History of Urban Design

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Absolutism

Institute of Urbanism

The rise of Absolutism in the 16th century

- the autonomous cities reach their peak in the 16th century; at the same time the processes of political centralisation and re-feudalisation start
- consolidation of the power of the sovereign
- hierarchic incorporation of life into the state
- society oriented towards the sovereign's court

Conditions for the development of Absolutism

- the united French monarchy establishes itself against the Catholic Church
- the state presented and symbolised by the king ("I'etat ce moi")
- the importance of the royal buildings is underlined in the city's shape; churches and public buildings are deemed of secondary importance and are situated in relation to the royal axis
- these design tendencies spread across the cities' boundaries

The end of Absolutism

- in France: after the French Revolution 1789 and at the beginning of the 19th century (late Absolutism)
- in England and the rest of Europe: during the Industrial Revolution 1780-1830

Developments – the changes in urban typology

While a great number of autonomous cities stagnated, a number of capital cities and towns where dignitaries of state and church resided (Paris, Würzburg, Salzburg, St. Petersburg) were booming.

Developments – enlargement of planning elements

- the absolutist rulers' need for the representative and the prestigious was satisfied by the design ideas of the Baroque; large-scaled geometric systems came into use to underline the centres of power; the idea of the city as a synthesis of the arts (Gesamtkunstwerk) was flourishing;
- at the end of the 19th century absolutistic design comes into a creative crisis; the same design elements are carried on by Napoleon I to underline imperial symbols ("Roman" urban design)

The field of urban design is expanded by the integration of garden design

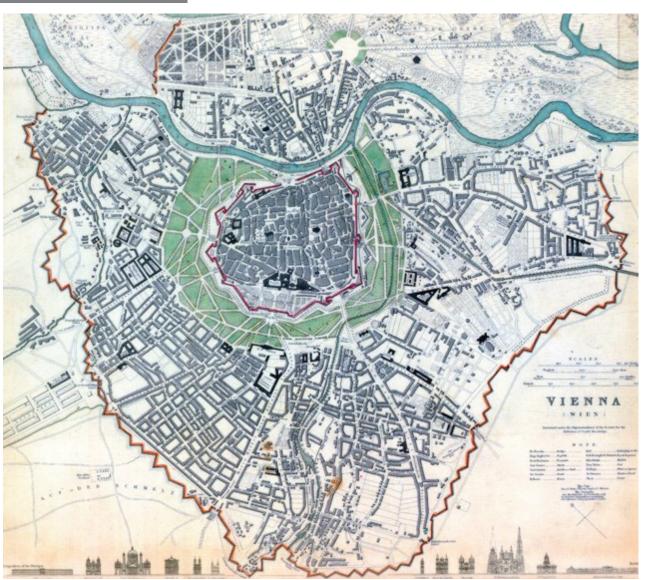
- in the 16th century, new aspects of urban design are introduced due to garden design and a rising interest in nature and hygienic aspects of urban organisation
- in the 17th and 18th century, garden design becomes an element of the city structure, decision up to the landlords
- a new kind of integrative planning comes into being by designing residences and gardens
- the wish to have absolute control over space, nature and man reflects in the design of the absolutistic parks and gardens





The birth of the public gardens and parks in late Absolutism

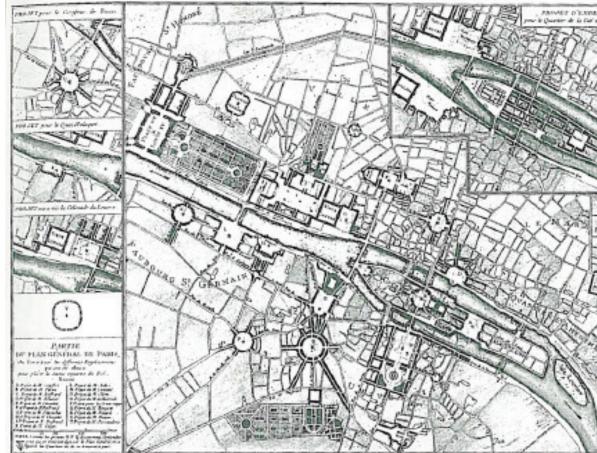
- public access to princes gardens in the 18th century
- creation of public promenades and green spaces (1661 London Vauxhall Gardens, Wiener Prater)
- new communal graveyards established at the outskirts of cities and existing graveyards relocated
- public gardens recognized as locations of common education



Basic elements of urban design in Absolutism

- the representative street
- the representative square
- the park and garden, urban greenery

Paris, 1765



The representative street

With the introduction of the Avenue the Baroque city develops a new type of urban and landscape element:

- the main axis
 - an aesthetic and representative idea
 - often based on the need to control public space
 - functional reasons
- the view axis
- the diagonal

The representative square

- more a decorative element than a functional square; the ideological backgrounds dominate over the functional purposes
- continuation of the big urban "mise an scene" in the concrete location

Basic types of absolutistic squares

- palace squares
 - serve as a link between the palace and the city; build up suspense and expectation of the palace
 - serve as a kind of ante room of the residences at the outskirts of the cities
- representative squares with statues of the sovereign the absolutistic symbol of the state

Shapes and systems of squares

- rectangle, octagon, rondo, semicircle
- focal point of two, three or more radial streets
- an innovation in urban design: the consciously planned sequence of squares provokes spatial images
- the elements in between (arches, portals, narrow parts of the street) link sequences or accentuate the borderline between street and square
- the new monumental buildings gain importance by integrating into large-scaled representative systems of squares; they serve as starting points for urban extensions

Parks und gardens

- artificial natural elements (trees, flower strips, water and fountains) serve as compositional and ornamental elements and relate to the city shape
- green and architectonic elements combine to form a work of art (Gesamtkunstwerk) and point out one centre
- never before seen homogeneity and size of the compositions



Types of urban green

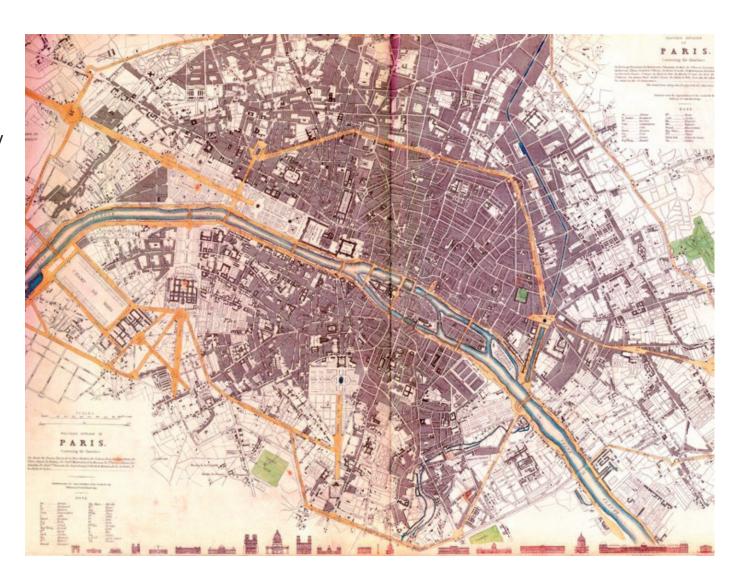
- palaces, (summer-)residences of the sovereign with typical features:
 - axial links between palace and garden
 - dominance of one building over a park landscape
 - arrangement of larger areas and their order from an initial point – three beams, focal points and avenues with random greenery
- walkways and promenades at the outskirts of the city highlighted by rows of trees
- public urban green (Prater, Place Royale)
- urban promenades (The Mall, Heinestraße, Praterstern)
- green squares ("Gartenplatz", "Salone")
 - in contrast to the absolutistic typologies, these are intended as functional squares
 - originally not planted



