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To cite this article: Dirk Schubert (2020): Fritz Schumacher – Neglected German town planner and urban reformer in Hamburg and Cologne, Planning Perspectives, DOI: [10.1080/02665433.2020.1757497](https://doi.org/10.1080/02665433.2020.1757497)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/02665433.2020.1757497>



Published online: 04 May 2020.



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Fritz Schumacher – Neglected German town planner and urban reformer in Hamburg and Cologne

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ABSTRACT

Fritz Schumacher (1869-1947), German town planner and reformer, is often mentioned as a 'conservative modernist' or as an 'unmodern architect' and neglected in the works on the origins of modern housing and urban development. Schumacher was a visionary and pragmatic, a reformer and a realist at the same time. Schumacher's oeuvre and its full impact are not specific to Hamburg, but are integrated into the regional, national and international discourse on the reform of the metropolis. His ideas, his concepts for reform, his methods and his ability to ensure that the plans are implemented promptly, are current and forward-looking. The breadth of his work in Hamburg and Cologne is outlined in this contribution.

KEYWORDS

Fritz; Schumacher; neglected; German; town planner and urban reformer; conservative modernist

In 2019, many places in Germany were celebrating the 100th anniversary of the Bauhaus. The search for traces, buildings and architects – as well as a recent focus on female architects – that could be associated with the Bauhaus is ubiquitous. Many people, buildings and projects that are only marginally connected with the context of the Bauhaus were iconised and equated with 'modernity', which is tantamount to a kind of canonization. This marginalized other diverse trends, building cultures and architectural languages as well as their creators for being 'out-of-date', which implicitly devalued them. Meanwhile, new studies on Frankfurt,¹ Berlin and Hamburg and at the borders of Austria, Holland and Switzerland have opened up new perspectives and insights into the planning and building history of the 1920s.

The German literature on 'modernism', 'new building', 'modern architecture', the 'new objectivity' of the Weimar Republic and the 'representatives of modernism' has no more than a footnote on Fritz Schumacher (1869-1947).² The extensive 'Tendenzen der Moderne' catalogue does not even list Schumacher in the index.³ The architects Bruno Taut, Walter Gropius, Ernst May, Mies van der Rohe and Erich Mendelsohn are mentioned; Frankfurt, Celle, Stuttgart and above all Berlin⁴ are featured, but not Schumacher. Often classified as a 'conservative modernist', 'modern urban planner' and 'unmodern architect', he is hardly mentioned in the works on the origins of modern housing and modern architecture. Hamburg, on the other hand, a trading city that values tradition and the place where he worked, still holds him and his impact in high esteem and elevates him to a shining light of architecture. In the meantime, many facets of Schumacher's work in Leipzig, Dresden, Hamburg and Cologne (mostly in German) have been examined.⁵ The focus of his work shifted from building projects and questions of architectural design to housing reform, urban planning, urban and regional planning issues, which will be dealt with here. Although he rarely attended

international conferences, his work in Hamburg and Cologne was well received nationally and internationally. This is all the more astonishing as he grew up in New York, and was – unlike many of his contemporaries – quite fluent in English. Here, the focus is not placed on issues of design, architecture and the style of modernism, but on issues relating to housing reforms as well as residential development, urban and regional planning.

Fritz (Friedrich Wilhelm) Schumacher was born in Bremen. His father was ambassador in Bogota and New York, where he spent his childhood. In 1883, the family returned to Bremen and Schumacher attended the local grammar school. From 1889 to 1896, he studied at the Technische Universität Munich, first maths and natural sciences, then architecture. After working for the Leipzig planning authority, he was appointed professor at the Technische Universität Dresden in 1901, became co-founder of the Deutscher Werkbund in 1907 and municipal director of urban building construction in Hamburg at the age of 40 in 1909.

Urban problems and housing reform

Schumacher's work was founded in a precise analysis and stocktaking of cities as well as in a detailed knowledge of the social, political and administrative circumstances, opportunities and feasibility. He described this method as follows: 'And that is why the problem of the metropolis cannot be addressed on the bases of a general theory, but only through the caring immersion in the essence of the particular city where the practical work is to be applied. The more distinctive this particular city is, the more one will have to seek the key to an approach in its distinctiveness.'⁶ (Figure 1).

Before the First World War – shortly after Schumacher took office – Hamburg's population reached the million mark, closely surrounded by the Prussian cities of Altona, Harburg and Wandsbek. He assumed that, at best, he would be able to 'inhibit further swelling of the existing agglomerations', but not eliminate their presence.⁷ Schumacher's holistic approach was based on the 'transformation of the old' and the 'design of the new'. For Schumacher, 'the problem of urban development [...] was ultimately synonymous with the housing issue' and 'a reform that makes housing more expensive is not a reform'.⁸ Schumacher had thus set himself an ambitious task that could not be solved by means of planning and creativity, because economic and social aspects posed the questions and provided the answers. 'The cluelessness regarding the housing issue in the new city is not a failure of architectural design, it is the inevitable consequence of unresolved social changes.'⁹

His work is characterized by the fact that he did not isolate diverse problems, but rather conceived and sought to solve them within an overall context. He chose a hostile narrative towards cities, which was not a 'declaration of war on cities', but the endeavour to focus on the question of how to go about reforming them.¹⁰ The starting point of his argumentative struggle was urbanization and a need for housing. In his first two 'disguised pamphlets', as he called them, Schumacher addressed problematic housing conditions in Hamburg.¹¹ He took up the criticism of the housing reform movement and described the densely built-up quarters, the overcrowded apartments, the Schlitzbauten – as the T-shaped, five-storey blocks of flats with narrow light wells at the back were called in Hamburg – the 'stone colossuses' where small livestock is kept in murky back gardens. Schumacher exaggerates the negative aspects of Hamburg's Wilhelminian housing stock, which still is a popular type of housing now – as long as it is not overcrowded. Compared to rural housing and living conditions and the housing estates in Berlin, the living conditions in Hamburg before the First World War were not too bad.

