there was a shortage of timber at that time – and the elaborate construction of the dormers. Additionally, according to Völkers, bedrooms are just as important as living rooms and should be relocated from their 'hidden' position in the attic (1949: 7). Nevertheless, GdF subscribers and other self-provisioning owner-occupiers continued to build the small house type during the 1950s. It is only by 1965 that the *Kleinhaus* form of housing disappears from the magazine (as well as its actual construction), and is replaced by larger detached dwellings, bungalows and terraced housing.⁶

The visual material and short text rarely address the issue of the location of a house in relation to the countryside or urbanised areas. The influence of the surroundings of a house – the larger urban entities such as neighbourhoods and districts – is not mentioned. The representations of model homes do not consider the dependence of the house on technical infrastructure, mobility, public services and local supply networks. Hence, in the articles on model houses, the image of the house with a garden evokes the notion of the home as a self-sufficient and closed unit. The household, firmly rooted in its home, is equally independent. The texts contain limited descriptions of household composition, and they do not prescribe ideals of domestic arrangements.

While the publications show the formal *Kleinhaus* type undergoing incremental refinement and adaptation to changing economic and social conditions, the corresponding suburban settlement remains arbitrary. The isolated, detached character of the house, conveyed through elaborate presentation of actual homes, also shaped the structure of its immediate neighbourhoods and districts, which, in reality, were mainly developed as clusters of autonomous, serial, detached dwellings with little relation to one another. This mode of suburban single-family home development very much reflects the notion of the freedom individual homeowners have as promoted by the Wüstenrot building society. This approach did not contribute to the establishment of the closely-knit neighbourhood that persists in former homestead settlements (Spellerberg and Woll 2014); the focus of the building society was on self-provisioning homebuilders. In addition to financing and building consultancy, representations of actual homes in building society magazines contributed to the production of affordable homes with optimised layouts. The advice and information services and the educational representation of homes provided by the GdF enabled individual homebuilders to self-organise the production of their homes.

The continued production of mediated content about individual homes is one of the constitutive processes in 'type operations' for buildings. Representations of actual homes as model dwellings influence the initial design, but also define domestic living over the long term. Insight into the impact of visual and verbal representations of the spatial and typological arrangement of houses over time contributes to a greater understanding of the historic co-creation of the built environment. This approach is particularly suited to the study of the architecture of suburban,

detached homes, shaped by owner-occupiers' self-provisioning practices. In-depth analysis of the German building societies' publications provides an insight into the effects of popular media on the long-term popularity of serial and mono-functional detached homes. However, the actual impact of representation on forms of habitation cannot be derived simply from the analysis of the mediated presentation of homes. Further research on the continued reproduction of common building types represented in the media and built and inhabited as material artefacts will contribute to an expanded notion of architectural history, going beyond the restrictive notion of the iconic, singular edifice.

Notes

- ¹ *Bausparer* is a German term used for members of building societies. There is a wide range of German expressions associated with investing in building societies, including the verb *bausparen*, which refers to saving with a building society. *Bausparhaus* is a house built with a loan from a building society. In this paper, the term 'building society saver' will be used for members of building societies. The section 'Saving Collectively, Building Individually' provides a comprehensive definition and explanation of the function of building societies.
- ² The spelling of the magazine's title changed several times. Initially, in 1924, Gothic lettering was used and the title spelled '*Mein-Eigen-Heim*'. In the early 1930s, the spelling was changed to '*Mein Eigen-Heim*'. In 1949, Gothic typeface was no longer in use and on the front page, the spelling '*Mein EIGEN Heim*' was used. In the mid-1950s, when the magazine started to use colour and a new font, the spelling was changed to '*mein Eigenheim*', a spelling still in use today, though not compliant to grammar but rather a graphic design feature. Correct spelling would be '*Mein Eigenheim*'. The latter spelling for this magazine is used by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek. For clarity, I have used '*Mein Eigenheim*', when referring to the magazine, throughout the paper.
- ³ Brenda Case Scheer, drawing on established scholarship on urban morphology, defines 'formal types' as buildings that share common characteristics, such as circulation, overall shape and scale, entrance conditions and situation on the site (2010: 6), while 'use-types' are 'a series of buildings with identifiable use' (Case Scheer, 2010: 10–12), such as airport terminals, schools, libraries, hospitals and so on. The '*Kleinhaus*' is, therefore, a formal type that belongs to a larger category of residential use-types.
- ⁴ Private detached houses were only supported in East Germany after 1971, through interest-free loans and exemption from property acquisition tax.
- ⁵ GAGFAH is the Gemeinnützige Aktien-Gesellschaft für Angestellten Heim-Stätten (Not-for-profit Corporation for Employee Homesteads). GEHAG is the Gemeinnützige Heimstätten-, Spar- und Bau-Aktiengesellschaft (Not-for-profit Homestead-, Savings- and Building Corporation).

- ⁶ The number of small houses (*Kleinhaus*) financed through building society mortgages cannot be provided, as official statistics do not distinguish between different types of formal house. Moreover, information on both the formal house type and the type of financing cannot be derived from the statistical data.

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The author has no competing interests to declare.

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