Urban developments – examples

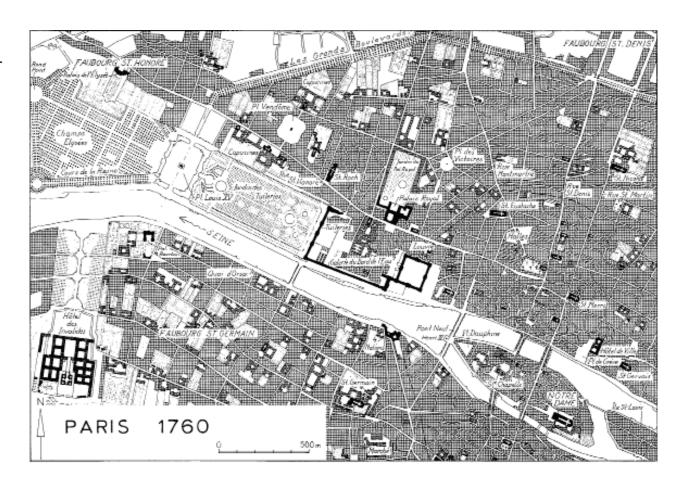
Paris

- in the 17th century the city grows from 220,000 to 510,000 inhabitants
- this has partly been provoked by the decision of Louis XIV. to destroy the fortifications that marked the edges of the city
- in the first half of the 17th century the urban design of Paris establishes itself as a mainstream culture, influenced by the founding of the academies
 - Academie Francaise (1635)
 - Academie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture (1648)
 - Academie Royale de Architecture (1671)



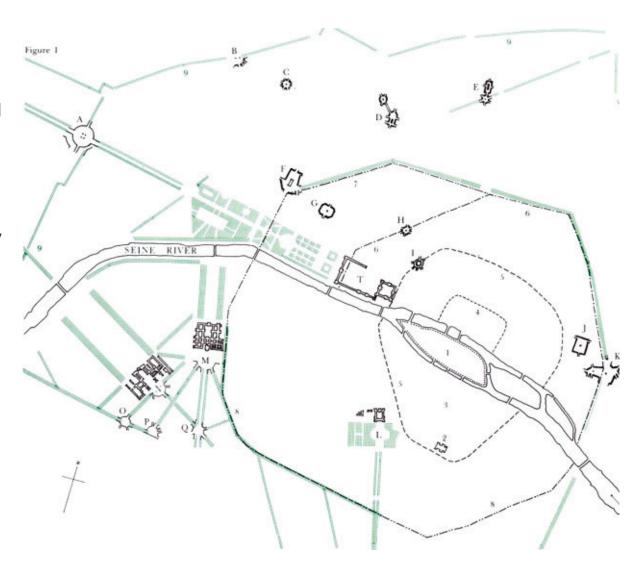
Converging factors for the homogenisation to a mainstream culture and the homogeneous city shape

- standardisation of building typologies, new conventions established
 - type of the urban residence (hotel)
 - church buildings
- the extension of the Louvre in the 1670's a model for residences of the aristocracy
- academically educated architects hired for the planning of the residences
- common housing for the citizens built by master builders forms the basis for academic architecture



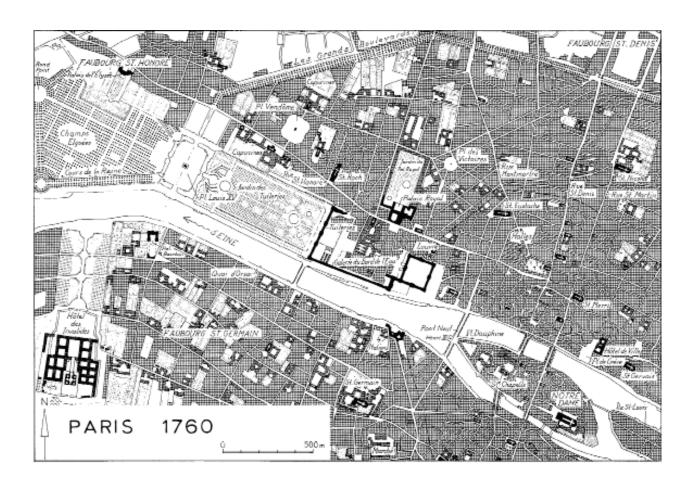
Champs-Elysees

- the realisation starts in 1563 with the building of the Tuilerie Palace and the adjacent Italian Renaissance Garden to the west
- herewith an extension to the west is predefined
- development of the Champs-Elysees started in 1667 by Le Notre with the idea to create a dynamic, axial and open ensemble
- Dom des Invalides (1671) compositionally linked to the Seine and the other ensembles by alleys of trees



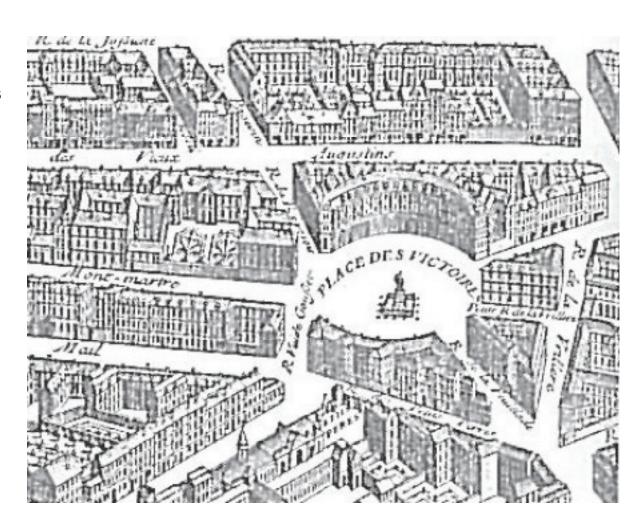
Grand Boulevards

- 1666 the fortifications (Bollwerk) on the north edge of the city are removed after royal power is strong enough and a longlasting peace is established
- birth of the Grand Boulevard (Avenue) as a city edge
- space defined by tree rows
- serve as fashionable strolling miles