As an indicator for the housing conditions, the housing rate and occupancy rate were usually cited.¹² The housing number indicates how many inhabitants account for an inhabited building

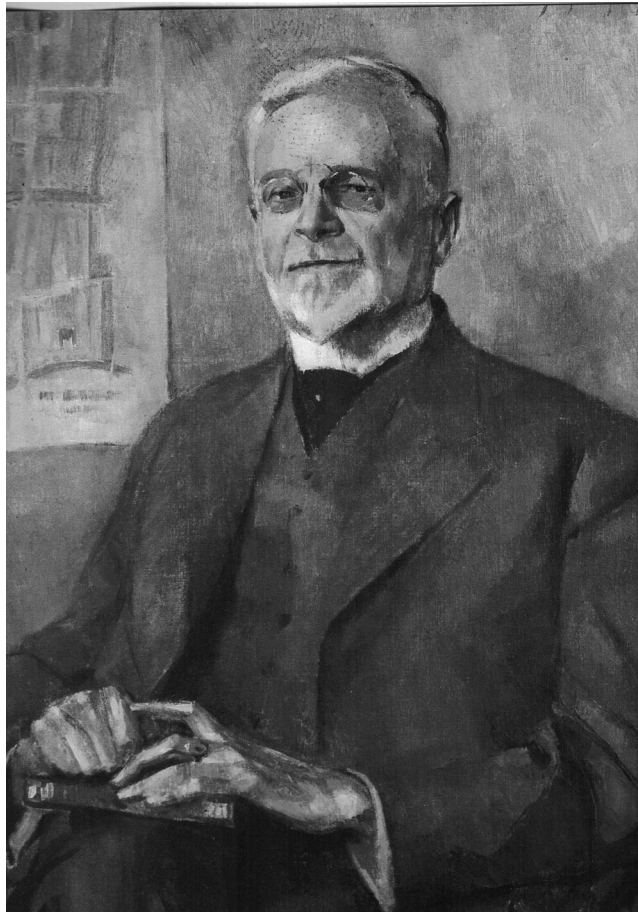


Figure 1. Portrait Fritz Schumacher 1944 – Painting by Friedrich Ahlers-Hestermann (Located in the Fritz-Schumacher-School in Langenhorn).

on average. It was in Hamburg in 1900 at 23.3 compared to Berlin 50.1, Munich 28.9, Leipzig 27.8, Dresden 28.7 and Breslau 38.5. The occupancy rate was 1927 in Hamburg at 3.6, in Berlin 3.3, Munich 3.7, Leipzig 3.8, Dresden 3.5, Breslau 3.7 and in the Reich average at 3.7. Housing in Hamburg in 1927 accounted for 0.86 inhabitants, while it was in Berlin 1.01, Munich 1.03, Leipzig 0.84, Dresden 0.89 and the Reich average 0.98. High housing figures were used by housing reformers and protagonists of decentralization as proof of the need for ‘thinning out’.¹³

During the First World War, construction activity was down and Schumacher found leisure to deal more fundamentally with big city problems, especially with the peculiarities of Hamburg. He analysed in two books the causes and manifestations of dense development, its problematic hygienic and social consequences, and outlined proposals for improved structural and urban solutions to overcome the ‘depraving blocks of flats’ in two of his books.¹⁴ By overstating, he provided lasting evidence of the need for reform. ‘In the decisive years of the modern metropolis’s development, between 1870 and 1900, Hamburg, like other major German cities, did not know how to direct housing for the masses into the right channels. Here, too, the development plan and building regulations

resulted in a dominance of entrepreneur-built blocks of flats for mass housing with all its drawbacks.¹⁵

The First World War was to act as a catalyst for social change: Democratization, women's right to vote, increasing female employment, a reduction in the size of families, a reduction in working hours and better living standards prevailed in the following years. During the war, house building had stopped, there were fewer marriages, refugees from areas separated from the Reich, continuing urbanization and structural changes in the population had also contributed to the considerable housing shortage in Hamburg. The need for housing – the shortage of low-priced small flats – could not be eliminated in the short term. The first task was for the public authorities to manage the shortage as best as possible.

In addition to Theodor Fischer, Hermann Muthesius, Otto Gussmann, Adolf von Hildebrand and Richard Riemerschmid (a Camillo Sitte student), Schumacher was involved in the Construction and Art Commission of the first German garden city in Dresden Hellerau in 1908/09.¹⁶ Friedrich Naumann's ideas, the combination of aesthetic, social and technical reforms, had motivated Wolf Dohrn, the initiator of Hellerau, to found a first German garden city near Dresden.¹⁷ But later Schumacher was critical about the garden city idea as solution model for metropolitan housing problems and he was not a member of the Deutsche Gartenstadtgesellschaft.

The idea of garden cities evaluated by Schumacher 1912 – with reference to Ebenezer Howard and the garden cities visited by him such as Haempstead and Letchworth – as a 'social dream' that could not bring about a cure of a 'radical cure of the big city evil'.¹⁸ But in the post-war confusion, the municipal estate in Langenhorn on Hamburg's periphery – now known as the Fritz Schumacher Siedlung – had to be completed in difficult conditions and under the direction of Schumacher.¹⁹ Temporary solutions were not wanted, but a lot of sacrifices had to be made and inferior makeshift materials and untested construction methods used. Building development relied on expropriation and municipal real estate. Schumacher planned larger plots with gardens and land for keeping small livestock. To this day, a lively community has been consolidating over generations in the neighbourhood around the school (Volkshaus) in the centre of the estate. The city itself was the client for the Langenhorn development, which was an exception. 'At the end of all striving workers too always have an ideal of a house of their own with a garden of their own', Schumacher wrote.

In addition to the housing needs, Schumacher's work focused on the task of assigning homes and workplaces. Even before the First World War, a number of publications had pointed to the inadequate spatial development possibilities and structural problems in the Vierstädtegebiet (four-city-region), comprising Hamburg, Altona, Harburg-Wilhelmsburg and Wandsbek. The central problems of developing the metropolis were inadequate opportunities for port expansion, coordination problems with port planning in Altona and Harburg (Prussian), the allocation of residential areas to workplaces and transport and infrastructure planning issues.

