



**DEVELOPMENT OF A STRATEGY FOR THE DESIGN
OF A SOCIAL DISTRICT IN VIENNA THROUGH
SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS**



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Development of a Strategy for the Design of a Social District in Vienna through Sociological Analysis

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ABSTRACT

The Viennese social housing system is worldwide famous for its historic tradition and its efficiency. The Viennese policy aims at including the largest part of the population, favouring Austrian and EU and EEA citizens. Furthermore, the system of competition and subsidies stimulate architects to design projects accounting for economic, ecological and social sustainability in addition to the architecture quality. Thus, the city offers a broad variety of design examples, each with its own characteristics, that create a remarkable projects catalogue from which it is possible to analyse the main urban development tendencies of the city.

Starting from the literature that precisely describes the social housing system in Vienna and depicts the current housing market situation in the Austrian capital, the thesis aims at delineating a development strategy along the right riverbank of the Danube River, in districts 2nd and 20th (namely, *Leopoldstadt* and *Brigittenau*), integrating aspect of urban design with the main sociological and architectural features of the social housing projects. Through the sociological analysis, involving different stakeholders and experts in the field, the issues that may exist in this apparently perfect system and the urban problems of the area along the river are detected. The final strategical guideline attempts at laying the foundations for a potential development centred on the main features of social housing, fostering the social wellness of Viennese inhabitants.

INTRODUCTION

- 1 purpose of the research and research questions
- 2 relevance of the research for the architecture field
- 3 limitations of the research
- 4 dissertation outlines

This introductory chapter aims at giving an overview of the research, highlighting its most relevant components. The first paragraph introduces the purpose of the work, and the selected research questions that structure it. The second paragraph outlines the reasons behind the choice of the topic and the relevance it has in the field of architecture. Then, the third paragraph clarifies the overlooked aspects that could be objects of further future studies. The final paragraph introduces the topics treated in each of the chapters, anticipating the comprehensive structure of the thesis.

1 PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The idea of the thesis derives from the will to conciliate in a unique project three different aspects. The first element is the theoretical knowledge of the Viennese social housing system. The second is the sociological research that aims at disclosing further aspects of the system and the possible faced problems. The last element is an architectural development strategy focusing on an undeveloped area of the city, which could host a new urban renewal in the frame of social housing. The strategy is created starting from a theoretical and sociological inquiry and will possibly allowing further future developments, in a long-term perspective.

The first step of the research consists of analysing the existing research material on the topic to have a general understanding of how the system and the related laws and policies work. This step is crucial to address the research in a correct direction and to formulate the interview questions that constitute part of the sociological aspect of the thesis.

The sociological analysis of the research is developed on both quantitative and qualitative data. The quantitative data mainly consists of statistical data on the districts that surround the area considered as potential project site: an urban study of the neighbourhoods with an investigation on the demographic components constitutes the starting assumptions for the formulation of the interview questions. These questions are addressed to different

professionals involved in the provision or management of different aspects of the social housing system. The collected answers constitute the qualitative material to analyse for a better understanding of the needs of the city population and to translate them into an architectural strategy.

The formulated research questions allow a subdivision of the work in subsequent phases to create a strategical scheme that leads to implementing guidelines to architectural and urban design based on solid preconditions.

The thorough analysis of the structure of the social housing system in Vienna leads to the first research question: *what problems may arise from the Viennese social housing system?* The discussion of these possible issues is advanced as a conclusion of the first chapter, which presents a theoretical framework of the social housing structure. Secondly, the analysis deals with the urban structure of two districts of the city of Vienna, namely *Leopoldstadt* (the second) and *Brigittenau* (the twentieth), addressing the second research question: *what are the peculiarities, from the urban and demographic point of view, of Leopoldstadt and Brigittenau?* The analysis of the local area is advanced in chapter 3.

The two research questions are analysed thoroughly through the interviews of various stakeholders working in the field. The final purpose to which those research questions lead is the developing an architectural strategy, in the frame of social housing, that re-establish a connection of the city with the Danube River and at the same time pursues the social sustainability target, focal point of Vienna policy.