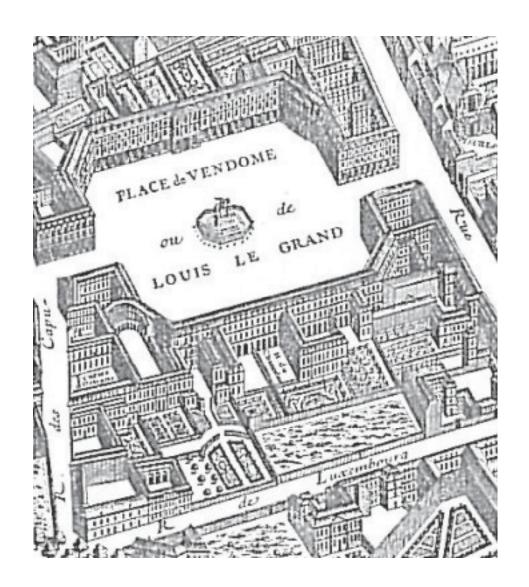
Place de Victoire (1685)

- a proper location for a statue of the King is needed; as a consequence, the Place de Victoire is established
- characteristic configuration of the ground plan
- homogeneous architectural frame by arch. Luis Mansarde



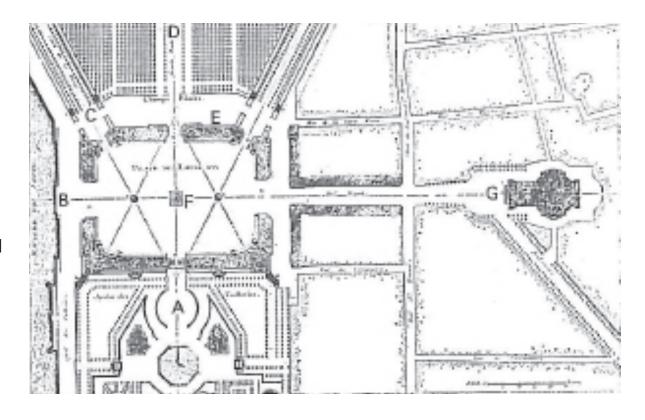
Place Vendome

- homogeneous effect due to a clear ground plan
- new and existing buildings receive a unified classicistic elevation



Place de la Concorde

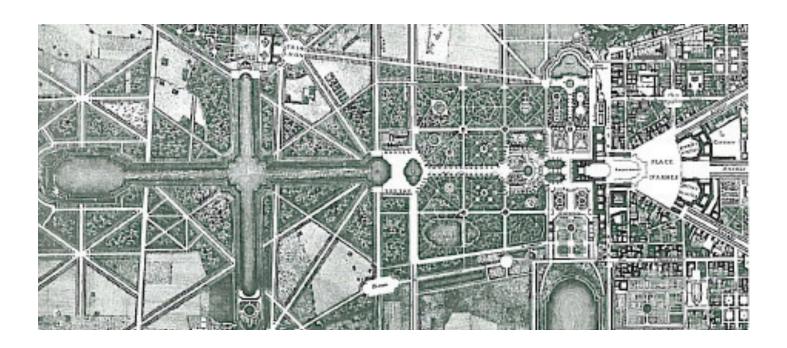
- planned as a king's square from 1755 to 1775
- innovation: the architectural frame is replaced by an artificial frame of green elements – the first open urban square
- characteristics
 - an important sequence in the axial development to the west
 - further extension of the Tuilerie Gardens with open spaces
 - open to the Seine
 - developed in the second dimension through the lateral axes of the Rue Royale and the Pont de la Concord, to the Palais Bourbon
 - the eastern part of the Rue Rivoli finished in 1805



Versailles (1724) – the symbol of concentrated political and economic power

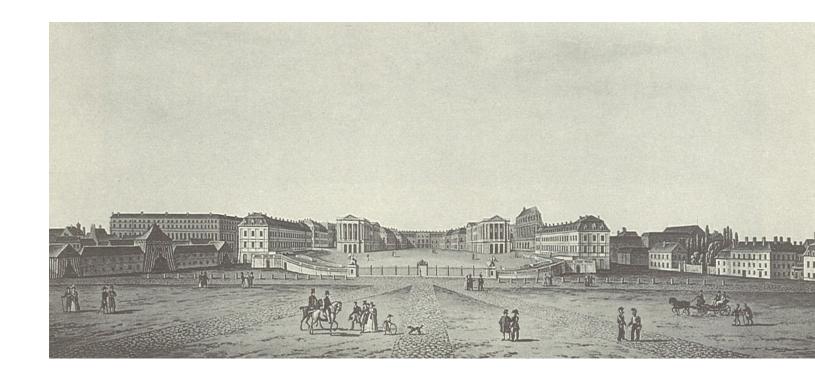
Le Notre's ideas:

- the landscape turns to a theatre scene for big celebrations (influenced by Vaux le Vicomte)
- the whole park can be experienced from one point
- the different elements are subordinated to the synthesised composition
- the main axis conveys the impression of unity