Cologne – model study for planning work

Due to declining construction activity, inflation and a lack of building materials – not only in Hamburg – Schumacher had time to work on other jobs and he took part in an urban planning competition in Cologne. In 1919, he won the competition to redesign the 'Innerer Rayon' (ring of fortresses) and Hamburg granted him three years' leave of absence at the insistence of the Lord Mayor of Cologne, Konrad Adenauer.²⁰ Schumacher had planned only public buildings in Hamburg, now in Cologne was about an urban design task, which he expanded to urban development planning. Based on a holistic survey of Cologne he developed a general methodical kit for urban development

planning. It remains to be seen whether Schumacher – who knows English – knew the works of Patrick Geddes.²¹ Schumacher's complex inventories were similar to Geddes' 'regional surveys' and took account of social, economic and ecological interdependencies.²² This was another step towards the scientification of urban planning. With this work, a further step towards the urbanization of town planning was made and for Schumacher she was to prepare the equipment for his later work in Hamburg again (Figure 2).

Cologne had been able to acquire the land immediately adjacent to the ramparts from the Prussian War Ministry and areas of open land from the Prussian War Ministry in addition to some land from private owners. The site was to be used for prestigious green spaces and buildings which was made possible by passing reallocation legislation and a number of legal exemptions. Adenauer had a clear conception of the redevelopment, but sought outside advice on urban planning matters. Hermann Jansen and Alfred Stooß, who knew Cologne well, had been invited to take part in the competition alongside Schumacher.²³ The compelling aspect of Schumacher's design was its configuration of green spaces and the newly acquired building plots, which Cologne wanted in order to create a new, modern and distinctive appearance.

Schumacher's work in Cologne coincides with a time of upheaval. He applied Oswald Spengler's metaphor of the 'downfall of the West' with 'that strange mixture of curiosity and resignation'. In order to accomplish 'new views of life' and 'living conditions', a harmonious scheme had to be developed 'from the needs of the masses'. He employed biological metaphors in order to establish a resilient base of reasoning for the radical changes. 'Disease' and 'social suffering' would cumulate in cities. 'The whole abundance of unsolved social problems, the whole force of unnatural living conditions accumulate in this term. Talk of "smashing the city" echoes like "fanfares"'.²⁴ Based on his studies on housing in small apartments in Hamburg, he now analysed the typology of blocks of flats in Cologne in order to improved natural lighting and ventilation by means of building reforms. He repeated and generalized his conclusion: 'Housing has so far been the enormous unresolved problem of the city.'²⁵

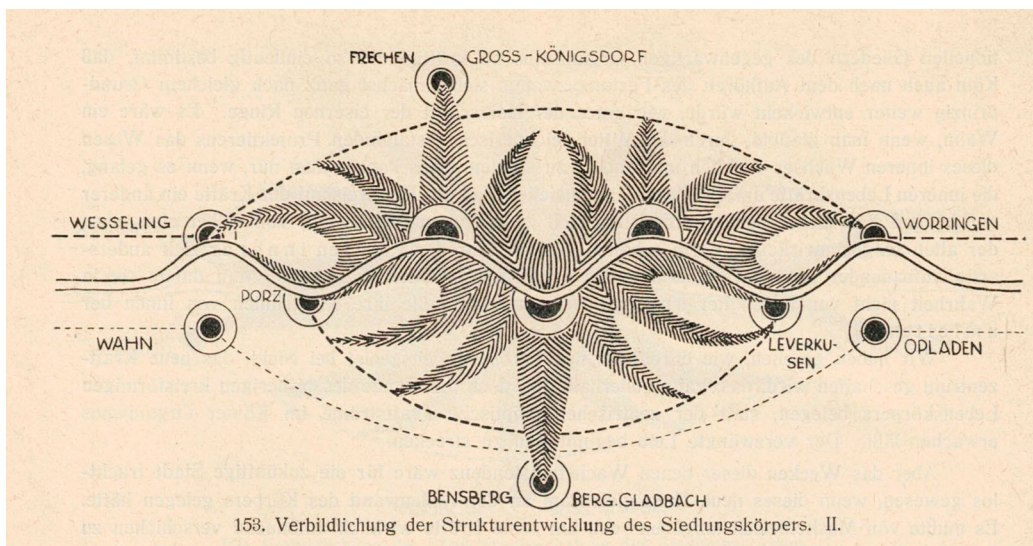


Figure 2. Development structure for Cologne 1923 (Schumacher, Fritz, Köln. *Entwicklungsfragen einer Grosstadt*, Cologne 1923).

Schumacher's systematic and methodical approach determined the future of planning in Cologne and reached far beyond design matters. Schumacher took the problems of cities, the preconditions for development, the goals of development, the design of new plots as well as the redevelopment of the old town as a starting point and summarized the results of his inventory and plans. He was not only concerned with the immediate area around the site, but also sought to integrate overall urban development perspectives. He delivered an impressive case study of Cologne's urban development, containing a systematic analysis of the city, which was to serve as a model for other cities with similar planning issues. It was a homogenous piece of work that brought together many specific aspects, while always considering the city as a whole. Schumacher saw the overall planning and partial plans in a dialectical context, considered sectoral plans while always reflecting elements of urban planning and design. Using an analysis of the existing situation to develop a masterplan, he derived a long-term 'ideal', which was to serve as the guiding principle at all times. Politics and typically competing administrative departments were to use this model for their orientation. Schumacher showed different building and housing typologies for sub-neighbourhoods that were to serve as examples for their building and spatial implementation. He summarized: 'The work of this book is not only of special local significance. It can also be seen as an attempt to use the paradigm of a certain city as an approach to general urban planning issues.'²⁶

Schumacher did not pursue 'drastic measures' for 'smashing the city', but his aim was its reformability. Healthy growth was to shape the sprawling city. This should lead to an ideal rather than an imposed result, which was to integrate spatial, sectoral levels and individual problems.²⁷ He thus provided a – state of the art – blueprint of what urban planning can achieve for a city if it is methodically and systematically designed.