2 RELEVANCE OF THE RESEARCH FOR THE ARCHITECTURAL FIELD

The thesis thus attempts at contributing to the research on Viennese social housing in two ways. First, the study (as anticipated in the previous paragraph) integrates different aspects. The second innovative element lays in the development idea of the considered area.

2.1 A synthesis of different aspects

The idea behind the overall work is to consider different facets of a unique central topic. The thematic of social housing involves several disciplines, establishing a strong interaction between them. Housing affordability comprehends the socio-political aspects as well as the economic and the architectural ones. For the sake of this research, the considered perspectives are sociological and architectural.

Apart from interaction among different disciplines, another viewpoint of the synthesis aspect is the attempt at formulating theoretical assumptions as a starting point of the architectural strategy, which instead constitutes a pragmatic response for solving the emerged issues.

The relevant element of the project is the delineation of a strategy for implementing a new urban settlement of subsidized housing through sociological analysis. A first analysis of the existing literature integrates historical, administrative, and sociological aspects of the topic, bringing together several focuses usually developed separately. The sociological study is further advanced through the interview campaign, articulated in three main sections. The first accounts for aspects of social housing in general, which are clarified or expanded by the interviewees. The second regards the human element, thus the users and the excluded ones. The third aims at deepening the insight on the considered districts and on the area alongside the river, chosen as a potential urban development. This last section, although part of the sociological analysis, is thematically detached from the previous parts being the outcome of the urban analysis. The other two are instead strictly dealing with the issues and problems emerging after an examination of the system in place and its policies.

2.2 The development area

The choice of the potential site for the project is not innovative *per se* since its role inside the city has been already an object of discussion and since it is partially overcoming an urban transformation. The innovation is on the interpretation of the space and the target to whom a new development could be addressed.

The area is constituted by a strip of land that lays on the right riverbank of the Danube River, extended for about 6 km and situated inside the territory of districts number 2 and 20 of Vienna. Although the favourable and central position, the area is poorly accessible, is barely used by the citizens and is poor in infrastructure. With the recent evolution of *Brigittenau* and especially *Leopoldstadt*, the riverbank is currently part of urban transformation plans, mainly addressed to luxurious developments.

The urban proposal advanced with this research work aims at allowing access to recreational and public spaces to all the citizens, to better integrate the site into the city fabric, and suggests an architectural solution for a more socially sustainable project. This last purpose finds its best realization in a subsidized project in the social housing framework.

Thus, the 6 km-long area becomes the focus for integrating the riverside with the city of Vienna. The main purpose is not to detail a specific program for the entire riverside, but to study in a general way the functions to implement and the potential modifications of the traffic viability in the nearby streets, to allow further future developments. In this way, in a view to expanding the social housing settlement, different proposals could be incorporated so to hypothetically maintain one of the fundamental features of the social housing Viennese architecture: the implementation of a variety of architectural languages to avoid repetitiveness of the same structure, promoting instead the importance of design identity even in subsidized and affordable projects.

3 LIMITATION OF THE RESEARCH

The research presents in general some limitations due to the choice of methodology and in some cases to a lack of resources.

Some disciplines that are strictly connected with the social housing development are neglected to expand the sociological and the architectural analysis. The economic side of the policies regulating the social housing in Vienna is not the object of investigation and is only partially considered to give an overall framework

of the system. Another subject considered nowadays as central in the development of social housing in Vienna is environmental sustainability, which although not completely ignored it is not central in the thesis apparatus: design strategies are suggested concerning this component too, but not deeply analysed.

