

**XXVIII International Seminar on Urban Form**  
**ISUF2021: URBAN FORM AND THE SUSTAINABLE AND PROSPEROUS CITIES**  
**29<sup>th</sup> June – 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2021, Glasgow**

## Camillo and Siegfried Sitte – a father-son relationship in urban planning theory

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### **Abstract**

*Siegfried Sitte (1876–1945) is a little-known character in the architectural scene of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. His work is overshadowed by his father's oeuvre: Camillo Sitte's pamphlet "Der Städtebau nach seinen künstlerischen Grundsätzen" published in 1899, which clearly is a milestone in urban theory. But until now, little light has been shed on how close the relationship between Camillo and his son Siegfried actually was. The research is based on a hitherto unpublished collection of materials; which is currently being processed as part of the dissertation on an apparently planned—but not compiled—second volume of Camillo Sitte's "Der Städtebau nach seinen wissenschaftlichen Grundsätzen". Studying this new collection allows us to realise on the extent to which the work of the two generations of architects is intertwined and how far the father's unfinished plans had an influence on the son's works.*

*The first-born son of Camillo Sitte followed his father in his profession—not only as a planner but also as a teacher at the so called "Staatsgewerbeschule". The detailed study of the Sitte generation's heritage in the archives of TU Wien clearly provides evidence that Siegfried worked in his father's studio and continued or completed the urban planning and architectural projects after his father's sudden death in 1903. Siegfried himself later engaged intensively in the theoretical foundations of urban planning and published several writings on the subject. However, his own main work, "Das Wirtschaftsbild", only appeared posthumously. In it, he took up themes that his father had already dealt with and that he evidently had wanted to discuss in the second volume.*

*Thus, this article is the first to explore the relationship between father and son in terms of the theoretical debate on urban planning by giving insights to the new findings on the topics Siegfried's father had already in mind to discuss in his sequel.*

**Keywords:** Camillo Sitte, Siegfried Sitte, Sitte Family of Architects, Urban Planning Theory, Vienna

### **Introduction**

On the basis of hitherto unpublished documents the paper examines the relationship between the Viennese architect and urban planning theorist Camillo Sitte and his son Siegfried. The former is best known for his work *Der Städte-Bau nach seinen künstlerischen Grundsätzen*, in which he used vigorous language and images to criticise contemporary practices in urban planning of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Further editions of *Der Städte-Bau* were published during Camillo Sitte's lifetime, demonstrating the great interest of the professional community. At the same time, his assessment of architectural developments in Vienna and the Austro-Hungarian Empire also triggered critical reactions. Camillo Sitte's numerous writings suggest that he intended to express these experiences in a more extensive theoretical debate; namely, in the form of a sequel to his book (Schwarzl, 1949, Wurzer, 1989, Wilhelm, 2005 and Kubin, 2019).

The broad reception of the book *Der Städte-Bau nach seinen künstlerischen Grundsätzen* outshines the work of his two sons Siegfried (1876-1945) and Heinrich Sitte (1879-1951). While Siegfried succeeded his father in the profession, Heinrich became a renowned archaeologist and art historian (Wurzer, 1989: 25). Heinrich Sitte published the most comprehensive biography of Camillo Sitte (Sitte, 1929).

In order to illuminate the background for this article, a brief introduction to Siegfried Sitte will be given. The results of his long activity as an architect, planner and researcher are reflected in his manuscript *Das Wirtschaftsbild*, completed in 1940. This work, which was not published until decades after his death, is Siegfried Sitte's main legacy. With his proposal for a change in taxation and his attempt to redesign building legislation, he aimed at reorienting the Austria's economy in the interwar period—in order to end the pressing problem of the housing shortage (Stokreiter, 1997).

Franz Stokreiter—to whose commitment the publication of Siegfried Sitte's *Wirtschaftsbild* is owed—wants to recognise in Siegfried's opus magnum the lost second volume of Camillo Sitte's *Städte-Bau* (Stokreiter, 1997: ix). Our approach challenges this position and presents a methodology for deriving an argument to distinguish Siegfried's *Wirtschaftsbild* from *Städte-Bau*. For this purpose, new hitherto unpublished documents on the lost second volume were examined and analysed; they are introduced by the name *Konvolut Knab-Stokreiter*. On the one hand, the interpretation enables us to draw conclusions about how the lost work of the father influenced the son, but on the other hand, it is also possible to draw a distinction between Camillo's *Städte-Bau* and Siegfried's *Wirtschaftsbild*. In this way, unknown aspects in the relationship between Camillo and Siegfried can be identified.