Adenauer certified to Schumacher an iron will of an 'iron will'²⁸ and sought to tie Schumacher to Cologne in the long-term.²⁹ Later after Schumacher's death Adenauer wrote in 1950 posthumously: „I was deeply impressed by his sense of duty, his understanding of all the problems of a big city, his limited creative power”. But Schumacher later wrote in his figurative style: 'I was a man married to Hamburg who suddenly found himself in a new love affair. This was by no means a negligible moral conflict.'³⁰

Regional planning and the issue of Greater Hamburg

Until his forced retirement in 1933, Schumacher had a decisive influence on planning and building activities in Hamburg.³¹ On his return from Cologne, he became Hamburg's chief building director, a position that extended his powers. In the 1920s, he became an eager propagandist for the Greater Hamburg issue. Schumacher assumed that the marshes were the best area for port extensions and workplaces, while the geest was suitable for housing development. 'Just as much as the marshes are earmarked as Hamburg's work area, they are unsuitable for residential development. [...] In contrast to the area for work on the marshes, Hamburg's natural area for housing is the geest. [...] The ideal picture would be [...] that the work areas on the marshes are surrounded by a border of housing on the geest. All housing and traffic problems would then be easily and naturally solved: the shortest and most unhindered traffic routes could lead to the place of work from all directions. These problems are currently insoluble as the ownership of Hamburg's geest and marshlands is completely separate.'³² (Figure 3).

Schumacher believed the issue of housing reform to be linked to the Greater Hamburg solution and ultimately to be the vital question for Hamburg's development, which was predetermined by natural conditions: 'The low-lying land of the marshes was created for work, the higher land of

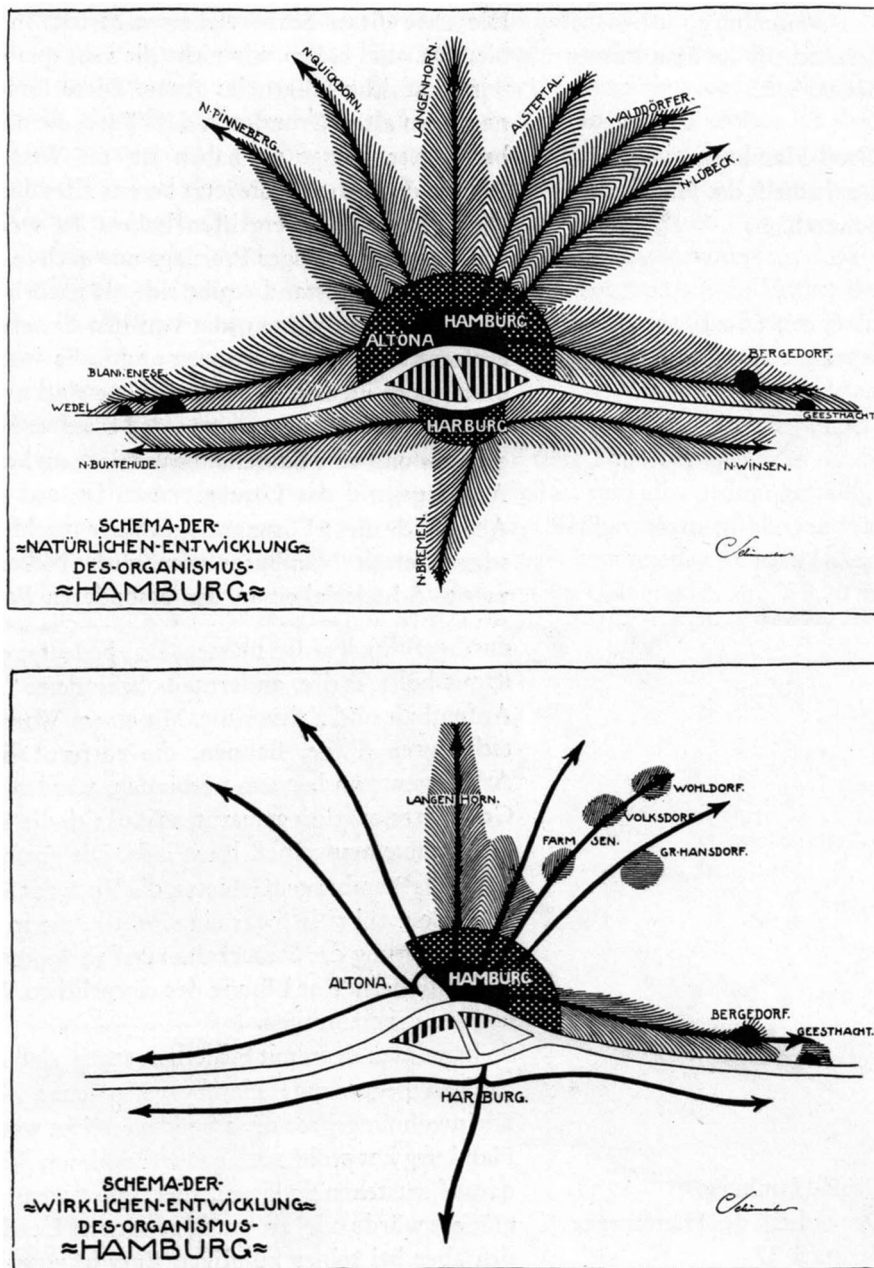


Figure 3. Hamburg Plan from 1919 with blocked spatial development and plan with a „natural“ perspective (Kallmorgen, Werner, Schumacher und Hamburg eine fachliche Dokumentation, 1969).

the geest for living. [...] The entire social future of the city is based on this possibility.’³³ Schumacher’s development model, first published in 1919, was to guide urban and regional planning to the present day. Schumacher contrasted ‘natural’ development with ‘amputated’ opportunities, and thus established a memorable anti-Prussian polemic. The biologically tinted terminology that Hamburg’s ‘proud blossom’ was ‘prevented from unfurling’ proved to be an effective argument.³⁴

Schumacher considered the Greater Hamburg issue to be a matter of port expansion with housing policy implications. He wrote that ‘a major cause of illness is brought about by the unnatural coincidence of marshland to geest within Hamburg’s borders. [...] Therefore, it is surely right to say that not only the requirements of the Hamburg port issue, but equally the requirements of the Hamburg housing issue imperatively press for the replanning of Hamburg’s borders.’³⁵