For what concerns more specifically the sociological investigation, some limitations are intrinsic to the choice of implementing an interview campaign as a research technique, as it is for example the non-standardization of the results (Corbetta, 2015). This feature has pros and cons: as advantages, it leaves more freedom in the answer to the interviewees, highlighting their viewpoint on a topic. The disadvantages regard the difficulties in comparing and synthesizing the results. Furthermore, the sample is quite reduced, thus complicating a generalization of the results and an extension of the acquired knowledge to the overall Viennese population. The personal interpretation of the researcher plays a role too. In fact, the assumptions derived from the interviewee's opinions on certain topics become a guideline for the implementation of the architectural strategy. Since the interviewed stakeholders tend to have different (sometimes opposite) viewpoints on the same theme, also depending on the type of professional role they cover, an interpretation of who analyses the results certainly influences the outcome. Some limitations are due to the historic period in which the research is conducted: because of the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic outbreak in 2020, some direct contacts at the social level are not always possible and reduce the field of action. In fact, the interviews held are solely addressed to stakeholders, thus experts in the discipline, and not to the rest of the population. In addition, accounting for the perspective of the non-expert would have required a guided structure of the interview, to avoid the risk of collecting strictly personal opinions. This would have presented complications because no sociology experts are involved in the research process. Thus, the most convenient choice for such a type of study in such a historical situation is to narrow the sample to stakeholders, who are experts in the field or representatives of a community.

4 DISSERTATION OUTLINES

This final paragraph illustrates the topics faced in each of the chapters. The thesis structure develops following the sequence of different phases that leads from the most general overview of the topic until the process of architectural guidelines, presented as a strategy for the issues raised. The work is subdivided into five chapters (apart from the introduction) and a conclusive chapter. The following paragraphs briefly delineate the content of each chapter and the reason they are part of the research unfolding.

4.1 The research method

The very first chapter of the thesis delineates the research method that is put in place for the thesis development, and it is subdivided into three paragraphs. The first paragraph sheds light on the interaction between sociology and architecture and the phase of the research in which the sociological investigation supports architecture. The aim is to justify the choice for the type of research and to clarify how a sociological analysis can become a support for an urban project in general and in the particular case considered.

The second paragraph analyses those that are considered the primary data of the research, thus the first-hand data, collected specifically for the sake of this study. The main data collection takes place in the interview campaign, which allows gathering information about specific topics previously selected. The interview questions are formulated on the basis of the investigation of the secondary data, in order to select specific missing information or to have the interviewees' perspective on certain issues. Another type of primary source is the direct observation of the Viennese urban environment. In particular, several social housing complexes (the most recent and popular) were visited, so to have a direct perception of the use of the public areas and the arrangements of spaces at an urban level. The site of interest was visited as well to experience the difficulties that interest its accessibility lack of public infrastructures, especially for pedestrians.

The third and last paragraph defines the secondary data. The preliminary investigation for the theoretical premises on social housing and the analysis of the demography of the districts is based on data that were not collected specifically for the sake of this research but derive from previous studies. These types of data comprehend the existing literature on the topic and statistical data collected by the city of Vienna, regarding its population and urban structure. Thus, the first include the other studies previously conducted on how the system of social housing works in Vienna and its history. The seconds are all the statistics available on the Vienna government database, that concern the features of each of the twenty-three districts and their population.

4.2 The social housing system

The second chapter focuses on the theoretical investigation of the system organization, serving as a framework for the overall work. The chapter is subdivided to analyse separately each component of the system. The first paragraph clarifies the historical roots of social housing and its development until the current situation. Affordable rents are strongly part of the Austrian tradition, and it is fundamental to understand how the system has developed and which are the differences between the original system and the current one.

The second and third paragraphs concentrate on the social system of nowadays structure, illustrating how the associations and the municipal government manage the rents from a logistic, economic and political point of view. The second gives a general overlook of the real estate panorama in Vienna, whereas the third concentrates on how the provision of the flats is organized.

The fourth and fifth paragraphs introduces the main issues that raise from some of the peculiarities of the management system and the new challenges that the city is facing in the field of subsidised flats. These two paragraphs, outcome of the analysis brought on in the first, second and third paragraphs, constitute the premises for the formulation of the interview questions.

