THE CULTURAL LEGACY OF

WIESBADEN

THE NINETEENTH CENTURY’S SOCIETY SPA
The cultural legacy of Wiesbaden

The nineteenth century’s society spa
WIESBADEN - “Wiesbaden has done me a lot of good.”

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe to Carl Friedrich Zelter, 1815
Preface – Even today, Wiesbaden still fascinates its visitors. It is a city founded for a reason that still holds good after more than two thousand years, and that has been the cause of unprecedented, and at the time breathtaking, developments in the 19th century. It was the combination of the healing waters, the climate and the scenery that caused Johann Wolfgang von Goethe to state that Wiesbaden had done him “a lot of good”. For many generations the people of Wiesbaden made the most of this opportunity. They pursued a consistent urban development policy, keeping one object in view: to create a “beautiful city”, a city of diversion and social exchange. By the time WWI broke out, the small spa town that Wiesbaden had been in the year 1800, with its population of barely more than 2,000, had become “the world’s spa”, a place like no other – a spa city numbering more than 100,000 inhabitants. The international appeal of the large spa towns, and their development into places of communication first and foremost, were interrelated, and this was especially true of Wiesbaden. The innovative Kurhaus building of 1810 quickly brought widespread recognition, and within a hundred years a city had developed that was unblemished by industrial facilities but always ready to adopt modern concepts of urban planning. It also offered the opportunity to establish and cultivate social contacts beyond those permitted by the conventions of life in the capital: the aristocracy and the aspiring middle class were closer here than anywhere else. Even today Wiesbaden is overwhelmingly shaped by the 19th century both in its urban layout and its buildings; in many places the clientele of the “luxury city”, the routes once strolled down by flâneur politicians and artists, can still be traced. From our awareness of the city’s special status, the idea has taken shape over recent years that Wiesbaden, the 19th century’s “global spa”, should apply for recognition as a World Cultural Heritage site. This distinction would focus attention on our cultural legacy as nothing else could, and with it on the international attitude and the principle of peaceful communication that are inseparably bound up with it.
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HISTORY OF THE CITY: AN OVERVIEW
As early as the Neolithic period, around 3000 BC, the emergence of hot mineral springs in a climatically favoured hollow south of the Taunus hills had attracted settlers to the area of today’s city of Wiesbaden. The geographical location and the springs have remained essential features of the developing town ever since.

Over many centuries the town’s geographical location and hot springs have played a major part in shaping the development of Wiesbaden.

In the first century BC, the Romans built an outpost fort on the eastern bank of the Rhine. It served their garrison at Mainz, close to the region of the springs, which was at the time inhabited by a tribe of the Germanic Chatti, the Mattiaci. After the troops had been moved forward to the Limes early in the 2nd century, the civilian settlement, by now thoroughly Romanised and known as “Aqua Mattiacorum”, became the chief town of an administrative area east of the Rhine (“Civitas Mattiacorum”). A flourishing provincial Roman town with mineral springs that were widely known even in Classical times thanks to a mention in Pliny’s Naturalis historia, it soon came to boast several thermal baths – a fact confirmed by archaeological excavations.

The settlement survived both the advance of the Alemanni and the abandonment of the Rhine border by the Romans in the 3rd to 5th centuries, and in Frankish times it became the centre of the district of Königsoordagau and the location of a fortified royal manor. In 828/29 Einhard, the biographer of Charlemagne, first used its new name of “Wisibada” (usually interpreted to mean “baths in the meadows”). The Carolingian era also saw the building of the first church of St Mauritius in the centre of the settlement’s old core. The adjoining castle precinct was further strengthened by the building of a keep in the 9th/10th centuries. From the late Middle Ages onwards, Wiesbaden was a minor residence belonging to the counts of Nassau, and until the 13th century it even enjoyed a spell as an imperial city. By the year 1370, no less than sixteen bathhouses were available to sufferers wishing to benefit from the medicinal springs.

In 1507–1510, the south-eastern areas were enclosed within a city wall. Two disastrous fires in 1547 and 1561 destroyed a large number of medieval buildings; nevertheless the town recovered quickly, in part probably thanks to its many spa visitors – only to be devastated again, and temporarily depopulated, in 1644 in the course of the Thirty Years’ War. In balneological literature Wiesbaden had established its place by the early 17th century, which furthered the upturn of its spa business in the period that followed, despite a number of war-related setbacks. From 1690 onwards the city walls were rebuilt, now enclosing the thermal springs and bathhouses (“Sauerland”) too. All around the town, gardens and green spaces
were laid out with footpaths for the use of spa visitors. When Prince Karl of Nassau-Usingen decided, in 1744, to move the chief residence of the house of Nassau to his new palace of Biebrich on the Rhine just outside of Wiesbaden, the decision was of some importance to the town. Numerous ministries took up residence in the old palace in the castle precinct. The spa business responded instantaneously, several bathhouses and inns embarked on conversions and renovations to cater for a new type of spa visitor, expecting a different kind of service. The growing demand for comfort and sophisticated entertainment heralded the rise of the "society spa". Around the turn of the 18th/19th century, Wiesbaden with its population of about 2,500 was the most populous town in the Nassau territory, catering for an average of 5,000 to 6,000 spa visitors per year. However, urban life was still concentrated in the space enclosed by the city walls.

Almost overnight, Wiesbaden became the seat of numerous administrative bodies of the new duchy of Nassau in 1806, and later its capital city.

Things changed with the political upheaval of the Napoleonic era and Nassau’s elevation to the rank of a duchy in 1806. Almost overnight Wiesbaden became the seat of even more administrative bodies, those of the new state, and in 1816 it was chosen as the capital city of Nassau.
George Barnard: Social life at the rear of the Kurhaus, 1843
Wiesbaden’s new status as a political and administrative centre, together with its favourable geographical location and long tradition as a spa town, provided the starting point for an unprecedented urban development over the course of the 19th and early 20th centuries. The crucial part played by the “society spa” in this process is illustrated by the first Kurhaus equipped with gambling rooms, built 1808–10 outside of the municipal border; with the surrounding green spaces it provided the spa business with a new and prestigious centre. Very soon large hotel and theatre buildings attached themselves to the new spa district. The demolition of the city walls, completed in 1820, opened up the old town’s settlement area in all directions, and provided the space needed for the young duchy’s administrative buildings and barracks. Next came numerous prestigious municipal buildings, schools and churches. In 1838/39 Wiesbaden was connected to the railway network. The new town palace, built 1837–1843, was situated in the old castle precinct. The Russian-Orthodox church on the slopes of Neroberg hill, the burial place of the prematurely deceased wife of Duke Adolph of Nassau, bears testimony to Wiesbaden’s close ties with the Russian Empire. The town expansion was conducted methodically and in accordance with the specifications drawn up by the duchy’s architects, Carl Florian Goetz, Christian Zais, and their successors. Aided by the inducements and tax privileges offered to new residents by the authorities, they created the groundwork of systematic growth, which continued – still on the basis of the Nassau architects’ specifications – even after the Prussian annexation of the duchy in 1866. Wiesbaden compensated for the loss of its status as a capital city by marketing itself very successfully as “the world’s spa”; the regular visits by the Prussian-German emperors, Wilhelm I and Wilhelm II, added to the glamour of social life at the spa up to the year 1914.

Wiesbaden compensated for the loss of its status as capital city of the duchy of Nassau by marketing itself, with huge success, as “the world’s spa”.

Between 1800 and 1900, the population of Wiesbaden had doubled at a fairly regular rate of about two decades each time, reaching 100,000 shortly after 1900. In the course of one century the compact spa town had become a spa city of international renown, hosting about 200,000 visitors annually during the first decade of the twentieth century.