The Prussian government was the main adversary against Hamburg’s request for incorporation.³⁶ Prussia expressed an independent interest in Harburg and Wilhelmsburg, which were indispensable for its economic development and industrialization. Prussia argued that any problems would be solved by agreement between the states and that territorial changes were unnecessary. It pursued an independent port and urban development policy for Harburg,³⁷ which was reflected in the amalgamation of Harburg and Wilhelmsburg in 1927. The merging of the neighbouring cities to the south of Hamburg gave rise to a new Prussian city with over 115,000 inhabitants.³⁸

Schumacher’s further efforts, on the other hand, were only reflected in the Hamburgisch-preußischer Landesplanungsausschuss (Hamburg-Prussian State Planning Committee),³⁹ founded in 1928, which he chaired until 1933.⁴⁰ Expert committees prepared analyses and, in some cases, competing plans for an area covering a 30 km radius around Hamburg’s town hall. By 1933, the committee had developed numerous planning criteria. In 1933, after the National Socialists seized power, the committee was reshuffled and the focus of work shifted towards industrial settlement policy while at the same time attempting decentralization. Schumacher, the head of the technical subcommittee, had to resign and was replaced by the Harburg building director Karl Köster. The work was focussed on consultations, assessments and proposals for changes to planning projects by the municipalities in the surrounding region. Since the committee did not have any financial resources and executive powers, its possibilities for action were limited.⁴¹ What remains impressive, however, is not only the amount of surveys produced, but also their innovative cartographic methods for mapping complex socio-spatial contexts using isochrones for example. Schumacher observed that a ‘reduction of space’ took place when airborne and that certain deformations would only be recognizable from the air.⁴²

Hamburg – ‘Residential City’

At first Schumacher was skeptical about the revolutionary upheavals after 1918, but moderate forces were soon to dominate, and after the end of inflation, the state intervened more in urban planning and housing construction, and the building tax (1923) was used effectively to promote new construction. The left and the SPD were primarily concerned with the solution of the ‘main contradiction’ in capitalism, the contradiction between wage labour and capital – since the writing by Friedrich Engels ‘Zur Wohnungsfrage’ (1873). If this conflict were resolved, the ‘side contradictions’ of the housing question would virtually ‘resolve themselves’. A stringent housing policy strategy by socialization therefore seemed not to be necessary; at most, small steps in the direction of economic democracy, the general economy and the support of cooperatives would help to improve living and housing conditions in a selective manner. From this position it was therefore natural to assign this problem to the women’s movement.

In the context of housing development in Hamburg Schumacher mutated from architect to urban development manager. He coordinated the developers and architects involved and compared this to the world of music: ‘Just as it is possible to achieve a good choral effect by bringing together voice material that is not particularly valuable in itself, if the conductor is purposeful and tasteful in holding together the notes and driving them on to the right beat [...]’ It does not need to be mentioned who

considered himself to be the ‘good conductor’. In an earlier edition of his book, Schumacher made it even clearer: ‘Therefore the effectiveness of a wise choral conductor is extremely important in order to come a little closer to the goal of creatively harmony in the metropolis’.⁴³ ‘Individuals who build must not consider themselves to be soloist, but feel like a serving member of a choir.’⁴⁴ The best-known architects in Hamburg, including Karl Schneider, Hermann Höger, Erich zu Putlitz, Wilhelm



Figure 4. Growing Hamburg – Location of new housing estates built after World War I in Hamburg (Schumacher, Fritz, *Das Werden einer Wohnstadt, Hamburg* 1932).

Behrens, Hermann Distel and August Grubitz, the Gerson brothers and the Frank brothers, voluntarily submitted to the design guidelines laid down by Hamburg's chief building director (Figure 4).

Schumacher developed a 'model building' approach for planning new residential areas. Participating architects and cooperative building associations tested their housing projects with Plasticine models to adjust cubature and architectural design and find the best 'elastic' solutions.⁴⁵ On the 'basis of a voluntary and loose coercion of such cooperation [...] all of the extensive, new residential areas have been given a uniform appearance'.⁴⁶ Thus, the neighbourhoods contain different architectural styles which were arranged in a coordinated manner (Figure 5).

Schumacher referred to the outstanding achievements of housing construction in Holland and in Vienna and was concerned with a 'refinement of Hamburg's housing construction'. That would only be possible if the 'best and most suitable architects' were involved. In doing so, the 'artistic unity' should not be lost, but promoted by 'penetrating cooperation'.⁴⁷

The planning of the new residential neighbourhoods implied various problems and a variety of different tasks.⁴⁸ At Dulsberg it was a matter of redesigning a plan from the pre-war period by relocating, zoning down and creating green corridors. Barmbek-Nord too had a development plan from 1914 that was 'reformed' by Schumacher. He staggered the height of the buildings towards the boundary of the estate, earmarked playgrounds, green spaces and recreational areas and grouped the development around a central square. Very small apartments were built, which were supported by interest-free or low-interest municipal loans. The Frank brothers used new floor plan typologies in buildings with balcony access to save costs.⁴⁹ They also built a block of tiny flats for the target group of working women. Plans for the estates also included leasehold gardens. 'A spot in a garden, be it ever so small, for the homeless people in our joylessly agglomerated cities!'⁵⁰ A sense of home was to be stirred by a clod of earth. 'Allotment gardens have developed a life of their own, which brings a touch of sedate small town life into the restless and neighbourless city.'⁵¹ According to Schumacher, working in an allotment could spark educational inner values (Figure 6).