### Siegfried Sitte

In the current architectural theory scene, Siegfried Sitte is regarded as a minor. It is significant that there is no separate Wikipedia entry concerning Siegfried, unlike in the case of Franz, Camillo and Heinrich. Siegfried's architecture and urban planning have never been seriously studied scientifically; only few projects have been discussed so far in a short overview (Wurzer, 1989). This is all the more astonishing because Siegfried Sitte's work, which has fallen into oblivion, is comparable in scope to that of his father. The material in the Sitte estate at the TU Wien which relates specifically to Siegfried comprises more than 50 architectural and urban planning projects, international competition entries and design works (Lacina, 1979). Of these numerous projects, only a few were actually realised: the design of his father's tomb at the Vienna Zentralfriedhof, a country house in Rodaun Lower Austria, a residential complex in Währing and the development plan for Zell am See, Salzburg (Stokreiter, 1976, Lacina, 1979 and Wurzer, 1989).

Siegfried, the first-born son of Camillo Sitte, was born on 29 April 1876 in Salzburg, where his father was director at the local *Staatsgewerbeschule*, which he himself had founded. After the family moved to Vienna, he underwent a comprehensive education until 1900. Siegfried studied at the *Staatsgewerbeschule*, at the *Technische Hochschule* (today TU Vienna) and at the *Akademie der Bildenden Künste*. Like Camillo, Siegfried himself became a teacher at the *Staatsgewerbeschule* in Vienna from 1899. In 1934 he even took over the direction of this institution for a short time. He officially retired in 1936, but was again appointed to the school during the war years of 1939-1944. He died in Salzburg in 1945 (Schwarzl, 1949: 4-5, Stokreiter, 1976: 25-27 and Wurzer, 1989: 25).

Siegfried Sitte already worked in his father's studio during his studies, which significantly influenced his urban designs. After the unexpected death of Camillo Sitte in 1903, he was responsible for the continuation and completion of the open projects, later implementing his own ideas and deviating from his father's original designs (Wurzer, 1989 and Mönninger, 2014: 311, 421-422, 489). This activity is closely related to his father's succession: "*Siegfried Sitte regarded his research work on the economic foundations of urban development as a legacy from his father, who asked him before his death to research these questions, without whose knowledge all urban development work would be in vain, since he himself was no longer in a position to do so*" (Stokreiter, 1976: 26).

Siegfried became an employee of the *Central Office for Housing Reform* in Austria, where he dedicated himself to combating the housing misery. After the collapse of Austria-Hungary and the dissolution of the organisational structures of the monarchy, he joined the *Bund österreichischer Bodenreformer* and later became its executive board. He thus devoted himself extensively to social and economic issues. Siegfried Sitte published numerous writings related to this background (Lacina, 1976 and Sitte, 1997: xvii-xix). In his writings Siegfried presented meticulously calculated reform proposals in which he meant to realise the solution to Austria's economic problems in the interwar period. However, these ambitious plans for tax and economic reforms were never seriously considered by politicians (Schwarzl, 1949, Wurzer, 1989 and Stokreiter, 1997). Thus, Siegfried Sitte bundled these theories in his manuscript *Das Wirtschaftsbild*, completed in 1940, at a time when politicians were pursuing other goals: "*In the National Socialist way of thinking, his trains of thought naturally found no room*" (Schwarzl, 1949: 5). The fact that Siegfried Sitte was unable to publish this work during his lifetime is to a certain extent an analogy to his father Camillo Sitte, who was equally unsuccessful in realising his far-reaching publication plans, even if the background of a different nature.

## Methodology

As preliminary work within the framework of this investigation, new (unpublished) documents were processed and—in order to preserve the originals—digitised. The collection, now accessible for the first time, was compared with archival documents from the *estate of the Sitte family of architects*. A comprehensive

literature search accompanied the content analysis in order to identify possible cross-references to previously published texts by Camillo and Siegfried Sitte. This enabled a more in-depth examination of the contents, which made a final classification possible.