The outbreak of WWI in 1914 was a turning point for Wiesbaden, signifying as it did the decline of the upper-class spa culture with its large percentage of international visitors. It took the city a long time to recover, especially in budge-
Thermal and mineral springs at Wiesbaden

Thermal water taps at the Kochbrunnentempel

1. Salm-Quelle
2. Kochbrunnen
3. Spiegelquelle
4. Kranzquelle
5. Adlerquellen
6. Römerquelle
7. Pariser-Hof-Quelle - Gold.-Kreuz-Quelle
8. Sonnenbrunnen-Quelle
9. Dre-Linden-Quelle
10. Goldene Kette - Stern-Quelle
11. Bären-Quelle
13. Gold-Brunnen-Quelle
14. Bäckerbrunnenquelle
15. Goldenes-Ross-Quelle
16. Quelle Häfnergasse 12
17. Quelle Goldgasse 1-3
18. Wilhelm-Heilanstalt-Quelle
19. Schützenhofquelle - Am Schützenhofbad
20. Gemeindebad-Quelle
21. Faulbrunnen
22. Schwarzer Bock Brunnen
23. Bäckerbrunnen-Zapfstelle

Thermal and mineral springs at Wiesbaden

At present, Wiesbaden has a population of around 276,000, and remains a popular destination for tourists from both Germany and abroad.

In the decades that followed, the trade fair and conference industry, as well as the influx of service providers and federal agencies, steadily gained in importance next to the spa business. At present Wiesbaden is a city of around 276,000 inhabitants tending upwards, home to a university (Hochschule Rhein-Main) and departments of the European Business School, and enjoying great popularity with tourists from both Germany and abroad.
THE SOCIETY SPA –
WIESBADEN AS THE PARADIGM
OF A PHENOMENON

by Thomas Weichel
The character of the spa town changed after the late 18th century. For a long time it was a case of "he who sins, must go to a spa." In the post-Roman era, the search for healing of diseases, which were often the result of an unhealthy lifestyle, was the main reason for visiting a spa resort, where the facilities usually offered little or nothing in the way of luxury.

The “society spa”, seeing and being seen, was more important in the fashionable spa of the 19th century than the health aspects.

Already during the Ancien Régime, the town of Spa in what is today Belgium was a meeting place of the European aristocracy, and gained a significance similar to that of the English Bath, whose planned facilities are still highly impressive. This trend was clearly perceived at the time and Wiesbaden seized the opportunity at a very early stage. During the Napoleonic era, when Wiesbaden became the capital of the duchy of Nassau, the construction of the “Gesellschaftshaus”, or assembly rooms, brought a change in paradigm from the medieval healing spa to the society spa of the 19th century. The building, which only received the name “Kurhaus” later, did not have spa facilities. It served exclusively social purposes. Even its location, far away from the thermal springs, is testament to its programme: the provision of rooms and representative open spaces as a meeting point for the spa society, for whom the thermal springs were often merely a side show.

The chances offered by this trend were also recognised at an early stage outside of Wiesbaden. The city began to attract foreign capital, most of which went into building hotels. The earliest example is the Hotel Vierjahreszeiten designed by Christian Zais and built around 1820, which became the model for luxury hotels throughout Europe, and gained a significance similar to that of the Gesellschaftshaus, also designed by Zais, as a building a pioneer of its type and a meeting place for the wealthy classes who were seeking mainly communication and entertainment.

An important element of the amusement was gambling, which Wiesbaden – as had happened in Baden-Baden – soon put in the hands of a French casino tenant whose job also included providing all of the entertainment for the spa visitors. The analysis of the spa lists shows how within just a few years Wiesbaden became a leading spa resort that confirmed Goethe’s high estimation of the city in the best possible way. The city became one of those “Salons de l’Europe”, as the international spa expert Dominique Jarrassé called the exclusive spa resorts of the time. The attractiveness was reflected in growing numbers of visitors – always with a high proportion of foreigners whose religious needs were catered for by the building of the Anglican Church and the Russian-Orthodox Church. This was not only a burial church, but was deliberately built at a prominent position on Wiesbaden’s local mountain as a signal of internationality.

Wiesbaden was not only highly attractive to spa visitors – foreign investors also made a contribution towards the rapid development of the spa resort.

The colourful social drama of the spa season is probably described nowhere more impressively than by Dostoyevsky, who gambled his last money in Wiesbaden,
in his novel The Gambler. When the casino was closed down by Prussian legislation in 1872, this was by no means the end of Wiesbaden’s influential role in the European spa sector – the “society spa” remained an engine of growth which eventually turned the town into a city. We can see Wiesbaden in this period as a “venue for international human exhibition”, as it is described in the play Das goldene Kalb by the women’s rights activist Hedwig Dohm, which premiered in the Boulevard Theatre in Berlin in 1879. The idea of Wiesbaden as a place of social intercourse and “match-making” was so widespread that the author was able to play with it in different ways. The spa as a social stage became the subject matter on the stage of the theatre.

Around 1910 Wiesbaden was by far the spa resort with the most visitors – a “spa metropolis” with over 100,000 inhabitants.

The “global spa” of Wiesbaden had long been independent of casino operation and cleverly took advantage of a series of trends at the time. Alongside its international clientele, Wiesbaden was also increasingly attracting a socially broader, German public, to which the regular visits of Emperor Wilhelm I and later Wilhelm II made a significant contribution. Industrialisation and the growing prosperity of society gave the advantaged middle classes the chance of visiting the glamorous city of Wiesbaden themselves. The spa became the counterpoint to an increasingly condensed working life. No longer an enclave of otherwise prohibited gambling, but a protective space for the necessary relaxation which went with the “healing programme”, the uncondensed rhythm of the cure. The society spa reached its climax around the turn of the 20th century. This trend is indicated by increasing numbers of spa visitors and new society buildings such as the theatre and the new Kurhaus. And new grand hotels such as the Nassauer Hof, the Palast Hotel or the Hotel Rose provided not only the height of luxury, but also created their own worlds of communication. Anyone could get an overview of potentially interesting contacts in the “Badeblatt”, the spa bulletin, which listed all newly arrived spa visitors.

The curtain came down on the stage of the “global spa” with the start of the First World War. The concept of the spa resort for European guests and the German middle classes as a social phenomenon was lost in the rush of nationalism and the collective destruction of wealth.
TOWN PLANNING AND LANDSCAPE DESIGN FOR THE SPA SOCIETY

by Martin Horsten
In the 18th century, Wiesbaden began to emerge as a sophisticated spa town. In 1824-1827, the Palais von Hagen was built on today’s Paulinenhang, to the north of the Kurhaus and assembly rooms. Together with the Haus Bermbach, built in its immediate vicinity on Cansteinberg, it initiated the methodical construction of villas all around the Wiesbaden town centre. It was, however, only after the town had been connected to the railway network in 1839, and the first railway station built, that the sunny Taunus slopes were increasingly studded with “Landhäuser”, as this type of residence was called until well into the 1860s to describe its specific, supposedly rural characteristics.

In 1843 the dowager Duchess Pauline commissioned a residence on the site of the demolished Palais von Hagen, the first member of the ruling family normally resident in Biebrich am Rhein to move to the new capital.

Town planning and urban building are inseparably linked with landscaping and the art of the garden. The various functions of urban life were methodically distributed to fit the unique topographical conditions. The starting point of urban development was the area of mineral springs surrounding what is today’s Kochbrunnenplatz square, right at the foot of the Taunus hills – already known for its therapeutic properties by the Mattiaci, and later developed by the Romans. It was not long before numerous bathing facilities and inns established themselves, later followed by hotels offering their own spas, and service providers in the spa business. For centuries the spa facilities were among the prime sources of income for the slowly growing town, part of the county of Nassau, which had finally reached a population of a little over 2,200 around the year 1800.

The elevation of Nassau to the rank of a duchy in 1806 initiated a process of urban development that has remained unique among European spa towns. Duke Friedrich August was well aware of the commercial relevance of the hot springs and the health and spa business for the development of the town. He commissioned Christian Zais to draw up plans for a town expansion that would on the one hand reflect Wiesbaden’s new function as the young duchy’s capital and seat of government, providing an appropriate setting, and on the other would re-structure and beautify the town, enabling it to be developed into an international spa and health resort.