On the Elbe island Veddel, on the other hand, it was a matter of intensifying use. It was about a 'cottage district' with approximately 1000 square metres of land, which was built in 1880 after a competition with 196 houses next to the River Elbe. The non-profit construction company from 1878, a philanthropic company led by the shipping company Rob. M. Sloman, tried to turn former tenants into proud owners. The houses could be bought cheaply (without the building company's right of repurchase) and were subsequently quickly sold as speculative objects (several prices) at significantly higher prices.⁵² Schumacher considers the overriding reasons of housing policy to accommodate the tenants affected by the renovation in the southern part of the old town, such as the accommodation of dock workers, as a priority. The older building stock was demolished and replaced by housing estates with small flats for dock labourers. The shape of the new blocks, open spaces, materials (red brick) and flat roofs were specified in order to give the neighbourhood a uniform appearance. At Jarrestadt, which was developed at the end of the 1920s against the backdrop of the economic crisis, it was a matter of redesigning a new residential area and many renowned Hamburg architects were involved. Within the framework of Schumacher's model plans, the architects' imagination was to be directed towards questions of 'extreme economy of the architectural disposition'.⁵³ (Figure 7)

However, the new housing estates only reached the target group of workers to a limited extent. The rent for new buildings was significantly higher than for older ones, which made them unaffordable for the many workers' families.⁵⁴ Schumacher attached particular importance to schools. He himself designed more than 30 schools⁵⁵ and considered 'the school to be an instrument of folk culture'. It could 'become decisive for the spirit of the built resolve in an entire area and grow up into the nurturer of its surroundings'.⁵⁶ The main effect should be that it became the educator of young pupils.

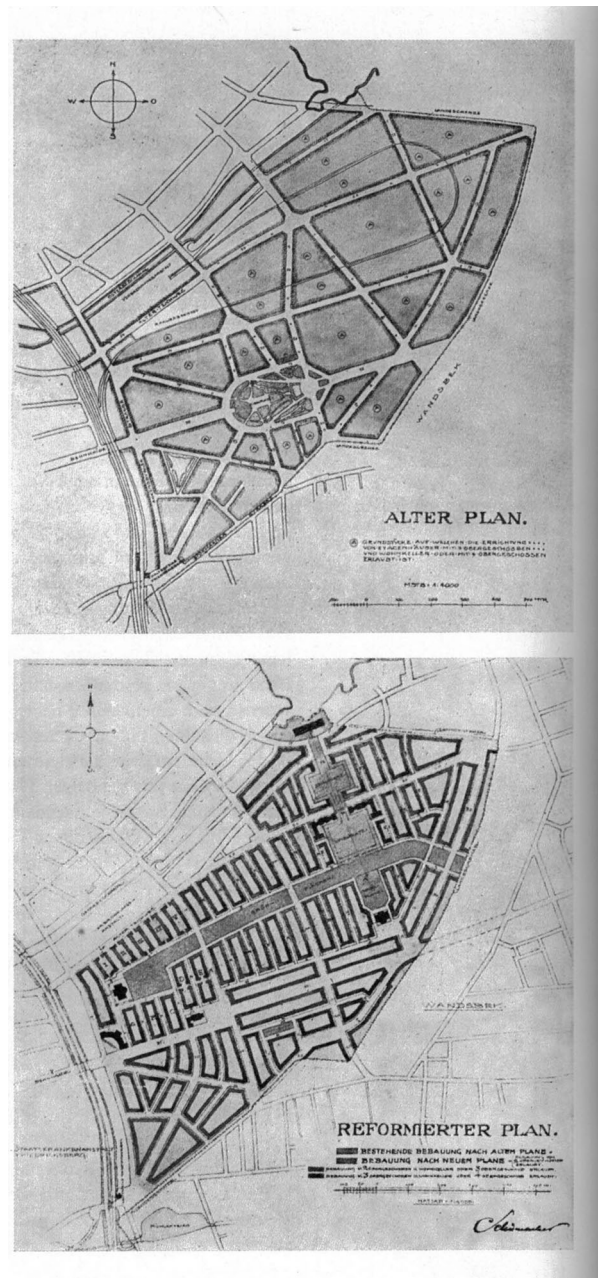


Figure 5. Old and reformed Plan for the Dulsberg Area (Schumacher, Fritz, Das Werden einer Wohnstadt, Hamburg 1932).

He travelled a lot by bus to show guests 'his' new buildings and living quarters that, were visited by locals often on Sunday walks. Foreign city planners and architects visited Schumacher in Hamburg to study his plans. The Prince of Wales visited the new Hamburg housing blocks incognito and Patrick Abercrombie was allowed to hear critical comments about the London slums. The Americans

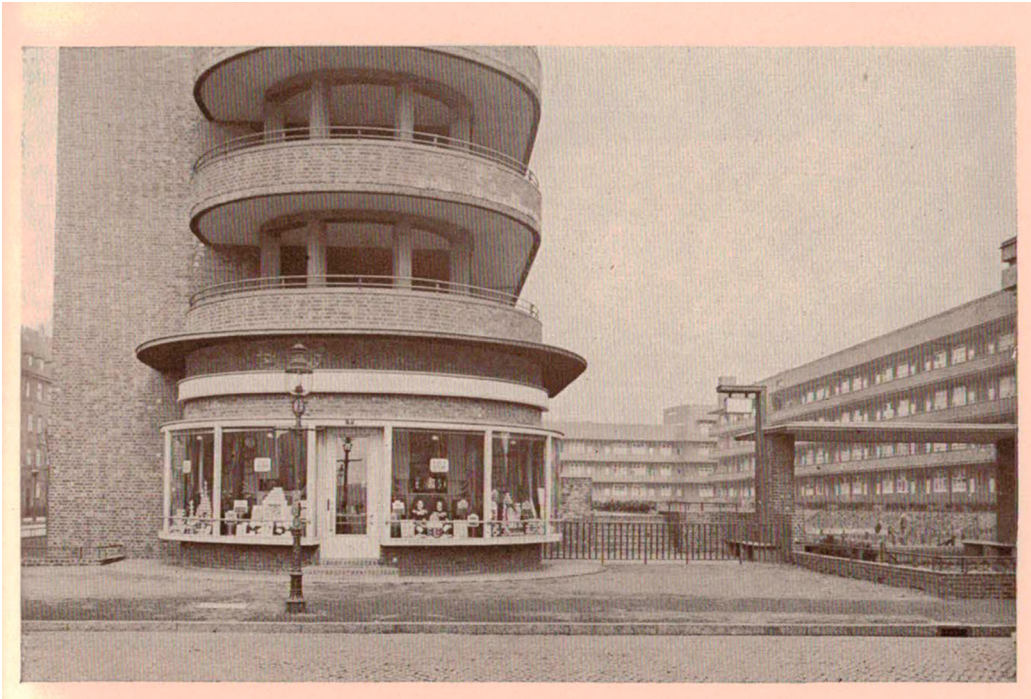


Figure 6. Blocks in the Dulsberg estate with balcony access and shops on the ground floor (Architect Paul A.R. Frank) (Schumacher, Fritz, *Das Werden einer Wohnstadt*, 1932).