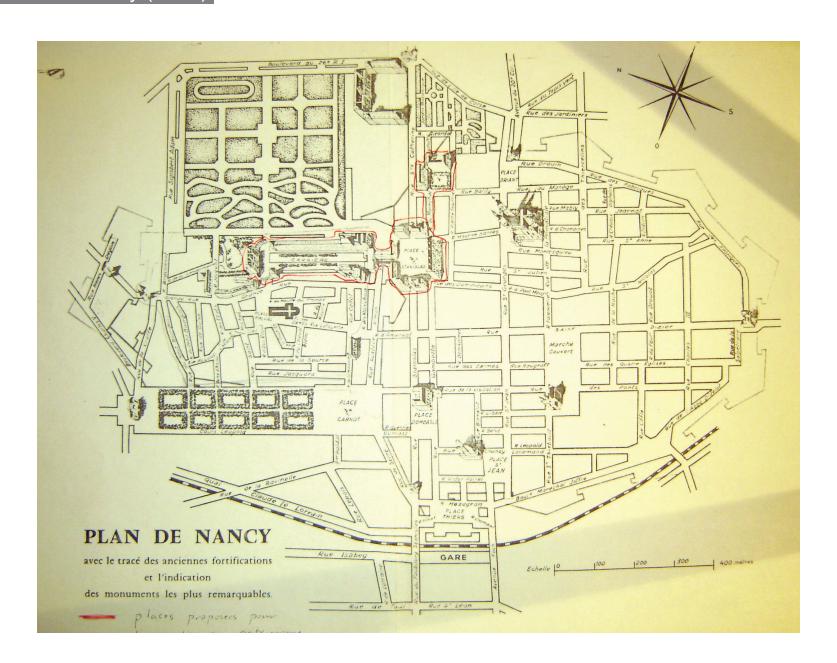


Characteristics of Versailles

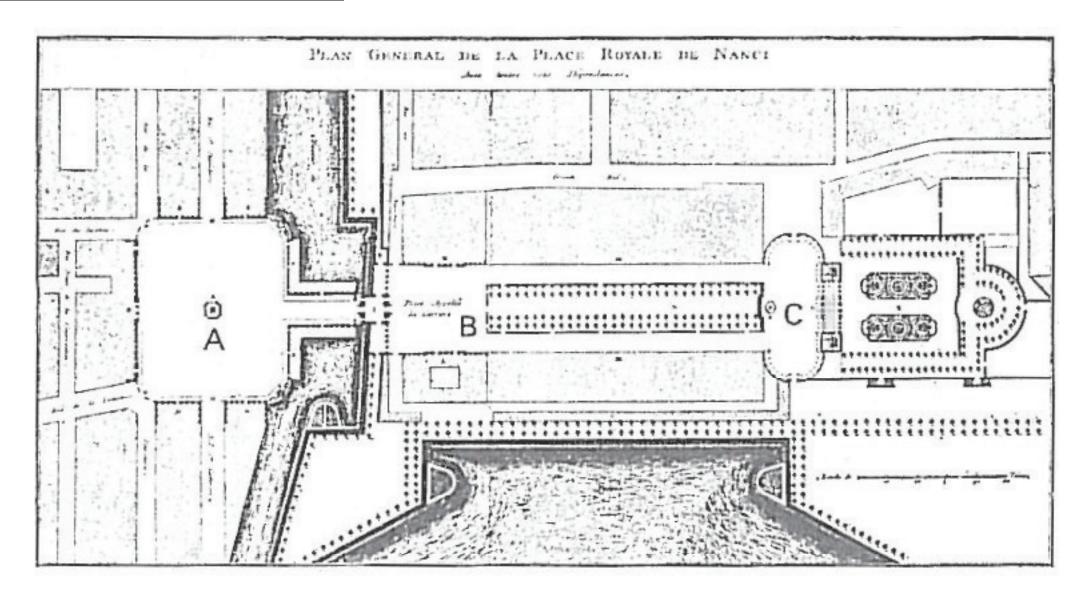
- direct links between the design of the urban and park fronts
- the radial street directions as a reflection on the Piazza del Popolo in Rome
- later on, the radial streets served as a model for the planning of Washington



Place Stanislas in Nancy (1750)



Place Stanislas in Nancy (1750)

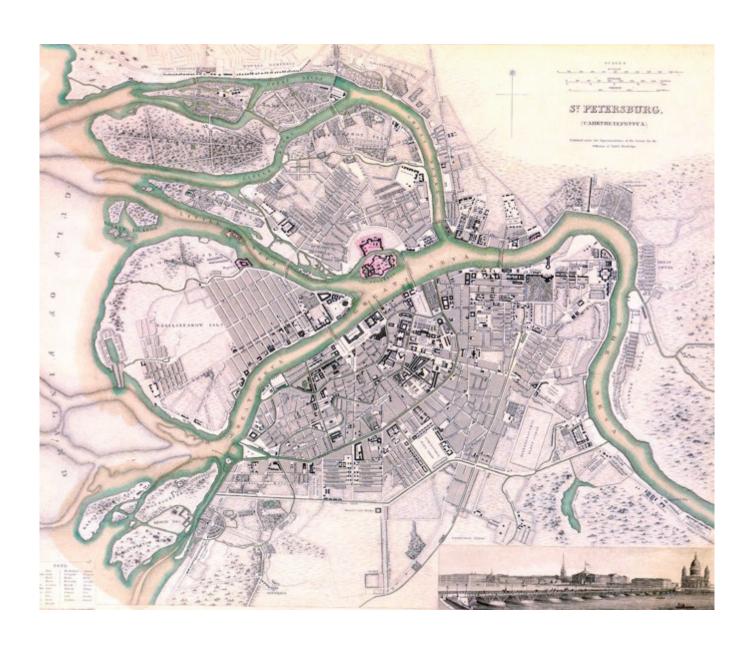


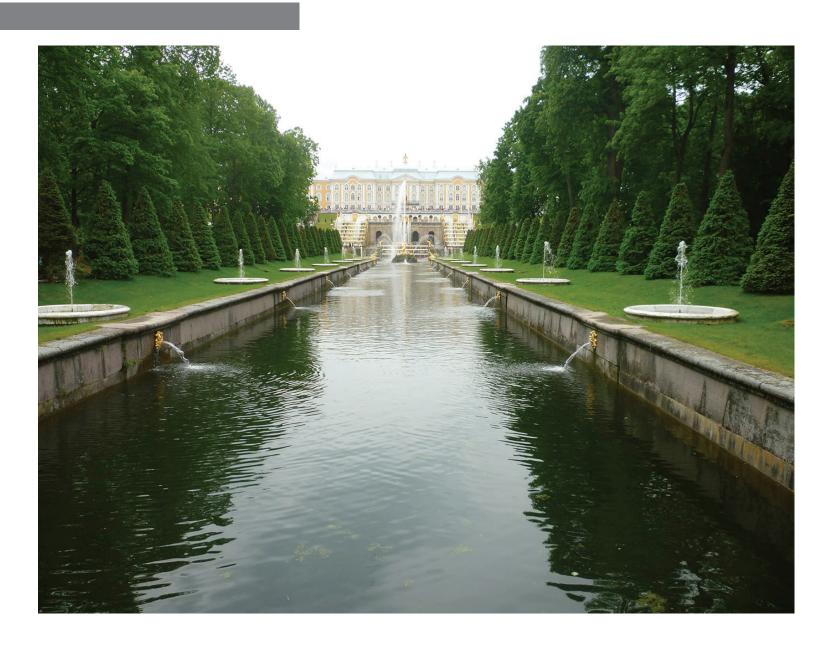
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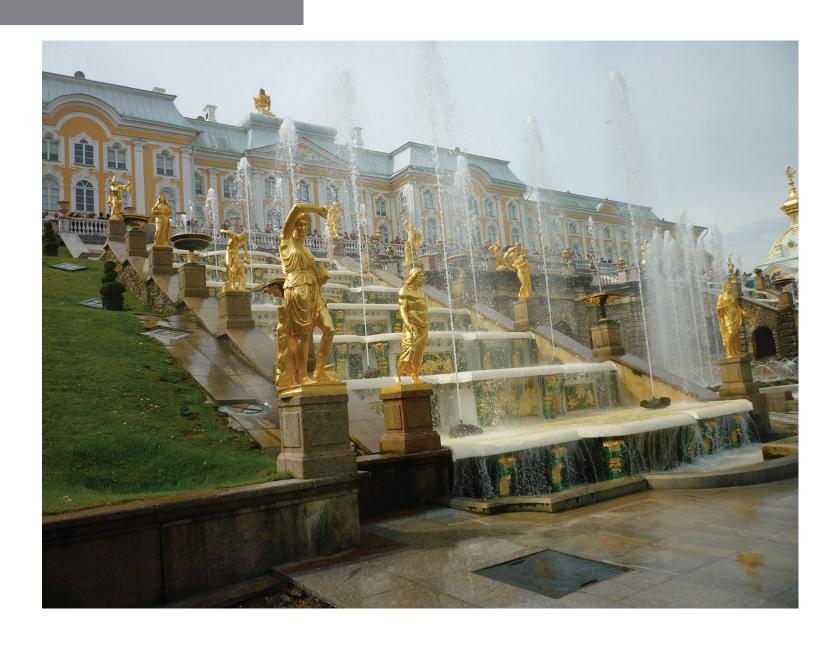