In 1818, Zais submitted a comprehensive report and a plan. The core element was the creation of a pentagon of streets to give structure to the irregular medieval town, create a regular geometric layout and fill it in with newly constructed buildings in a sober neo-Classical style. The introduction of a grid system was a common element in early 19th-century town expansion plans, both in Europe and elsewhere in the world. The choice of a pentagonal shape, however, was a skilful and Wiesbaden-specific decision reflecting the town’s topographical situation at the foot of the Taunus slopes. It allowed the reconciliation of Langgasse street, running in a curve from the south-west to the north-east, with a grid of perimeter blocks expanding uphill towards the north-west – the area that was to become the Bergkirchenviertel neighbourhood. New streets were laid out orthogonally. Residences were built for the officials of the Nassau administration. To the east of the old centre, Zais positioned the new Kursaal to serve as the social hub of fashionable spa life. In this he also laid the foundation of the gradual extension of the spa district with the Bowling Green, colonnades and Kurpark.

With a view to the requirements of spa visitors and future inhabitants of the town, hoped and expected to belong to the affluent classes, Zais recommended the building of mansions designed for upper-class living on the slope to the north of today’s Sonnenberger Straße. In 1824-1827, the Palais von Hagen was built on today’s Paulinenhang, to the north of the Kurhaus and assembly rooms. Together with the Haus Bermbach, built in its immediate vicinity on Cansteinberg, it initiated the methodical construction of villas all around the Wiesbaden town centre. It was, however, only after the town had been connected to the railway network in 1839, and the first railway station built, that the sunny Taunus slopes were increasingly studded with “Landhäuser”, as this type of residence was called until well into the 1860s to describe its specific, supposedly rural characteristics.

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The commitment of the Wiesbaden élite regarding the methodical conversion of their town into a residential and spa town, and the determination — in part no doubt inspired by commercial considerations — to increase its attractiveness as a resort even further, is impressively demonstrated by the activities of the first town beautification society ("Verein zur Verschönerung der Umgebung Wiesbadens"), founded in 1843. This association promoted the concept of designing the town in its entirety appear like a vast landscape park.

The picturesque effect created by the merging of public and private green spaces remained the predominant design principle of the elegant residential areas.

The effect was a certain „urbanisation“ of the “villa“ type of building, with the plots of land narrowing, the front gardens decreasing in size, the main gardens increasingly laid out at the rear. This altered their effect within the street. The range of design choices in both form and building material was enormous. A crucial element in the interplay of public space and private plot was provided by the see-through fences of the private gardens. The picturesque effect created by the merging of both remained the predominant design principle of the elegant residential areas, just as Thelemann had intended.

Over the course of the 19th century, Wiesbaden was transformed into a glamorous residential and spa town. The aim was to make the town in its entirety appear like a vast landscape park.
Die touristische Erschließung der „Kurlandschaft“
Waldwegkarte von 1905

Der Gartenarchitekt als Stadtplaner: Carl Friedrich Thelemann
Generalplan der Stadt und Umgebung von Wiesbaden, 1862
The Protestant Marktkirche finally granted its own planning sovereignty in 1860. Alexander Fach, from 1863 to 1873 the first “Stadtbaurmeister” (planning and building director), submitted an expansion and development plan immediately after the victory over France in 1871. It promoted the creation of a generously proportioned ring road; this, however, was not embarked on until 1894. In the years that followed, the “Ring” – which ultimately was never completed – was to become a particularly prominent part of the urban structure.

From the 1880s onwards the town was distinguished, as it were, by constant building on a very large scale. Population had, once again, almost doubled in the past 26 years; it was now at 50,283. As well as a large number of residential buildings in the town expansion areas, some of which had been planned to include front gardens, numerous prestigious public buildings (theatre,
railway station, town hall) sprang up. Notable architects were at work, among them Georg Hauberrisser, Fritz Klingholz and the firm of Fehlner & Helmer. Friedrich von Thiersch designed the new Kurhaus, Johannes Otzen built the Bergkirche, his first Predigerkirche ("Dominican" church) with a cruciform central plan, and later developed the "Wiesbaden Programme" exemplified in the Ringkirche; it was to lead the way in Protestant church architecture. The same principles were observed by Friedrich Pützer in his Lutherkirche, built to the west of the new central station to provide a point de vue for the Oranienstraße axis.

**Around 1900, Wiesbaden resembled a huge construction site. At the same time, however, it enjoyed its heyday as a stage for the sophisticated “spa society”**.

In the decades around 1900, 26 brickworks were in operation in and around Wiesbaden; remains of only two of them have survived today. A rough estimate suggests that between 1871 and 1910, approximately four billion bricks were produced there to supply the numerous building sites in the city. These numbers alone bring home the gigantic logistical feat achieved during that time. For decades on end, and with business in full swing, Wiesbaden resembled a construction site. It nevertheless became the meeting place of European society during those years. Between 1880 and 1905, its population doubled once again, finally crossing the threshold of 100,000. Wiesbaden was now officially "Großstadt" – a spa city.

The last innovative contribution to the city's urban development in the waning years of the 19th century was made by Felix Genzmer, building director of Wiesbaden since 1894. Genzmer considered the chief task of modern city planning to be the solution of urban-constructional and hygienic problems. At the same time, he was a proponent of artistic, or picturesque, town planning as propagated by Camillo Sitte in his survey on the principles of urban planning ("Der Städtebau nach seinen künstlerischen Grundsätzen"), published in 1899. In accordance with these guidelines, streets were laid out not invariably at right angles; curves and open squares were introduced to render urban space more varied and attractive. Closed rows of buildings were utilised to create squares and other spaces of differing character but invariably considerable quality.

Genzmer also initiated the "furnishing" of streets, squares and parks with picturesque small structures – kiosks, pavilions, but also, among other items, embellished gas distribution boxes. He caused pavements to be ornamented with elaborate mosaic in multicoloured small stones, but he also continued the policy, so vital to the green cityscape, of visually merging the avenue-like street spaces and private front gardens. It was in Genzmer's time that the parks in Nerotal (1897/98) and Dambachtal (1898/99) were created.

In architectural matters, Genzmer propagated the unity of form and function, and opposed an arbitrary, purely decorative use of "historicist" styles. With his demands for an authentic use of building materials, and his attention to matters of architectural colour in particular, he was very much in line with contemporary discussions on architecture. Of his own architectural work in the city, one of the most notable examples is the 1901/02 foyer of the court theatre (today Staats-Theater), of which only the interior remains. It was built to provide an appropriate setting for the May festival of music cherished by the German imperial family. Two imposing schools, Gutenbergschule and Blücherschule, and the mock-Roman Römertor serve as landmarks within the cityscape. Genzmer’s abattoir building at the southern entrance to the city, next to the railway station, was designed with the aesthetic demands of spa and court society in mind. It has since been demolished with the sole exception of its water tower.

For the development of the cityscape as it presents itself to the eye today, Felix Genzmer was without doubt among the most notable architects and town planners to have worked here. Next to him, Christian Zais must be mentioned who created the guidelines and laid the foundation for the "ordered" 19th-century town (the Pentagon and the concept of the mansion districts) as must Alexander Fach (Ringstraße). In 1903 Genzmer was appointed full professor of Technische Hochschule of Berlin-Charlottenburg. As Sigrid Russ has justly observed in 1988, it was Genzmer who perfected the image of Wiesbaden in the spirit of the 19th century – and very much in the service of the force that drove the city's development, the fashionable spa business.
ARCHITECTURE AND GARDEN ART: WIESBADEN’S LEGACY IN THE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURIES

by Martin Horsten
In the reappraisal of 19th-century architecture, Wiesbaden played a leading part.

Among the fashionable resorts of the 19th century, Wiesbaden is alone in having accomplished its development into a modern city without losing its identity as a spa.