An aspect of particular methodological relevance for the comparison was also the execution, handwriting and typeface of the new documents. Another aspect for dating and classifying the texts is the orthography; the first version was clearly written before the reforms in the last decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the first of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as illustrated, for example, by the spelling of terms such as "*Thüre*" (door) or "*Thor*" (gate). In the case of loan words from Latin, the spelling is consistently in Antiqua. In a further track, all previously known traces to the second volume of the *Städtebau* were traced. The ongoing addition and updating of the data obtained in this way is constantly integrated into the transcription of the texts and allows for further conclusions.

### The Konvolut Knab-Stokreiter

The obituaries of Camillo Sitte unanimously report the existence of an archive in his flat in the *Staatsgewerbeschule*, where he had laid out his extensive collection of materials for his planned publications (Fischer, 1904 and Bach, 1905). Primarily, this was the "*universal historical history of art and culture*" (Mönninger 2008: 30), which was laid out in "*eight volumes*" and remained a construct due to Sitte's premature death.

Theodor Fischer, for example, reports that "[...] *there are more than 200 cassettes of well-ordered note material, including individual chapters that have already been worked out and many dispositions [...]*" (Fischer, 1904: 34). According to Theodor Bach, there are "more than 400 boxes" in which Camillo Sitte has "*thousands and thousands of his own reflections and of and excerpts from more than a thousand works that he has read, deposited and carefully arranged according to material and form*" (Bach, 1905: 298). As Michael Mönninger notes, this extensive archive did not come down to us (Mönninger, 2008: 31).

Relatively similar reports also refer to Camillo Sitte's second volume, *Der Städte-Bau nach wissenschaftlichen und sozialen Grundsätzen* stating that this sequel was largely completed, so that a publication by his son was awaited soon (Fischer, 1904: 34 and Henrici, 1904: 34). Although Siegfried published an expanded fourth and fifth new edition of *Der Städte-Bau* together with his brother Heinrich (Semroth, 2003: 251), the announced second volume never appeared. The manuscript, is considered lost and has since then repeatedly given rise to scholarly discussions (Wilhelm et al., 2005).

In the archives of the Institute for Urban Planning at TU Wien there are two cassettes made of black-covered cardboard; they bear labels with the printed inscription *Städtebau* and other handwritten annotations (Figure 1).



**Figure 1.** The original labels of the two cassettes from the collection of Camillo and Siegfried Sitte. They show various additional inscription thus giving insight on content. Picture ©Stefan Kubin, 2017.