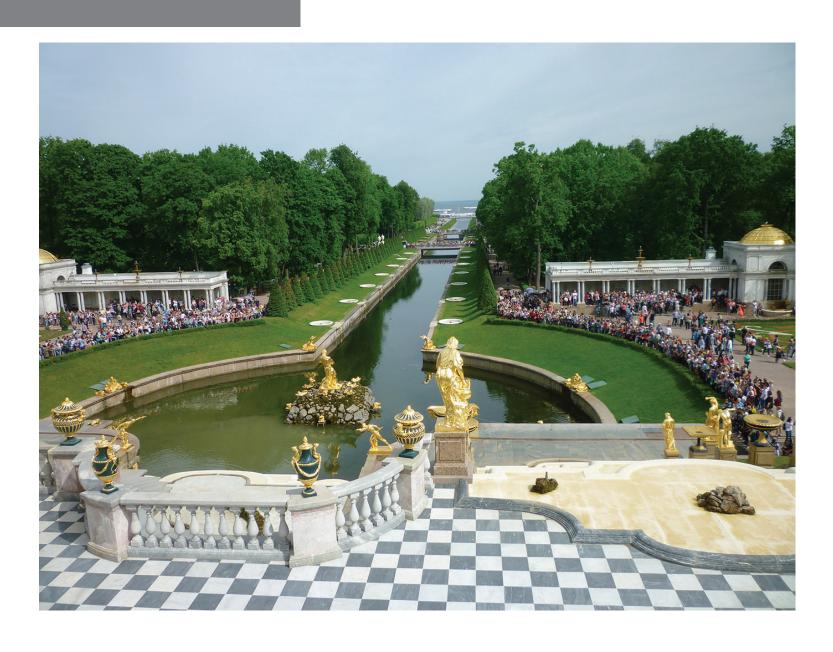


History of Urban Design | Absolutism St. Petersburg - founded 1712



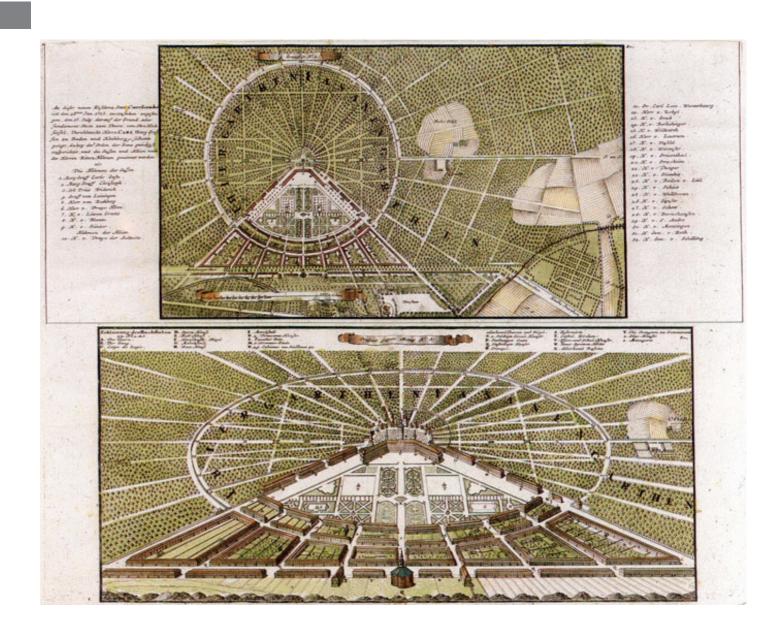








Karlsruhe (1715)

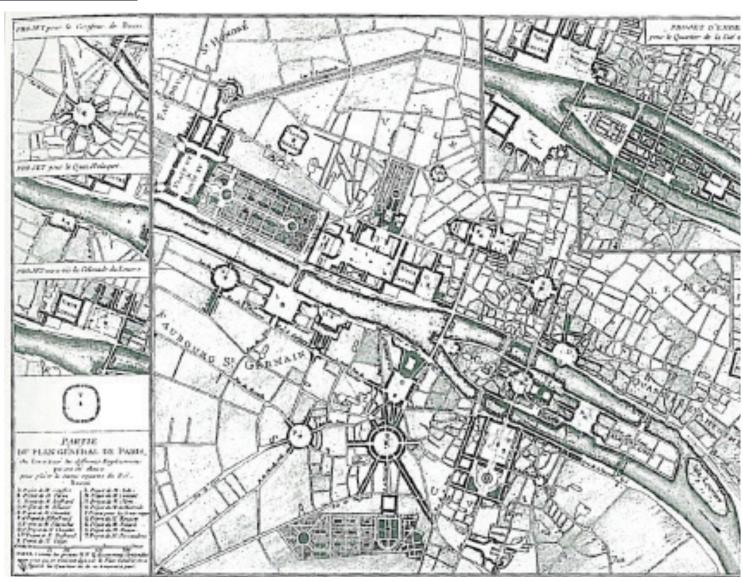


Urban enhancement (Stadtverschönerung)

Paris – plan of Patte (1767)

"The beauty of a city is based not only on one ensemble of buildings planned on a regular ground plan. The visitor must not be able to perceive everything in a moment, but should perceive permanently new situations, awaking its curiosity."

The apogee of absolutistic urban design?



The differentiated English approach

- from the 17th century England is a constitutional monarchy
- an open city without fortifications
- most powerful economic city
- in the 18th century the number of inhabitants reaches almost a million
- no urban planning; in contrast to Amsterdam with its homogeneous urban extension plan and Paris with its monumental ensembles
- 1666 plan of Christopher Wren und Robert Hook fails
 - no absolutistic monarchy as in France
 - limited economic possibilities of the monarchy
 - plot owners have the right of say
 - individual green elements (squares) established as a result of private initiatives

The basic elements of the urban design in England

The Crescent, The Circus, The Square

An ensemble of uniform houses, as a generous urban design motive







The basic elements of the urban design in England

The Street, The Lane





The basic elements of the urban design in England

The Mews
A subordinate lane formed by secondary
houses intended to serve the representative
row of houses alongside the street/square/
circus/crescent



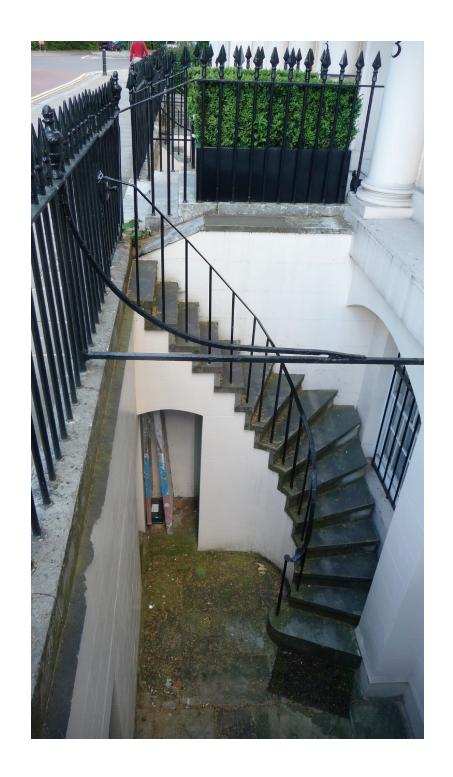
The basic elements of the urban design in England