Wiesbaden is one among only a few German towns and cities that survived the devastations of WWII with comparatively little damage. By international standards, too, Wiesbaden is an outstanding heritage area with regard to the number and value of surviving historical layout features and buildings. Among the fashionable resorts of the 19th century, Wiesbaden is the only one that accomplished its development into a modern city without losing its identity as a spa. Dukes of Nassau, Prussian elites, mayors and building directors, entrepreneurs and spa directors – all of them always kept the spa business as the chief economic factor in mind when making planning decisions on the further development of the town.

The city in itself is a magnificent mise-en-scène, a stage for 19th-century social life. The architecture of that time, in German-speaking countries frequently (but sometimes controversially) referred to as “Historicism” due to its reliance on historical styles, had few advocates in the mid-20th century. As late as 1963, the town planner Ernst May called for large-scale demolition of the obsolete mansion districts and densely built up perimeter blocks in his publication, „Das Neue Wiesbaden“.

The demolition of the characteristic old buildings was in fact embarked upon, and rows of new housing interspersed with green spaces were built.

Although May was chiefly concerned with unsatisfactory living conditions in the old, densely built up and hygienically problematic structures, he clearly misjudged the aesthetic value of the stock of old buildings, and their capability of being adapted to changing requirements. After fierce opposition from the population, and students especially, the project was finally abandoned. Opposition to the heedless destruction of the old urban structures grew in other cities too. The year 1975 was finally declared “European Architectural Heritage Year” by the Council of Europe; in Germany, it is usually referred to, in a somewhat narrower definition of the term, as „Europäisches Denkmalschutzjahr“ – European Monument Protection Year. It was under one of the leaders of the Wiesbaden anti-demolition activists, the Social Democrat, lawyer and head of the Department of Urban Development, Jörg Jordan, that shortly after 1975 a fundamental change of direction took place.

The city’s efforts were rewarded in 1978, in the context of a federal competition on townscapes and monument protection, „Stadtgestalt und Denkmalschutz im Städtebau“. The rediscovery of “Gründerzeit” (i.e. late 19th-century) architecture, long vilified by art historical research and a monument protection practice dominated by art history, caused the focus of monument protection to shift towards the architectural heritage of the 19th century. The city of Wiesbaden acted as a trailblazer for the rest of Germany in its efforts to maintain and restore its large stock of old buildings. One of its early key projects at the time was the renovation, carried out in strict accordance with restoration principles, of the Villa Clementine next to Warmer Damm, today one of the few villas that are municipal property, and thus open to the public.
Superimposition of an aerial photograph of 2011 and the protected area according to the Monument Protection Act.
When the State of Hesse’s Monument Protection Act was passed in 1974, a modern legal basis for the systematic registration of the stock of monuments had been established, and with it a foundation for their protection and maintenance. The Hessian State Office for the Preservation of Historical Monuments headed by its director of many years, Gottfried Kiesow, first initiated a review of the villa districts so crucial to the appearance of Wiesbaden, in order to take stock of the surviving buildings and assess their suitability for monument status.

In 1988, the much-noticed topographical book edited by Sigrid Russ, „Wiesbaden, Band II – Die Villengebiete“, was published. In 2005, the same author published her three-part Vol. I of the topographical book of monuments, covering the Pentagon and the town expansions both within and outside the Ring.

An examination of both topographical works together, and their comparison with the building stock of Wiesbaden around the year 1900, will demonstrate that the city in its dimensions of that time can still be experienced almost in its entirety, due to the surviving buildings, the preserved urban structures and the green spaces. About 90% of the built-up area of 1900 (compare the Spielmann/Krake plan of 1912) has been designated as a Gesamtanlage (ensemble) and thus a Flächendenkmal (“area monument”) in accordance with the criteria set by the Hessian state’s Monument Protection Act (compare the depiction of the entire ensemble, 2011). Of the approximately 1,300 villas built before WWI, an estimated 900 are still standing (exact numbers are not yet available at this time). The Wiesbaden list of monuments contains about 5,500 entries for the urban area alone (excluding the suburbs later incorporated into the municipal area), mostly buildings dating from the 19th and early 20th centuries. About 1,800 of these buildings have individually been given the status of historical monuments due to their excellent state of preservation, in some cases also due to their preserved interior décor.
WIESBADEN: RESIDENTIAL CITY, CAPITAL CITY, SPA CITY
Wiesbaden is a city of many faces: spa and health resort, residential town and capital of Nassau, city, the capital of Hesse. The beginnings of the later residential city are to be found in the second half of the 13th century, the time when Wiesbaden became the property of the counts of Nassau. Although their castle in the precincts of the old royal manor was elaborately restored at the end of the 17th century, there was no corresponding phase as a courtly centre for Wiesbaden in those years. It was only after the residence had been moved from Usingen to the banks of the Rhine in 1744 that the town began to profit from the proximity of the court of Nassau. The ruling family decided on the palace of Biebrich, which had been enlarged into a stately three-wing structure close to the river, as their new seat. It was to be an important decision for the political future of Wiesbaden when major administrative bodies of Nassau-Usingen were relocated to the small spa town, situated not far from Biebrich on the slopes of the Taunus hills. With this move, the first step towards its later function as a capital was made.

*Already in the 15th and 16th centuries, the town enjoyed an early heyday as a late medieval "fashion" spa.*

The counts, princes and finally dukes of Nassau promoted Wiesbaden not merely as their capital but also and primarily as a spa town. Already in the 15th and 16th centuries, the town enjoyed an early heyday as a late medieval "fashion" spa. King Albrecht I, Emperor Friedrich III and his son, Maximilian I, and numerous other members of the high nobility visited the town. Friedrich III of Habsburg, who suffered from a gangrenous leg, is reported to have visited Wiesbaden no less than six times.

After the decline of the spa and bathing business in the wake of the Thirty Years’ War, a new upturn set in around 1700, again promoted by the territorial rulers. From 1680 onwards they did their best to modernise the town and heighten its attractiveness to visitors. The Kransplatz square was created to provide a new centre for the spa district; the Herrengearten park and leafy promenades invited visitors to stroll. The entertainment programme was enriched by an entirely new feature in 1765: from that year on, travelling theatres were engaged on a regular basis to perform popular comedies for the enjoyment of both locals and visitors. In 1771 the authorities legalised the game of hazard, creating yet another attraction. A large number of regulations was issued to ensure peace and privacy for the ever-growing number of spa visitors, in order to make their stay more agreeable. With the aid of these and other measures, Wiesbaden succeeded in creating and cultivating a reputation throughout Europe, as a pleasant and sophisticated luxury resort.

*The founding of the duchy of Nassau in 1806 marked the beginning of Wiesbaden’s rise to the status of “the world’s spa”.*

The events of the year 1806 heralded a still-faster development of the spa town towards a “global spa city”. When the ruling princes of Nassau-Usingen and Nassau-Weilburg both joined the Confederation of the Rhine, their territories were declared a “united, indivisible and sovereign duchy”. The territorial definition and unification of the new state, and the coordination of a large number of spa towns under a common sovereignty, provided a starting point for a more efficient organisation of the spa business in the era of the dukes of Nassau. At Wiesbaden the mineral springs remained largely in private ownership, but the town benefited from state funding nevertheless. The prestigious new assembly rooms (“Cursaal”) built 1808-10 provide impressive proof of the fact. The plot of land had been supplied by the ruling family, and it was them, too, who provided for the expansion of the green spaces and promenades. In the vicinity of the new Kurhaus, a second spa district developed at some distance from the mineral springs. It catered primarily for the social life and diversion of the spa visitors. The Kurpark, the Bowling Green and later the colonnades built to flank it, the building of the ducal court theatre in 1827 and the laying out of the imposing Wilhelmstraße were some of the more notable features. However, the town made sure that the springs and their immediate surroundings were provided with their share of amenities and a prestigious appearance too, as shown by the measures taken for the beautification of Kochbrunnenplatz.
At the same time the expansion of Wiesbaden into the capital city of the young duchy continued apace. Between 1838 and 1842, the imposing structure of the State Ministry went up in Luisenstraße; today the building houses the Ministry of Justice. The newly constructed Mint and the Pädagogium (grammar school) on Luisenplatz, and a number of additional buildings intended for use by various Nassau government agencies, were likewise part of the sovereign’s rebuilding of Wiesbaden as an administrative centre. With the construction of the infantry barracks on Schwalbacher Straße in 1816/18, and the artillery barracks on the corner of Rheinstraße and Schwalbacher Straße in 1828/29, the upper ranks of the military gained in importance as a privileged segment of the population. From this time on the military came to be an indispensable element of social life at Wiesbaden, as were the higher-ranking officials of the Nassau administration. The military band contributed to the musical entertainment of spa visitors and local society. The newly formed corporative chamber took its seat at Wiesbaden too, and the state’s upper appellate court was moved to the new capital from Hadamar.