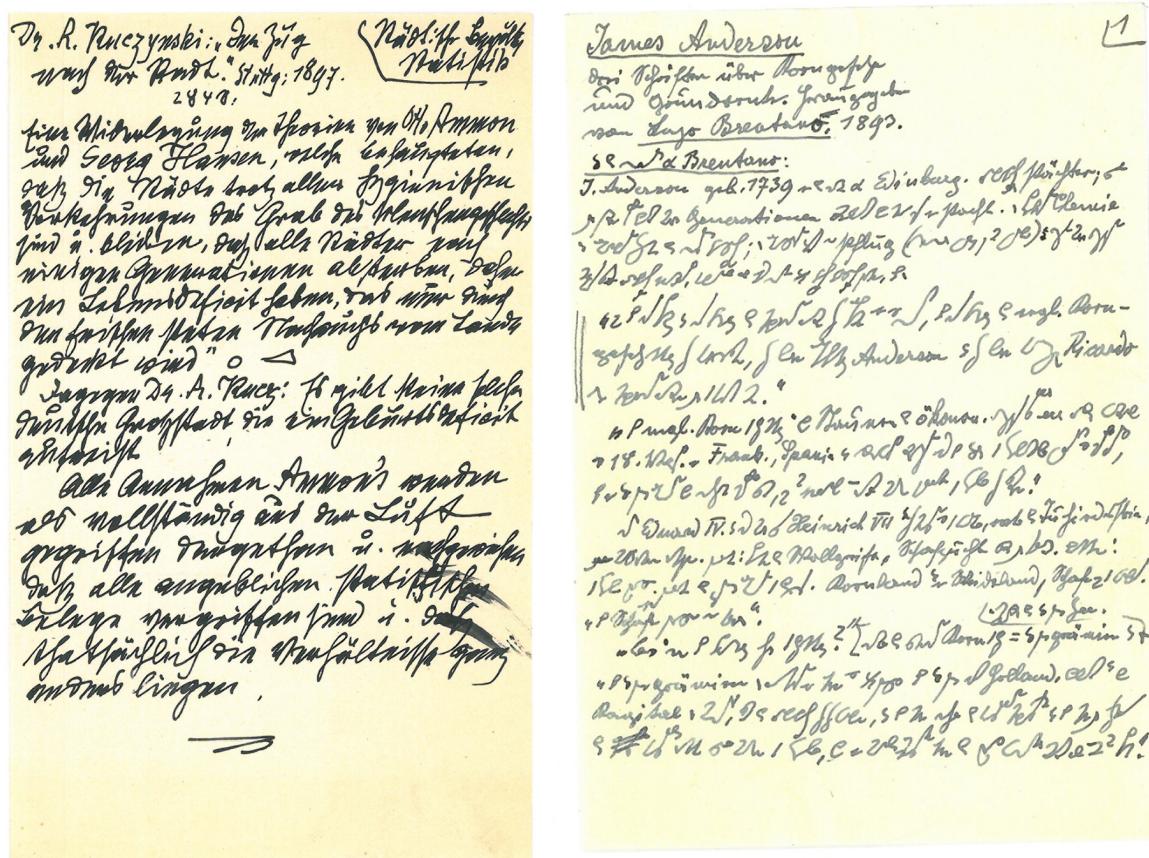
These two cassettes derive from the original possession of the *Sitte generation of architects*; they presumably came — together with the manuscript of Siegfried Sitte's *Wirtschaftsbild* — to TU Wien through a later donation from the estate of Philipp Knab through the mediation of Franz Stokreiter (Stokreiter, 1997: xiv). Subsequently, a first record of the holdings was presumably made by the institute's librarian at the time, Roswitha Lacina. In the course of this, part of the collection was stamped *Konvolut Knab-Stokreiter* and given a provisional catalogue number. The contents of the cassettes were then kept under lock and key for a long time. The exact provenance has not yet been clarified and is one of the subjects of Stefan Kubin's PhD thesis on the *Sitte generation of architects*.

The *Konvolut Knab-Stokreiter* has now been reprocessed. As explained above, the collection consists of two cartridges. The first contains a collection of handwritten notes or materials of approximately 200 sheets in various formats, closely written on both sides in *Kurrent script*. The contents range from brief notes to formulated blocks of text, various newspaper clippings, sketches and floor plans of house typologies.

The second box contains a comparably extensive collection of individual sheets, which, however, differ significantly. They are dated, containing statistics and texts in stenography.

In the course of the recording and subsequent transcription, it became clear that the documents were written by two different authors: Camillo and Siegfried Sitte. In order to be able to verify the authorship of the individual documents—at first glance the handwriting looks very similar—numerous comparative documents from *Sitte estate archive* were examined. In direct comparison, the first part of the collection can

be clearly attributed to the hand of Camillo Sitte, while the second box can be traced back to his son Siegfried Sitte (Figures 2 and 3).



*Marienberg, Hruschitz, Teplitz, Laibach, Pressburg, Bielitz und Wien".* Camillo Sitte names his own projects, which should be discussed in this second volume in order to demonstrate the practical implementation of his theories. This covers not only Sitte's urban planning designs but also his activities as a juror of urban planning competitions.

In contrast, the contents of the second box, which are comparable in scope, presumably represent a collection of materials for Siegfried Sitte's texts on economic theory. Whether this can be directly related to the *Wirtschaftsbild* remains to be clarified. Although the small folders are reminiscent of the *Konvolut Knab-Stokreiter*, a different division can be observed here than with Camillo Sitte. The topics researched by Siegfried deal with statistics on population development, social burdens, land and rent prices. A special focus is on tax and levy payments at the provincial and municipal level in Austria. The last folder contains documents on building costs. The documents in the estate archive also reveal Siegfried Sitte's activity as a valuation expert for land price developments (Lacina, 1979). In connection with the present investigation, the preliminary surveys and calculations of Siegfried Sitte documented on small pieces of paper are particularly relevant for these expert opinions. Less because of their content, but because of the similar formats and presentation, which justify a comparison with the collection of materials.