The row of uniform houses, "English courts"



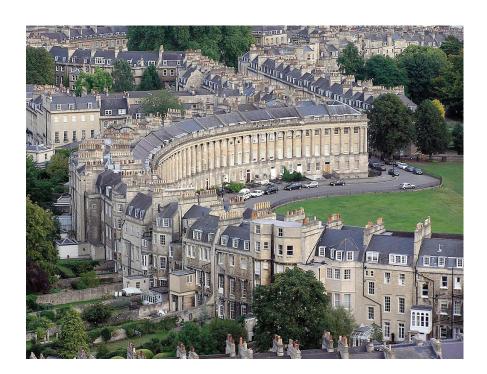
The basic elements of the urban design in England

The row of uniform houses, "English courts"



Bath Ensemble

John Wood the Elder, John Wood the Younger, around 1770 The Queens Square, The Circus, The Royal Crescent







Bath Ensemble

John Wood the Elder, John Wood the Younger, around 1770 The Royal Crescent



Bath Ensemble

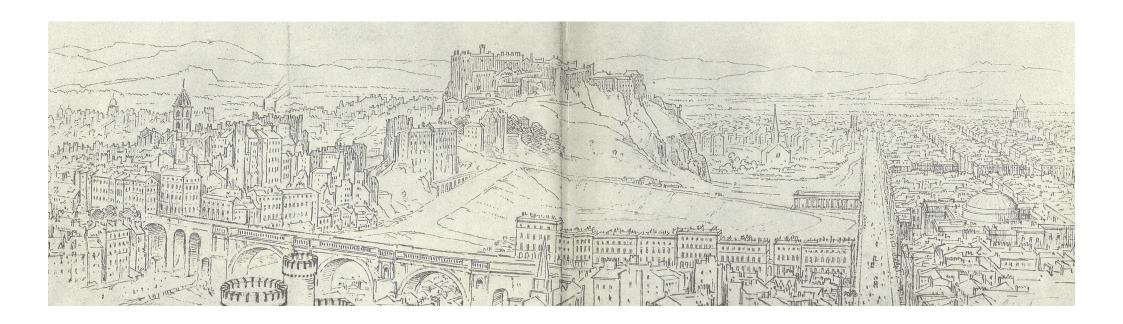
John Wood the Elder, John Wood the Younger, around 1770
The architectural frame formed by uniform classicist houses





Edinburgh New Town

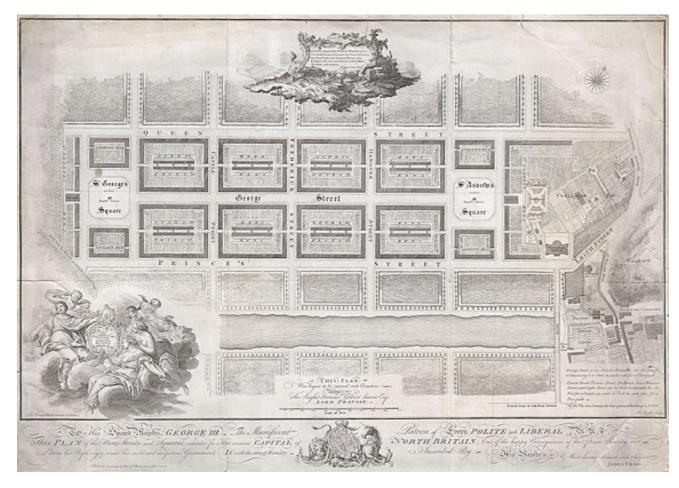
James Craig, 1760-1830



Edinburgh New Town

James Craig, 1760-1830

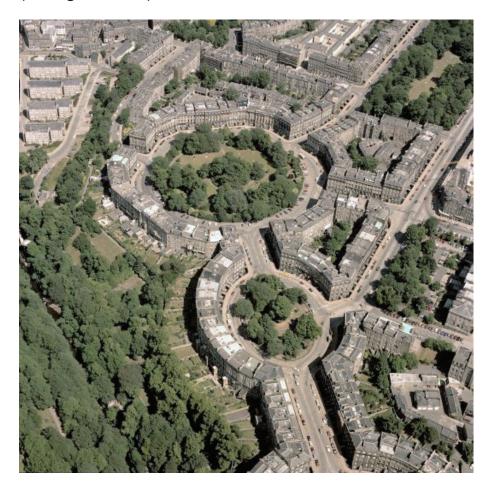
The largest planned urban extension at the time and a masterpiece of urban design