Within a very short time the townscape had changed beyond recognition, with the ducal building authorities exerting as much influence as possible during this process. From 1803 onwards, plots on Friedrichstraße had been marked out for court officials; in the street laid out to the west of the source region, originally Spitalstraße but renamed Nerostraße in 1811, plainer single-storey buildings went up for artisans and the petit bourgeois. The ducal residence itself began to extend into the capital as well. From 1813 to 1817, the Erbprinzenpalais was built on Wilhelmstraße for the court of the duchy’s hereditary prince, Wilhelm. The prince never actually
lived there, residing instead in his palace at Biebrich on the Rhine as his predecessor had done. Instead he “ceded his palace to the Muses”, as a travel account put it. In 1821, a public library was established here; a few years later, the collections of the Nassauischer Altertumsverein (i.e. the society of antiquaries) also found a home in the building. The social hub for the aristocracy, the officers and the upper middle class came to be the new town palace, built on the site of the old castle and incorporating several middle-class houses into its structure – because, as a Frankfurt newspaper put it, “our capital of Wiesbaden is to be the residential city of the ducal court as well”. The palace of Biebrich, on the other hand, served primarily as a retreat for the ducal family’s “private” life – and for the reception of guests of outstanding rank, such as the Austrian emperor, Franz Joseph, who was received there with much pomp and circumstance in August, 1863.

The town palace served as the winter residence of the dukes of Nassau, and in this function provided the spa town’s social highlights. Non-aristocratic members of the upper classes were admitted to the balls and soirees hosted by the Nassau court during the winter months. In 1857 the Kursaal provided the magnificently decorated setting for the nuptials of Prince Oscar II of Sweden (1829-1907) with Sophia of Nassau (1836-1913). The small palace known as Paulinenschlösschen, the dower house of the Duchess Pauline, served as a glamorous cultural meeting place during the Nassau years; in Wilhelmine times it was used as a temporary Kurhaus while the new Kurhaus was under construction (1904-1907).

Structures created in the town’s vicinity on the initiative of the ruling family included the 1744 pheasantry, the park of which was converted into a landscape garden with a vivarium and a refreshments kiosk in 1815, and the hunting lodge of Platte, built in 1826 on a ridge of the Taunus hills overlooking Wiesbaden. They provided delightfully situated destinations for a day’s outing, adding to the spa’s charms. Other locations that recommended themselves for a walk or a promenade were Neroberg, Nerotal and Geisberg hill.

The close connection between the “official” residence and capital of Wiesbaden, and the court at Biebrich Palace, was emphasized by the building of the stately Biebricher Chaussee, today’s Biebricher Allee. It is also the main traffic connection between the city and the Rhine. The State Monument, the premises of the Henkell sparkling wine company, and the viewing/water tower on Adolfs-höhe hill provide its architectural landmarks. The open view towards Biebrich Palace was the deciding factor in choosing the site for the Russian Church on Neroberg hill. Built as a burial place for Elisabeth, Duke Adolf of Nassau’s prematurely deceased duchess, who had been of Russian descent, it quickly became one of the town’s most visited sights as well as a landmark visible from miles away. To the present day the church, along with the Russian-Orthodox cemetery nearby, serves as a reminder of the close and long-standing connections between Wiesbaden and Russia.

Reforms in social and commercial policies as well as Nassau’s joining of the Zollverein (customs union) in 1836 contributed to an economic upturn and consequently to growing prosperity in the capital. The political successes of the “model state” of Nassau and the ever-growing attraction of its spa business, proved mutually beneficial. The transport infrastructure was improved, which in turn furthered the dynamics of urban development. An avenue providing a direct connection to Frankfurt was built. In 1827/36, Biebrich became a stopping place of the Cologne and Düsseldorf steamship companies. In the spring of 1840, the first train went to Frankfurt from Wiesbaden. Technical innovation was at work within the town as well: gaslight illuminated the streets from 1847 onwards, and in the autumn of 1854 a telegraph line was built via Wiesbaden to Koblenz.

After its defeat on the side of Austria in the Austro-Prussian War, the duchy of Nassau was annexed by troops of the kingdom of Prussia in 1866. Wiesbaden lost its status as residential and capital city, although it did remain an important administrative centre as the seat of the new Prussian regional authority, the Regierungspräsidium. Neither the prosperity nor the appeal of the town suffered in the least, not even as a consequence of the long-dreaded ban on gambling halls that finally came into force in 1872: the spa tax, also introduced in 1872,
and 1885, 10,814 individuals with an income of 13.3 million marks moved to Wiesbaden. In 1905, just a hundred years after the methodic development of the town had been embarked on, the population figure passed the 100,000 mark for the first time. Consequently Wiesbaden was now not just a global spa, but a spa city too. Alone among the spas of Europe it has since managed to maintain this balance without losing its cherished image: Wiesbaden, the affluent green spa between the Taunus hills and the Rhine, which it has remained to the present day.

The visits by the new rulers from Berlin, invariably punctuated by magnificently staged public appearances, proved a new and considerable crowd puller. The town palace acquired a new function as the seasonal abode of the German emperors and their retinue. The annual spring “Luftkur”, meetings with other ruling families and, after 1896, visits to the May festivals of music at the court theatre, an event specifically introduced for the imperial family, brought Emperors Wilhelm I and Wilhelm II back to Wiesbaden numerous times. Wilhelm II in particular exerted his – usually indirect – influence on the construction of the new court theatre, Kurhaus and central station. Both rulers intervened in various ways in the shaping of the spa town and its social life. In 1852, Wiesbaden referred to itself for the first time as “Weltkurstadt” – the world’s spa. And in fact the world did meet at Wiesbaden, “every travelling European’s conversation room” as the newspaper Rheinischer Kurier put it on 23rd August, 1878. Members of the European ruling houses, like the Russian tsar Nikolaus II and Empress “Sisi” of Austria, came and went at the spa town.

Composed and performed here; the Jewish feminist Fanny Lewald came for her health, together with her lover; in 1846 the Munich painter Wilhelm von Kaulbach took the opportunity to observe the spa visitors. Ever since Emperor Wilhelm II had discovered the town for himself and his retinue, the number of millionnaires settling at Wiesbaden had been on the rise. The influx of affluent new inhabitants brought additional wealth to the town, strengthening its finances and proving highly beneficial for its business life. Building activity, as it were, went through the roof. In the 1880s the drinking water supply was modernised; in 1888 the first steam-powered tram was on its way; from 1896 Wiesbaden, too, had its own electric tram system.

The property market produced huge turnovers, reaching 14.5 million marks as early as 1872. Between 1879 and 1885, 10,814 individuals with an income of 13.3 million marks moved to Wiesbaden. In 1905, just a hundred years after the methodic development of the town had been embarked on, the population figure passed the 100,000 mark for the first time. Consequently Wiesbaden was now not just a global spa, but a spa city too. Alone among the spas of Europe it has since managed to maintain this balance without losing its cherished image: Wiesbaden, the affluent green spa between the Taunus hills and the Rhine, which it has remained to the present day.