John Nolen and Lewis Mumford visiting Hamburg, on the other hand, were more concerned with urban planning issues.⁵⁷

An (un)known life's work and a continuing local influence

In summary, Schumacher proves to be a considerate, prudent and comprehensive reformer, without the radicalness that was practised elsewhere and met with little acceptance. Schumacher's main concern was (affordable) small flats and thus a piece of social reform, specifically the integration of workers into society by means of (small) apartments as well as exemplary housing and urban development. However, Schumacher always had the whole city in mind and did not limit himself to building new satellite developments on the periphery, but equally pursued an ongoing reform of the old city. The new housing on the periphery, the 'new living culture', the 'new building development' and the 'islands of modernity', the 'ring around Hamburg's old body' was not enough for Schumacher, he also wanted to transform the old, existing urban fabric. An undertaking which was far more difficult than the construction of new housing due to the existing ownership structure. Schumacher's goal was the reform of the city into a better city, and in achieving this goal he proved to be an ambitious radical reformer rather than a revolutionary.

Schumacher – the 'serious hard worker'⁵⁸ – as he was aptly characterized by a Dutch colleague – linked different spatial scales (from apartment to city region) and thematic aspects (from building material to design) in order to reform – not abolish – the metropolis. Now he would probably be known as a workhorse or workaholic who would be multi-tasking in the evenings while his sister read to him, working on plans and amendments which were drawn up by his employees the next day.



Figure 7. Playground and pool in Dulsberg-Süd (Blocks with balcony access in the background, Architects: Paul A. R. Frank, Hermann Frank) (Architekten – und Ingenieurverein zu Hamburg (ed.) *Hamburg und seine Bauten*, Hamburg 1929).

Schumacher in 1932 summed up his work on housing reform⁵⁹ and in 1947, shortly before his death, he wrote: ‘The ultimate issue of folk culture is therefore the issue of housing that we face in the context of the problem with the city. We came from a time when the state of our culture was measured in terms of its best performance in the field of housing. We are entering a time whose cultural state will be measured by the worst housing it allows to develop.’⁶⁰

The impressive breadth of his field of activities, ranging from stage sets to regional planning, reflects his work as an architect, urban planner, regional planner and writer. Around 65,000 apartments were built between 1919 and 1933, that is around 7,000–10,000 units per year, of which over 90% were publicly funded. This is an increase of approximately 1% each year in housing stock per inhabitant. Many of these estates will celebrate their 100th anniversary in the next few years.

There are many reasons why the innovative projects in Hamburg should not radiate beyond the region in the way the Bauhaus did. Schumacher not only left behind buildings and plans for Hamburg, but also a large number of written works, ranging from art and cultural policy to urban planning, arts and crafts, theatre and literature.⁶¹ On the occasion of his 60th birthday in 1929 he was described as ‘reverent’, with ‘untiring creative power’, as a ‘capable organizer’ and ‘leader nature’.⁶²

Additionally, he served on many juries for architectural and urban planning competitions in other cities. After 1933, the ‘apolitical’ building director suppressed comments on specialist politics, but was still undisputedly regarded as an authority in the background, and he focused on literary activities.⁶³ He studied Shakespeare, for example, and as an admirer of Goethe, he borrowed his metaphor of ‘architecture being coagulated music’ and published three of Goethe’s texts in an anthology.⁶⁴

Schumacher knew how to cultivate his habitus as a broadly educated leader. His nephew, also named Fritz Schumacher, the economist who was to shape the slogan ‘small is beautiful’ characterized his uncle as follows: ‘Uncle Fritz was an authority on Goethe and a distinguished and influential professor of architecture and town planning, eventually to redesign and rebuild a considerable part of Hamburg and Cologne.’⁶⁵

Between 1933 and 1942, he managed to write ten books, skilfully and eloquently avoiding conflicts with Nazi censorship. Like few other architects and urban planners, Schumacher documented and published his own work in a timely and continuous manner, with many commentaries by other authors (Figure 8).



Figure 8. Bombed housing blocks in the Barmbek-Nord area (yellow completely destroyed, dark orange conditional total loss, red severe damage etc.) (HCU <https://www.hcu-hamburg.de/it-und-medien/kartographie/>).

Many buildings and parts of the settlements planned by Schumacher were completely or partially destroyed in the Second World War. Shortly after the German capitulation in May 1945, he was asked – seriously ill – in October as the nestor of urban planning for a lecture in which he was asked to explain his ideas for the reconstruction of Hamburg. He spoke of an ‘apocalyptic event that broke out over us’ and demanded that of course the areas that had arisen after the First World War had to be rebuilt first.⁶⁶

Schumacher had always been a visionary and pragmatic, a reformer and realist at the same time. Perhaps this quote best characterizes his work; in 1932, shortly before he left the building authority, he wrote: ‘Don’t despise me for wishing! It is a tremendous force in life. It is not the wishing of a general and indeterminate kind that aim to amass good and beautiful things like in a fairy tale, but the wishing that emanates from the peculiarities and circumstances of reality and that has the courage to consider the path of its realization in all directions all the way to the end.’⁶⁷

Schumacher’s œuvre and its full impact are not specific to Hamburg, but are integrated into the regional, national and international discourse on the reform of the metropolis. His ideas, his concepts for reform, his methods and his ability to ensure that the plans are implemented promptly, are current and forward-looking. ‘One must shape one’s intentions in such a way that they can be realized.’⁶⁸ Recent surveys have shown that many citizens still associate their hometown mainly with the brick tradition, the ‘red Hamburg’ and the housing estates from the 1920s and 1930s, Hamburg’s unique feature.