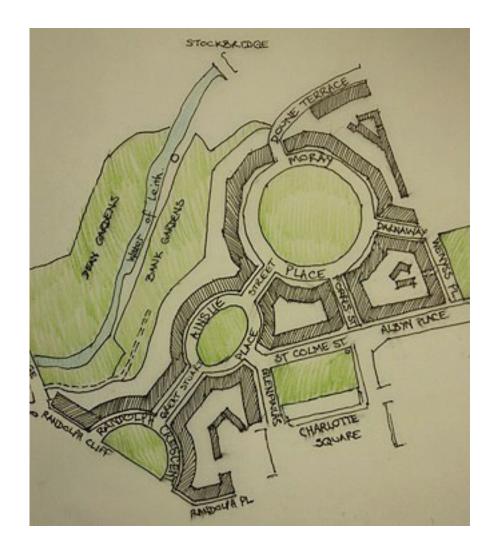


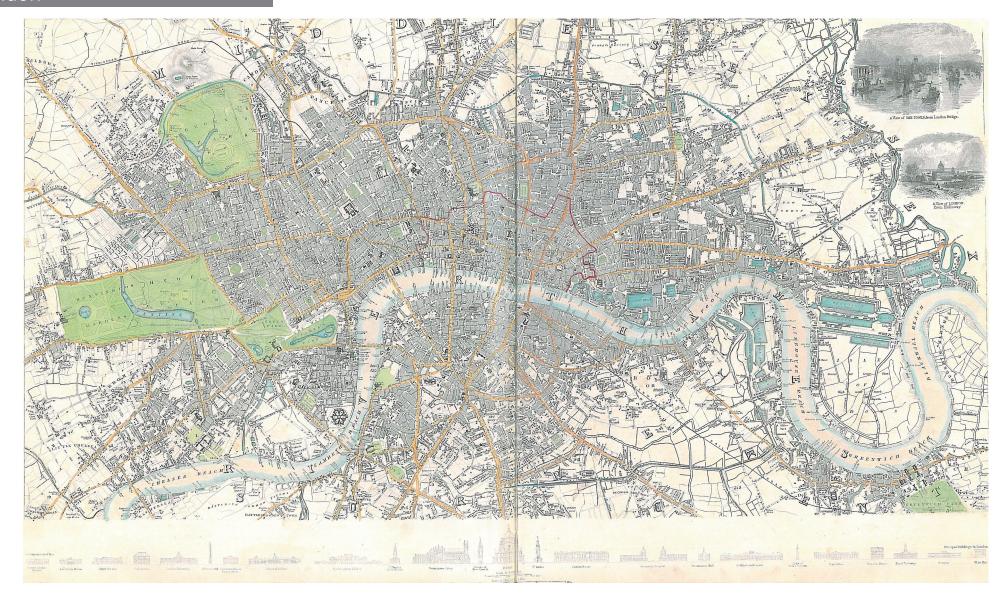
Edinburgh Moraj Estate

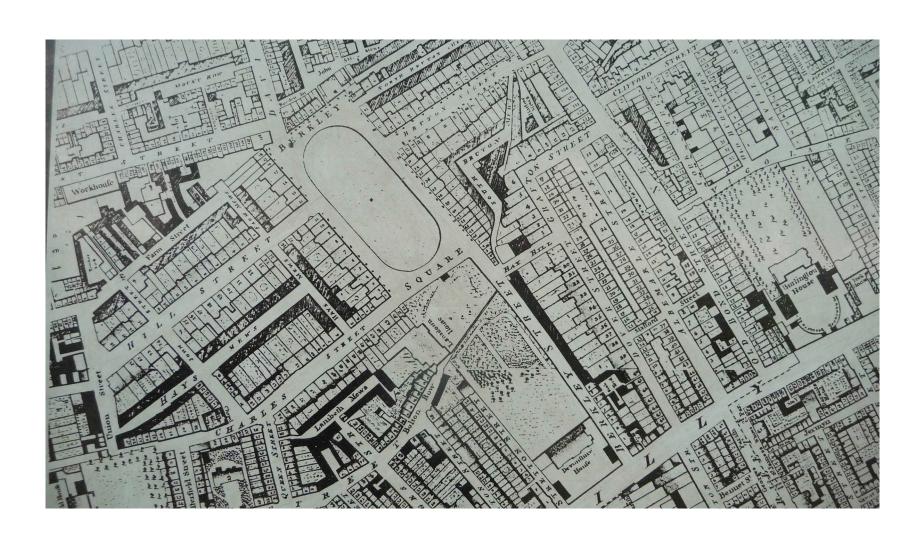
James Gillespie Graham, 1822

Randolph Crescent, Ainslie Place, Moraj Place (decagon-circle)





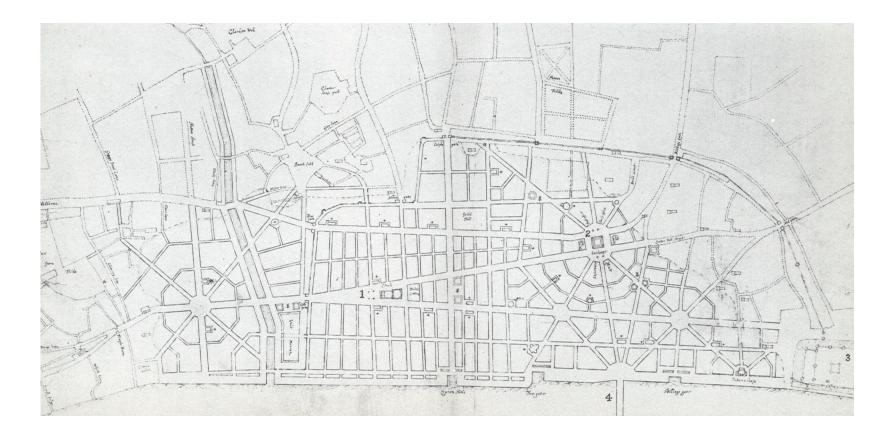




London

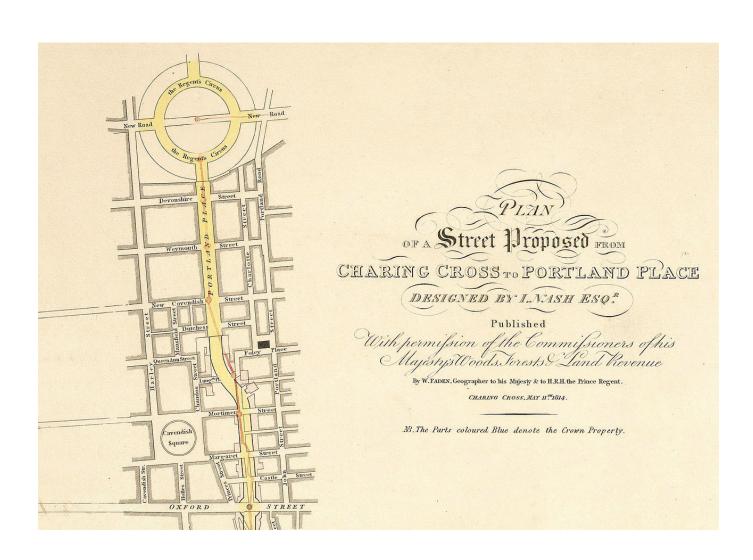
London Fire 1666 and Improvement Plan by Christopher Wren





London

Regents Crescent and Portland Place John Nash, 1806

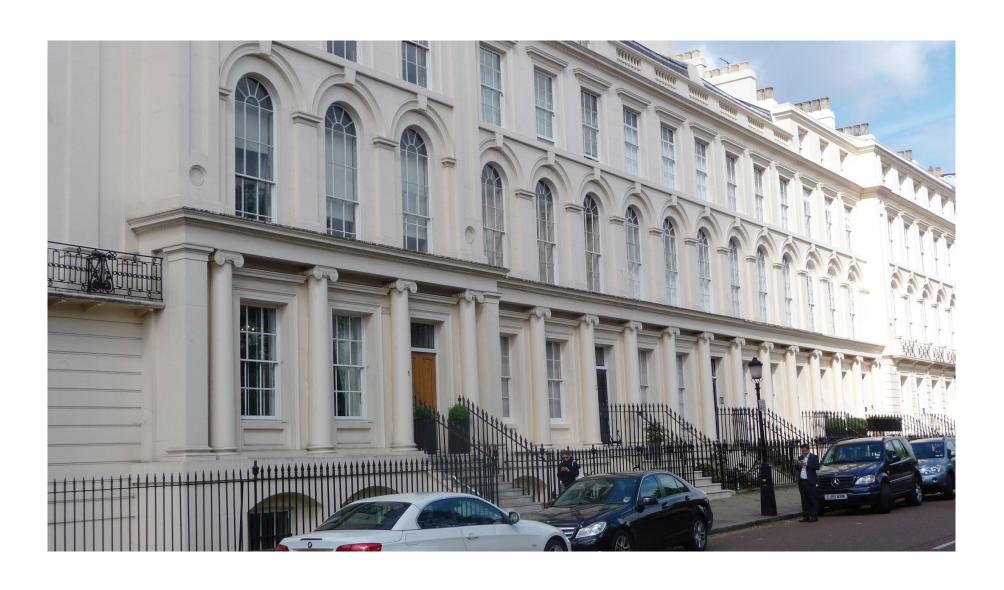


London

Regents Crescent and Portland Place John Nash, 1806













The English landscape garden from the 18th century as a counterpart to the spatial organisation of the Baroque