Empress “Sisi” of Austria
TOWN MAPPING AS A CONTEMPORARY WITNESS

by Erich Wieser
The beginnings of town mapping at Wiesbaden go back to the era of the ambitious “global spa”. As a contemporary witness it documents, in various collections of maps drawn up by the Nassau, Prussian and municipal administrations, the constant changes in the 19th-century town’s municipal area. It records shifts in the development of urban building, in land use and in the expansion of infrastructural facilities. Moreover, town maps were used for advertising purposes in the 19th century too. Next to the official depiction of the actual map, the border would be printed with illustrations and tourist-relevant information on public amenities, squares, hotels or public baths. The lithography was contracted out to publishing houses who worked for international travel agencies.

Current geo-information technologies facilitate the processing of historical documents, allowing both a retrospective participation in 19th-century urban development processes and comparison with today’s built-up areas.

The georeferencing of historical and recent sources of information allows the superimposition of cartographic inventories from different eras in time, and thus comparison with today’s built-up areas.

19th-century cartography was determined by the beginnings of territorial triangulation and topographic surveying on the one hand, and the compilation of land tax registers by the state on the other. The 1819 Wiesbaden sheet of the Prussian land survey by Müffing depicts the large-scale topographic situation with the setting of the still-young town between the Taunus hills and the Rhine. However, it also shows the detailed topographical structures of the palace of Biebrich and its gardens, as well as those of the old Wiesbaden Kurhaus and the adjoining Kurpark. The basic structural features of the young town, with its characteristic pentagonal shape, are already and distinctly present.

The oldest map in the Wiesbaden municipal archive’s collections depicts a ground plan of the Wiesbaden communal district, dated October 1701, with the distances between boundary stones given – a cartographic depiction that belongs to the early years of the land tax register.
The merging of streams and the canalisation of the water, and waste water, from the thermal springs led to the construction of impressive feats of engineering. The so-called „Abtauchen der Stadt Wiesbaden“ is probably the oldest collection of municipal engineering maps there is; drawn up in 1812 by the clerk of works, Weber, it documents the various water pipes and drains.

The surveys of 1862-1870 provided highly accurate cadastral plans documenting the designation of plots of land, buildings and land use. The precision of the surveying and mapping methods of the time allows for detailed comparison with today’s situation regarding changes in the outline of individual structures.
Detail contrasting the land registry situation in 1868 and 2012.
From the individual maps, the district surveyor, J. C. Baldus, drew up an overall plan of the town which also shows public buildings and bathhouses. From the plan it is evident that the distinctive pentagonal shape was already largely built up at the time. The generous and picturesque "landscape of villas" characterising the townscape to the present day, and the romantic landscape parks, are faithfully depicted in the plan. To the west of Schwalbacher Straße the beginnings of a new urban district are emerging. Originally drawn up in 1868, the plan was later used for town-planning purposes: it provided the basis for the development plan submitted in 1871 by Building Director Alexander Fach for the expansion of the town.
This development plan illustrates, on the one hand, the focus on expanding the showpiece structures, residential areas and landscape parks with added water features; however, it also depicts a generously proportioned “Ringstraße” to enclose the somewhat rigid grid of blocks – changing the paradigm, as it were, and designing a new outline for the town.

In 1912, Christian Spielmann published a summary review of Wiesbaden town mapping, beginning in the late 18th century, entitled „Die Entwicklung des Weichbildes der Stadt Wiesbaden seit dem Ende des 18. Jahrhunderts“. The so-called Spielmann-Krake-Atlas demonstrates developments with the aid of twelve town maps drawn up for the purpose, with a uniform layout, scale and sheet line system. The newly drawn maps were based in part on the earlier plans.

Current geo-information technologies facilitate the texturing of digital terrain models using historical maps, allowing for a retrospective participation in the processes of urban planning.
These days the use of modern geo-information technologies and geosensors supports historico-cultural analysis too. The coordinate-based location of historical and current sources of information enables the superimposition of cartographic inventories from different eras in history. Geo-information technology supplies new approaches for the multimedia cartographic visualisation of spatial information, and provides a wide range of new tools suitable for research into urban history.

The “superimposing” visualisation of current and historical maps, or the texturing of a digital terrain model with the aid of historical materials, create new insights into the phases of urban planning and development.

The superimposition of the current digital terrain model with historical maps demonstrates the adaptation of the Wiesbaden settlement and street patterns to the geomorphological structures of the urban area, with the mansion areas occupying the hillsides and the perimeter blocks concentrated in the plain, as well as the park landscapes so characteristic of the townscape clustering in the valleys.
Texturing of the 2006 digital terrain model using the 1868 plan of Wiesbaden
CONTINUITY AND CHANGE: THE CITY OF WIESBADEN TODAY AND TOMORROW

by Simone Zagrodnik and Martin Harsten
And what about today? What is the face “the world’s spa” presents to the world these days? Which parts of its past are still present? Which of its traditions have survived? Which values prevail, and what are the opportunities for the future that ensue from them? In the spirit of UNESCO’s inter-cultural educational objectives, let us take a closer look at these issues, bringing our little publication on the cultural heritage of Wiesbaden to a close.

**Wiesbaden: a lively green city situated in the heart of both Germany and Europe**

With a population of around 276,000, today’s Wiesbaden is a lively city in the heart of the economically powerful Rhine-Main metropolitan region. The city has remained popular as a place of residence, owing its appeal not least to its topographically attractive situation between the Taunus hills and the Rhine, and its location in the centre of both Germany and Europe. The proximity of the international Frankfurt Rhein-Main airport, the easy motorway access and excellent railway connections all contribute to the popularity the capital of the federal state of Hesse enjoys today with tourists and conference attendees, locals and those who work in the city.

The lush greenery of the city and its vicinity, dating back to 19th-century town planning, is still a characteristic element of the cityscape. It pervades the extraordinarily popular residential and villa districts that have grown over time in a ring surrounding the city centre, and offers countless opportunities for walking, engaging in numerous sports or quite simply for enjoyment – just as it did a hundred years ago. It is not least the urban climate that profits from the generous green spaces.

All residential areas share a smoothly functioning infrastructure. All of them offer a wide range of shopping opportunities, and are connected to the public transport network. Citizens’ initiatives, clubs and societies, and cultural organisations invite participation and involvement. Urban life in the residential areas and the centre is complemented by an excellent range of schools and kindergarten choices, and by a wide variety of educational institutions.

A closer look at the distribution of groups within our society across the urban area yields some remarkable facts. Somewhat naturally, the mansion districts are still those parts of the city where the affluent, or very affluent, have chosen to make their homes – just as they were in the past. Already in the 19th century parts of those areas were known as “Millionaires’ Hills”; in this respect, little has changed. On the other hand, in the course of the last decades many of the surviving villas have been converted into offices or schools, kindergartens or cultural institutions.

The immigrant share of the population is currently at about 17%; here, again, nothing fundamental has changed at Wiesbaden over the last 150 years. During the heyday of the spa business, artisans and domestic or spa staff were mostly from “abroad” – at the time, from neighbouring states such as Franconia and Bavaria, Württemberg and Baden, from the Rhine territories or from the east. Today the “multi-kulti” tradition is most evident in the Westend district, where people from Turkey and Greece, Syria, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Lebanon...
and Poland pursue business and trade – in the city and for the city.

At Wiesbaden, internationality is a trait not exclusive to the “residents” – those permanently settled here. Even in the 19th century, spa visitors from many countries frequented the fashionable town at the foot of the Taunus. The excellent quality of the medical care on offer and the wide range of social and cultural diversions available, gambling not the least among them, attracted numerous foreign visitors – predominantly from Russia, France, the Netherlands, Great Britain and Ireland. Wiesbaden has maintained close connections with all of these countries ever since.

International visitors appreciate the modern healthcare city of Wiesbaden with its prestigious clinics and wide choice of treatments.