## Meta-discussion

The reception of Sitte has taken different paths, but the interest in the issues raised by Camillo Sitte is unbroken. In the academic discourse on urban planning, sufficient attention has been paid to how attitudes towards Camillo Sitte changed and how the interpretation of his theories increasingly contrasted in the different schools (Semsroth et al., 2005, Wilhelm et al., 2008 and Bohl et al., 2009). Here, it is also worth mentioning again explicitly the cooptation of Sitte by the planners of National Socialism, which culminated in commemorations of Sitte's 100th birthday in 1943 - in Salzburg and Vienna. Siegfried Sitte was a guest at the celebration at the Vienna University of Technology, as can be seen from documents in the Sitte estate archive. In 1949, there was an exhibition on the work of the generations-spanning *Sitte family of architects*, and it was in this context that the essay by Josef Schwarzl was written. After that, it was quiet for a long time in the German-speaking world. Only when the family's estate came to the TU Wien in 1962 did a turnaround slowly begin (Wurzer, 1989).

In particular, the six-volume *Camillo Sitte Edition* by Christiane Crasemann Collins, Michael Mönninger and Klaus Semsroth, set new standards in the examination of Camillo Sitte's work by bringing together and critically commenting on all his writings and projects for the first time. Today, it represents the most comprehensive source for a discussion of Sitte's work, along with the Archive Estate. The edition thus took up a project of Siegfried and Heinrich Sitte. The first volume contains the plan for an edition of Camillo Sitte collected writings originally written by himself and edited by Siegfried and his brother Heinrich (Semsroth, 2008: 629-31). The list contains Camillo's Sitte's numerous, urban planning writings but no reference to a

second volume on the book *Der Städte-Bau*. In the introduction to the first volume, we learn that this project never came to fruition, however, due to the ongoing unstable situation in the aftermath of the First World War (Hnilica et al., 2008: 13-15). Siegfried Sitte only appears to a limited extent; he is only discussed in connection with the later reeditions of *Städte-Bau* or with the completion of his father's urban planning projects.

## Conclusions

Siegfried is rightly seen in close connection with his father and the second volume of *Städte-Bau*. *Das Wirtschaftsbild* is indeed inconceivable without this foundation (Sitte, 1997: I), but we were able to illustrate that Siegfried's main work *Das Wirtschaftsbild* is an independent work. The range of topics is clearly different from that which Camillo Sitte had laid out for his second volume in the *Konvolut Knab-Stokreiter*. There is nothing to add to Stokreiter's appreciation of this work on economic theory, but the view that this work is the actual implementation of Camillo Sitte's *Der Städte-Bau nach wissenschaftlichen und sozialen Grundsätzen* is too short-sighted. Siegfried Sitte has found his own profile based on partial aspects of Camillo's themes and has rolled them out in the comparably meticulous working method of his father.

With regard to the *Konvolut Knab-Stokreiter*, it is to be discussed whether there was ever a completed manuscript of the lost second volume of *Der Städte-Bau*, whether Camillo Sitte ever got beyond the stage of collecting materials for this work.

Conversely, the question arises whether we can assume that a nearly completed second volume would certainly have been published. On the surface: The upheavals of the First World War were not foreseeable for Camillo Sitte, even if he was concerned with unalterably valid—in his own words "natural"—developments in urban planning. It would therefore have been imperative to develop a new orientation of the concept compared to the situation at the turn of the century, in particular to reflect the social transformations and developments in the interwar period in particular and to offer adequate approaches to solutions.

This article provided new evidence and insight on the close relationship between Camillo and his son Siegfried Sitte, proofing the latter clearly deserves more attention within the Sitte reception.

## Acknowledgements

The authors want to thank Paulus Ebert, head of the TU Archiv and custodian of the Sitte estate archive, for his current support and help. Furthermore we want to state the special importance of the library of the institute of urban planning and its archive for our research, thus holding the largest body of specific relevant literature.

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