While many aspects of Schumacher’s life’s work in Hamburg have been sufficiently analysed, there are still unanswered questions about comparative perspectives on models of modernity abroad that were implemented by other architects and urban planners. This competent conclusion reflects another perspective: ‘Between 1918 and 1933 some 65,000 housing units were built under the aegis of the Social Democratic government. This had a far greater impact on the reality of modern design and planning than, say, the oft-touted housing complex of the Weissenhof Siedlung in Stuttgart.’⁶⁹ Why did the impact of his complex intellectual edifice remain predominantly local, why did it not affect the relevant national and international circles and conferences? Why did he not flirt with names like modernist architect or modern Hamburg, but left these labels to other architects and planners? We can only answer these questions if we free ourselves from the restriction and radicalization of existing positions and contemplate the diversity of modernity.

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1. Voigt, Deschermeier, and Schmal (eds.), *Neuer Mensch, Neue Wohnung*.
2. Huse, *Moderne Architektur in der Weimarer Republik*.
3. *Tendenzen der Zwanziger Jahre*.
4. Landesdenkmalamt Berlin im Auftrag der Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung Berlin (Hrsg.), Winfried Brenne (Projektleitung): *Siedlungen der Berliner Moderne. Nominierung zur Aufnahme in die Welterbeliste der UNESCO*.
5. Frank, (ed.) *Fritz Schumacher*; Hipp, *Wohnstadt Hamburg*; and Kayser, *Fritz Schumacher*.
6. Schumacher, *Das Werden*, 12.
7. Schumacher, *Probleme der Großstadt*, 9.
8. *Ibid*, 43, 43.
9. *Ibid*, 24.
10. Schumacher, *Ein Volkspark*.
11. Schumacher, *Die Kleinwohnung*; Schumacher, *Hamburgs Wohnungspolitik*.
12. Data from: *Handwörterbuch des Wohnungswesens* (ed.), *Deutscher Verein für Wohnungsreform e.V.*, 114, 121.
13. Eberstadt, *Handbuch*, 6.
14. NSCH VI A12, Großstadt Hygiene
15. Schumacher, „Hamburgs bauliche Entwicklung,“ 70.
16. Hartmann, *Deutsche Gartenstadtbewegung*, 50.
17. Schumacher, *Rundblicke*, 329.
18. *Ibid.*, 57.
19. Schumacher, „Die staatliche Kleinhaus-Siedlung,“ Clasen, *Die Hamburger Staatssiedlung Langenhorn*.
20. Schumacher and Arnzt, *Köln*.
21. Geddes, *Cities in Evolution*.
22. Meller, *Patrick Geddes*, 179.
23. Fritz-Schumacher-Gesellschaft e.V., *Fritz Schumacher in Köln*.
24. Schumacher and Arnzt, *Köln*, 15.
25. *Ibid* 16.
26. *Ibid*, no page number.
27. Genzmer, „Köln,“ 481.
28. Corr. Adenauer to Schumacher from 12. 2. 1946, FSI Hamburg.
29. Staatsarchiv Hamburg 731–8 A 769 Schumacher, Fritz.
30. Schumacher, *Stufen des Lebens*, 431.
31. See documents on entering retirement dated 3 May 1933: Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Hamburg Carl von Ossietzky, NSCH: VIII: E02: 1a-b and E 02: 4–9.
32. Schumacher, „Großhamburg als wohnungspolitische Frage,“ 37.
33. Schumacher, „Die Marsch als Wohnland,“ 61/62; Schumacher, „Groß-Hamburg als städtebauliche Aufgabe,“ 185–90.
34. Timm, „Der preußische Generalsiedlungsplan,“ 75–125.
35. Schumacher, „Großhamburg als wohnungspolitische Frage Aufgabe“.
36. Schubert, *Die Herausbildung der Regional- und Landesplanung*, 211–34.
37. Preußische Staatshäfen, 1925.
38. Hohlbein, „Harburg-Wilhelmsburg,“ 69.
39. Ockert, „Der Hamburgisch-Preußische Landesplanungsausschuss,“ 15–23.
40. Schumacher, *Das Gebiet Unterelbe-Hamburg*, 1932; Schumacher, *Wesen und Organisation der Landesplanung*, 1932.
41. Schumacher, *Wesen und Organisation*, und Schumacher, Fritz, *Das Gebiet Unterelbe-Hamburg im Rahmen der Neugliederung des Reiches*.
42. Schumacher, *Rundblicke*, 56, 233.
43. Schumacher, *Großstadt*, 1947, different text in the edition from 1940, 99–100.
44. Schumacher, *Großstadt*, 1947, 99–100.
45. Seifert, *Vom künstlerischen Despotismus zum städtebaulichen Dirigieren*, 52–64.

46. Schumacher, *Großstadt*, 82.
47. Schumacher, *Probleme*, 80, 82. „Niederschrift des Preisgerichts,“ Wohnungsamt I, 48e.
48. Schubert, „Fritz Schumacher in Hamburg 1909–1933“.
49. Schubert, „Fritz Schumacher,“ 76.
50. Schumacher, *Erziehung*, 37.
51. Schumacher, *Erziehung*, 39.
52. Spörhase, *Bau-Verein zu Hamburg*, 91.
53. Schumacher, *Zeitfragen der Architektur*, 93.
54. Hipp, „Wohnungen für Arbeiter?“.
55. Meyn, *Die Entwicklungsgeschichte des Hamburger Schulbaus*.
56. Schumacher, *Erziehung durch Umwelt*, 30.
57. Schumacher, *Selbstgespräche*, 44.
58. Bergeijk, „Fritz Schumacher“.
59. Schumacher, *Das Werden*.
60. Schumacher, *Erziehung*, 61.
61. Kayser, *Fritz Schumacher*.
62. Anonym, „Fritz Schumacher zu seinem 60. Geburtstag,“ 753–4.
63. Schumacher, *Selbstgespräche*, 86.
64. Schumacher, *Der Geist der Baukunst*.
65. Wood, *Alias Papa*, 5. Kurzweg, <http://fritzschumacher.de/gesellschaft/stammbaum/>
66. Talk „Fritz Schumacher redet.“ Der Wiederaufbau Hamburgs, 10. Oktober 1945.
67. Schumacher, *Wesen und Organisation*, 44.
68. Schumacher, *Großstadt*, 33.
69. Zukowsky, (ed.), *Building in Germany*, 113.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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