The time of the traditional spa and bathing visits to Wiesbaden is past. Nevertheless the medical, and in fact the thermal, sectors have remained a part of life in the city, and part of the attractions it offers too. The hot springs still ease complaints, whether at the exclusive old Kaiser-Friedrich-Therme or the modern thermal baths in Aukammtal. Hotels steeped in tradition use their own springs in well-appointed spas. Renowned clinics have attracted patients from all over the world who still travel to Wiesbaden for treatment. The numbers of visitors from Russia and the Gulf states in particular have continued to rise in recent years. Next to the United States and Great Britain these countries account for the largest percentages of visitors to Wiesbaden.

City tourism, too, remains an important aspect of Wiesbaden’s economy. The relevant numbers from the year 2011: just under 510,000 visitors arriving, more than a million nights spent, with visitors from within Germany accounting for slightly less than 80%. Wiesbaden offers 78 places to stay, and a total of close to 7,000 beds. Among the inns and hotels are renowned houses that offered their services to guests as far back as the 19th century. One of them ist the „Hotel Schwarzer Bock“, the origins of which go back to 1486, with its fine bathing equipment, including some surviving historical originals.

A large number of globally active companies have decided on Wiesbaden as the location of their German branches or headquarters, which adds to the city’s present-day internationality – as do the locally resident but often internationally active advertising agencies.

With its (for Germany) above-average percentage of businesses in the services sector, among them a very high number of insurance companies, consultancy firms, communications and media companies, Wiesbaden has developed into an
important hub of the services industry. Just under 76% of employees subject to social security contributions are employed in the tertiary sector.

**To the present day the varied calendar of events and the city’s rich cultural life are shaped by numerous traditional events.**

In 2006, a product inextricably linked with the history of fashionable living at Wiesbaden celebrated its 150th anniversary: „Henkell Trocken“, probably the best-known German brand of sparkling wine. As it was at the time, the fizzy beverage still is an integral part of festive occasions and glamorous parties. Grand social functions, events and celebrations have always been, and still are, a characteristic part of the rich cultural programme on offer at Wiesbaden. For example, today’s International May Festival organised by the Hessian State Theatre was originally initiated, under the name of “Kaiserspiele”, by Emperor Wilhelm II in 1896. It still manages to impress, year after year, with its magnificent programme. The annual international vintage car rally (Internationale Oldtimer rallye) brings back the flair of bygone days, and feeds the enthusiasm felt by many, then and now, for motor sports. At the 19th-century “global spa”, equestrianism was a much-practiced sport. The International Wiesbaden Horse Show (Wiesbadener Pfingstturnier) is both a world-class event and a true crowd-puller that upholds the tradition of fine horsemanship at Wiesbaden. Rheingau Wine Week, a fair for local growers to present their wines and sparkling wines, emphasizes Wiesbaden’s proximity to the Rheingau and its vineyards – a circumstance that has always had its effect on the town.

Social exchange and international togetherness have been practised at Wiesbaden for a long time, and especially with Wiesbaden’s American long-stay guests. The former Nassau, then Prussian garrison town of Wiesbaden became the headquarters of the U.S. Army in Europe; in 2015, around 20,000 Americans will be living in the Hesse capital. Another very old tradition of ours is that of a conference and congress town. One outstanding example of this would be the Internists’ Congress – held annually for almost 120 years now, it has its seat in the city. And as it did a hundred years ago, the Kurhaus is still the centre of social life in Wiesbaden.
Today it is in great demand as a venue for conventions, conferences and exhibitions as well as for prestigious receptions or public and private celebrations. Many of Wiesbaden’s historical buildings are still an inherent part of the city’s social and cultural life. Among them are the Marktkeller, the Villa Clementine, today the seat of Wiesbaden’s Literaturhaus, and the magnificent premises of the Casino Society.

Today’s politics, too, is decided in buildings steeped in history. The former town palace of the dukes of Nassau has become the seat of the state parliament, the Hessischer Landtag. Business matters of a city shaped by the services sector are handled in another fine old building: Wiesbaden’s Chamber of Industry and Commerce has its seat in the Erbprinzenpalais, once the town residence of the Nassau hereditary prince and in the 19th century home of the important collection of Nassau antiquities.

Wiesbaden, then, is very much aware of its rich cultural legacy, its manifold traditions, the merits of continuity. Everything of value that has survived from the past is being used to shape the present. The success and quality of our heritage will provide the yardstick by which future developments will be measured. To respect our legacy, recognise and communicate its values, and make good use of it in building an attractive future: that is the aspiration and the challenge faced by the citizens of our ever-changing city, the Wiesbaden of today and tomorrow.
ZONES, METHODS, AND SOURCES OF RESEARCH

by Hans-Jörg Czech and Thomas Weichel
The core area of what is today’s Wiesbaden had been largely completed by 1914. The city expansions of later years mostly conformed to the grid laid down by earlier plans at first; it was only after WWII that major new areas on the periphery were built on for the first time. Until 1914, urban development had proceeded without any incorporations of smaller communities, in marked contrast to many other cities.

The core area of what is today’s Wiesbaden was complete by 1914, and has maintained its structure to the present day.

The air raids of WWII had caused damage in places, but no large-scale destruction with the exception of the Webergasse area. A number of buildings in the city centre were destroyed, but the townscape as such survived. In particular, the upper-class residential areas surrounding the centre were spared almost in their entirety. The destructive interference of the post-war years, too, remained comparatively tolerable thanks to a committed citizenry. The historical parts of the city were largely spared the wholesale demolition of entire neighbourhoods originally envisaged by town planner Ernst May. Within the “Historical Pentagon”, the booming economy had repeatedly led to the demolition of individual buildings even as early as the mid-19th century.

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The city’s most homogeneous parts are the areas of town expansion built in the later half of the 19th and the early years of the 20th century, such as the Ring and the “Inneres Westend” district. More recent, new-built structures here are usually due to WWII-related damage. The identification of World Heritage zones will have to take various aspects into account: the development of the city in general, the function of individual districts, and their state of preservation. It will be particularly important to draw attention to the city’s unique status as a dynamic "spa city", the social life of which made it increasingly attractive to people of private means and pensioners, who settled permanently at Wiesbaden.

According to these criteria, four zones can be identified that will have to be examined closely and rigorously. Allowing for a certain degree of preliminarity regarding their exact boundaries, they should be proposed as core zones in accordance with the World Heritage guidelines. Those urban areas already designated as ensembles according to the Hessian Monument Protection Act, will acquire the function of buffer zones.

The designated core zones are:
I. The Historical Pentagon
II. The spa and villa landscape
   (Nerotal and eastern mansion district)
III. The Inneres Westend town expansion
IV. The Ringkirchenzone town expansion

Within these zones, detailed surveys of the approximately 2,500 individual structures have already been carried out. The buildings’ ages and specifications have been recorded and filed in a database; disfigurements have been assessed. The data has then been integrated into mappings of the zones created on the basis of geoinformation systems. This is required in order to obtain an exact image of these urban areas, which will facilitate the definition of core zones on the one hand, and on the other will provide the basic material for the preparation of the management plan required by UNESCO. The mapping of buildings’ ages has yielded important information on the homogeneity of the areas in question. Establishing buildings’ states of preservation facilitates statements on the authenticity of the old building stock. The data on disfigurements will be utilised in future concepts for long-term urban repair.
I. Historical Pentagon

The „Historical Pentagon“ is the striking result of early 19th-century town planning. This is the area which contains the nucleus of the historical town and its subsequent development: the mineral springs, the bathhouses and hotels as well as the town’s trade and business centre going back to Roman times. In the Middle Ages at the latest, administrative functions came into play and in the 19th century, the dignity of the capital city of the newly founded duchy of Nassau. Like those of most large cities, the centre of Wiesbaden is an area of permanent upheaval. This was especially true during the 19th century, which saw almost all of the buildings from the pre-1800 era replaced. Most of the buildings from the early 19th century were in turn replaced by more prestigious new structures during the Wilhelmine years. The comparatively moderate amount of destruction caused by WWII air raids was, once again, concentrated mostly on the area surrounding the springs. The pressure for change exerted by the economic upturn of the post-war era led to some interference with the historical building stock. Nevertheless, it is still the buildings from every phase of the “global spa” era that dominate the townscape of the Historical Pentagon.