Influences:

- new bourgeois consciousness
- planned from the very beginning as a work of art for the public
- the landscape garden is a product of the Age of Enlightenment
- bourgeois criticism of Baroque's rationalism; nature is perceived as a contradiction to the lifestyle of the royal court society
- pantheistic moral philosophy: nature is a reality that is unspoiled by civilisation; the unity of nature is permeated by God; man remains in a passive relation to it
- English Puritanism as a background for underlining the natural elements in landscape gardens in contrast to the Baroque idea of control and artificial shape-giving (Rousseau: The compulsion of a regulated nature is similar to social compulsion)
- the landscape garden has an enormous influence on urban design in the Industrial Age

History of Urban Design | Absolutism Regents Park





Regents Park





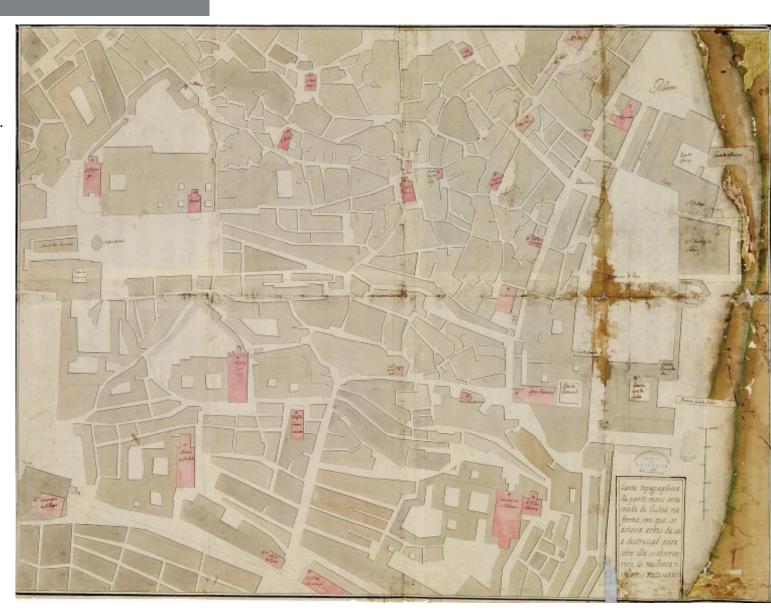
The end of Absolutisms

- the ideas of the Age of Enlightenment in the second half of the 18th century offer the philosophic basis for the French Revolution
 - man defined by his reason
 - emphasis on emancipation and self-determination
- the French Revolution of 1789 puts a clearly defined caesura between the absolutistic ruling sovereign and the bourgeois parliamentarian state
- the Industrial Revolution (1780-1830)

Age of Enlightment – Lisbon

The reconstruction of Lisbon
The medieval city, destroyed by the
earthquake, fire and tsunami in 1755.

The rebuilding of the city was directed by the prime-minister Marques de Pombal.



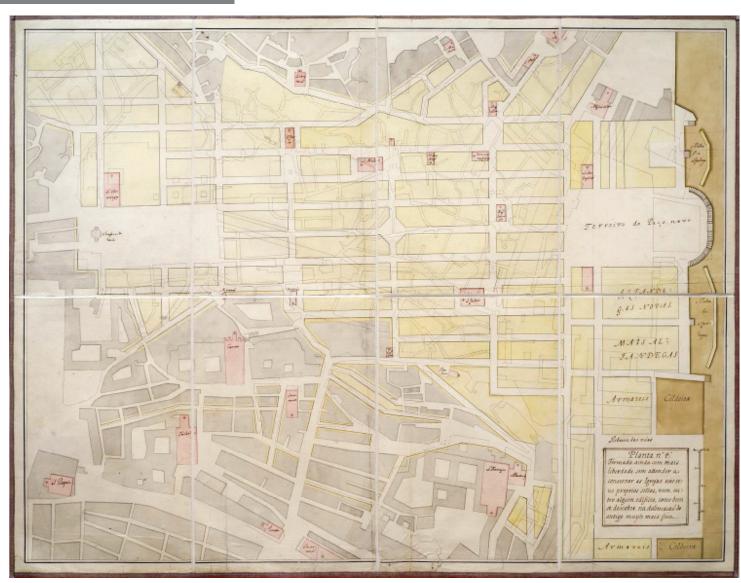
Age of Enlightment – Lisbon

The reconstruction of Lisbon One of the reconstruction plans.



Age of Enlightment – Lisbon

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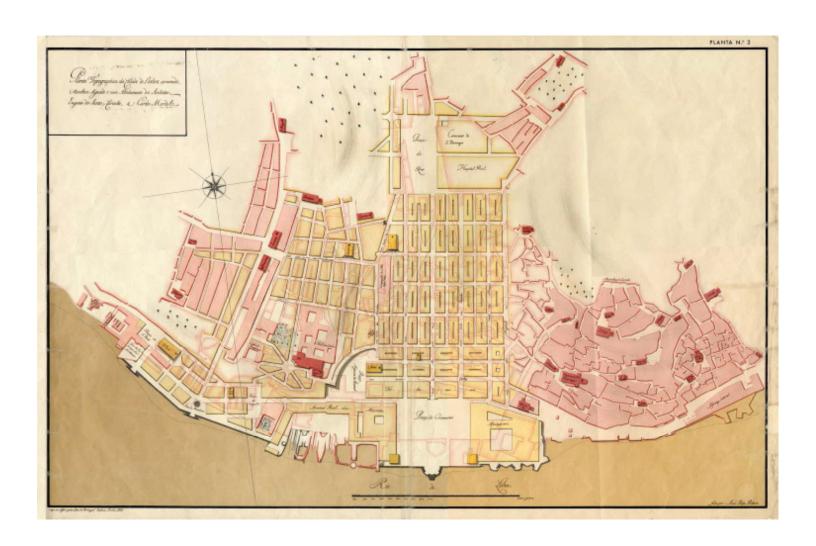
Age of Enlightment – Lisbon

The reconstruction of Lisbon One of the reconstruction plans.



Age of Enlightment – Lisbon

The final reconstruction plan of Eugenio dos Santos and Carlos Mardel
The plan was a precursor of the rational urban design of the European bourgeois societies of the 19th c. and a symbol of the Age of Enlightenment



Age of Enlightment – Lisbon

The precursor of modernity – Lisbon The Praca de Comercio – a symbol of the Age of Enlightement





Age of Enlightment – Lisbon

The precursor of modernity – Lisbon The Triumphal Arch an the Rua Augusta





Age of Enlightment – Lisbon

The precursor of modernity – Lisbon

The traditional Praca Rossio re-designed for the National Theater in the spirit of the Renaissance The newly planned Praca da Figueira