II. Spa and villa landscape (Nerotal and eastern mansion district)

Wiesbaden is characterised by its large districts of mansions, or villas, the first of which go back to the early years of the 19th century. They were part of a deliberately planned urban development process. Often spa visitors would only spend the summer season here, but more and more affluent people living on private means moved in from all over the empire and even from abroad, and settled permanently.

The residential areas are characterised by large detached villas, a great many of which have survived to the present day. The Kurhaus, Kurpark and public park of Warmer Damm are also part of the zone, as crucial amenities of the “society spa”. Spa facilities, villa districts and the surrounding natural landscape were all integrated into a single all-encompassing landscape park surrounding the core city.

III. The Inneres Westend town expansion

The development of Wiesbaden into a “global spa” with a huge “spa industry” would have been inconceivable without the parallel development of a large services sector. This was located outside of the spa district proper in its own areas (Bergkirchenviertel, Inneres Westend). As surveys so far have shown, both the old building stock and the urban structures in these former working-class neighbourhoods have largely survived. The Inneres Westend in particular is indicative of the necessity felt at the time (the second half of the 19th century) of
providing additional space, in tandem with the fast-growing spa business, for the spa society’s “service providers”.

IV. The Ringkirchenzone town expansion

Buildings in the area surrounding the Ringkirche are representative of the urban development phase c. 1900, when Wiesbaden passed the “city” mark. The neighbourhood with its closed perimeter blocks was the preferred residential area of the professional and upper middle class, people who could not afford the large houses in the mansion districts, or chose not to. The area is characterised by a large percentage of well-kept historical buildings in a good (or excellent) state of preservation, which is also reflected in the extraordinary percentage of listed monuments.

In addition to the built heritage, a very large stock of documents and objects as well as numerous records of the immaterial cultural heritage have survived from the heyday of the society spa in the pre-1914 years. This remarkable legacy provides us with an uncommonly detailed insight into the processes of urban development, including those that took place “behind the scenes”, as it were – and particularly those connected with the many facets of the spa and bathing business and the social life of the “global spa” of Wiesbaden in the 19th and early 20th centuries.

Archival documents and photographs relating to the city’s history

The state archives (Hessisches Hauptstaatsarchiv) based in the capital of Hesse, and the Wiesbaden public record office (Wiesbadener Stadtarchiv), both store a wealth of documents and planning records relating to local political-administrative history, as well as social and economical issues of the city and its vicinity. They reflect, in great detail, the various administrative aspects, but also the huge logistical and socio-political challenges brought about by Wiesbaden’s rapid development culminating in the 19th and early 20th centuries “global spa”. Other municipal archives house large stocks of files relating to Wiesbaden’s building and civil engineering history, as well as early land registry documents providing in-depth information on the building and use history of numerous surviving public and private structures.

The collection of books, more than 700,000 volumes today, held by the Hessian state library (Hessische Landesbibliothek) in Wiesbaden goes back to the 18th century. It currently belongs to the Rhein-Main University and is entitled to legal deposit copies of all publications on regional matters, and especially publications relating to Nassau. The collections contain important printed sources on spa and society life at Wiesbaden during the 19th century, including the “Kurlisten” published at regular intervals and containing the names of visitors then staying at the town. Then there are the innumerable travel accounts, describing the attractions of Wiesbaden over the course of several centuries to various audiences both at home and abroad – a type of publication still waiting for scholarly examination.

The international spa business provided exceedingly fertile ground for the development of professional photography at Wiesbaden. Numerous photographers’ salons competed for permission to take visitors’ portraits. At the same time, some photographers specialised in townscape views, architectural and postcard photography quite early on. Printed in large numbers, these images, too, helped to advertise the town’s imposing sights in Germany and abroad. Due to these circumstances the municipal archives hold large collections of historical photographs. The images provide excellent material for a detailed study of the development over time of the townscape and the appearance and use history of individual buildings as well as entire neighbourhoods. The public record office alone holds around 100,000 historical photographs in its multimedia archive, as well as early film recordings.

The capital of Hesse considers itself fortunate to count the headquarters of quite a number of eminent, long-established companies among its more than 18,000 local businesses. Some of their corporate histories go back far into the 19th century, as in the cases of the renowned producers of sparkling wine, Henkell and Söhnelein. The well-kept company archives provide yet more sources of information on the history of the city, and very specifically the society spa of the time.
ZONES, METHODS, AND SOURCES OF RESEARCH

Material and immaterial cultural heritage

As early as 1812, citizens’ involvement found expression in the Society for Nassau Antiquity Studies (Verein für Nassauische Altertumskunde und Geschichtsforschung). The society, which is still going strong today, aims to preserve important and characteristic relics of the history of Wiesbaden and Nassau. Its activities laid the foundation of the collection of Nassau antiquities („Sammlung Nassauische Altertümer“), which today contains more than 340,000 individual objects and is housed by the Wiesbadener Stadtmuseum. The items date from every era of history, constituting an internationally renowned collection of valuable original pieces of all kinds; the collection of graphic works (maps, townscapes and plans, portraits etc.) alone numbers 50,000 items. They represent an extraordinary source for research, facilitating a detailed reconstruction of the development of the Wiesbaden spa culture and the facets of social life in the town, from Classical times to the 20th century, covering the entire range of material manifestations.

Thanks in part to numerous cases of continuous use in the post-war years, many pre-1914 interiors have also survived. Whether public property or privately owned, today they are much in demand as carefully preserved settings for sophisticated events, for habitation or for prestigious business premises. Like the premises of the Casino Society (1872-74), the Villa Clementine (1878-82, today the Literaturhaus), or the Christian Zais Hall in the Kurhaus (1904-07), many of them are largely authentic examples of the interior decoration of their time. They are frequently-used settings for the highlights of modern social life, as well as popular locations for international TV and movie productions. Cultural historians and monument protection specialists appreciate the historical rooms as authentic examples of the room arrangement, colour schemes and craftsmanship of their time, examples moreover of extraordinary number and completeness.

In the course of the 19th century, numerous citizens’ associations were actively working towards the goal of making Wiesbaden and its surroundings ever more attractive to visitors. Their activities resulted in numerous contributions to the layout and design of public squares and parks; quite frequently they can still be identified today. One notable result is the number and diversity of shelters and monuments put up at suitable spots along the footpaths all around the town; even today they are popular destinations for a day’s outing.

Finally, the incomparable atmosphere of the “the world’s spa” has found its way into the work of numerous artists, some of them world-famous. The novel The Gambler by Fyodor Dostoyevsky (1866) and the “Wiesbaden Symphony” by Johannes Brahms (op. 90, 1883) are two eminent examples. Works such as these, as well as the large collections of source materials and objects mentioned above, underline the value of Wiesbaden beyond the preserved stock of old buildings and the unique layout of a “spa metropolis”: as an extraordinary place for protecting and further exploring the cultural heritage that is the international society spa of the 19th and early 20th centuries.
Thomas Weichel, (b. 1957) studied Early Modern history, sociology and politics at Frankfurt, obtaining his Dr. phil. with Prof. Lothar Gall. Dissertation on „Die Bürger von Wiesbaden. Von der Landstadt zur Weltkurstadt 1780–1914“. He was offered a research fellowship and lectureship at Frankfurt University and later worked for the Historical Institute of Deutsche Bank, and for Gontard & Metallbank, Frankfurt. Since 2001 he has worked in various functions for the city of Wiesbaden; since 2006 he has been head of the department coordinating Wiesbaden’s application for World Heritage status.

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