4.3 The urban analysis

This chapter is based on the statistical data consulted on the Vienna government site and the austrian statistic database. The first paragraph describes the urban development of the districts *Brigittenau* and *Leopoldstadt*, concentrating in particular on the evolution of the Danube River, which has a central role in the selection of the project site. The river, although representing a central element in the evolution of the city, has been for many years neglected before its regulation, object of analysis in this first section.

The second paragraph concentrates instead on the various elements that compose a descriptive overview of the two neighbourhoods, from a demographic and urban point of view. The statistical data about the population evolution and composition are the main source for the sub-paragraph about the demographic situation, whereas all the other sub-paragraphs constitute an overview of the urban evolution and structure of the districts.

The third paragraph clarifies the choice for the site on the Danube riverbank and the approach to the interpretation of the space that is then further explored in phase of .

In the entire chapter, the explanation is sided by illustrations of the district to highlight and analyse the geographic composition and structure of the area.

4.4 The sociological analysis

The fourth chapter is centred on the analysis of the previously collected data. First of all, the way in which the various stakeholders were chosen is explained. The sample is quite heterogeneous for what concerns the professional roles that these people cover, but they all can be defined as stakeholders, meaning part of those who influence the process of conceiving, designing and managing social housing. Then, the second paragraph illustrates the motivations behind the choice of the questions proposed to the interviewees, deriving from the analysis of the secondary data. After the delineation of the interview actors and questions, the material collected is analysed. Different themes, in some cases corresponding to single questions, in some other cases not, are selected and inspected. Through direct quotes

and personal reflections each themes is presented, discussing all the important issues mentioned and delineating a new, more thorough pictures of the subjects presented in the preceding chapters.

4.5 The strategy

The final chapter, entitled “Proposal for a development strategy” all the various introduced topic are gathered in a unique attempt to delineate a specific urban development strategy for the selected area, starting from the primary and the secondary data collected. The aim is not to deliver a precisely defined design, but to designate a series of steps to improve the quality of urban life in the specific area. A key element to increase the social conditions and well-being of the citizens is social housing itself, that becomes part of the strategy. The final goal is thus to set the stage for a potential new development along the riverbank, avoiding commercialization and luxury, that would pursue the interests of a restrict group of citizens.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1 architecture and sociological research

2 the primary data

3 the secondary data

1 ARCHITECTURE AND SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH

The two disciplines that govern the thesis research, are analysed to create a strategy for the development of a socially sustainable district. Hereafter, the scheme which is followed to obtain the foreseen result and the definition of social sustainability are illustrated.

1.1 The adopted strategy

One of the focuses of the thesis, as illustrated in the introductory chapter, is the integration of a sociological investigation with the implementation of a strategy for an architectural and urban design. The expected result is the formulation of a strategic approach to develop an urban proposal through sociological research, based on the analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data. The context for the application of this strategy is in this particular case the city of Vienna. The components that influence the feasibility of such a system are manifold and intricately interconnected. For this reason, the possibility of implementing the system studied and the consequent research steps which are formulated throughout the investigation is partially analysed. Implementing an analogous project in other cities in the European context, thus with some similar or shared policies, is analysed only from a theoretical point of view, since it depends also on political and administrative aspects which would lead the thesis focus out of context. Thus, apart from a potential analysis of the social housing system features that are exportable, the architectural attributes of the development are considered as a possible solution to some common issues arising in the application of affordable housing systems in other countries. This specific point of the study is possible thanks to the collection of the viewpoints of the experts about the topic during the conduction of the interview campaign. The architectural perspective permeates the overall research: the analysis of the central subject that could be potentially examined from several angles, concentrate on the architectural viewpoint. The sociological element is interpreted as a support to architecture, and thus all the investigation, including

the interviews, aim at addressing the architectural features: the population target that would benefit of the project, which spaces are considered necessary and which social interaction they host, the design program that enables the establishment of a strong connection between the riverside and the city fabric.

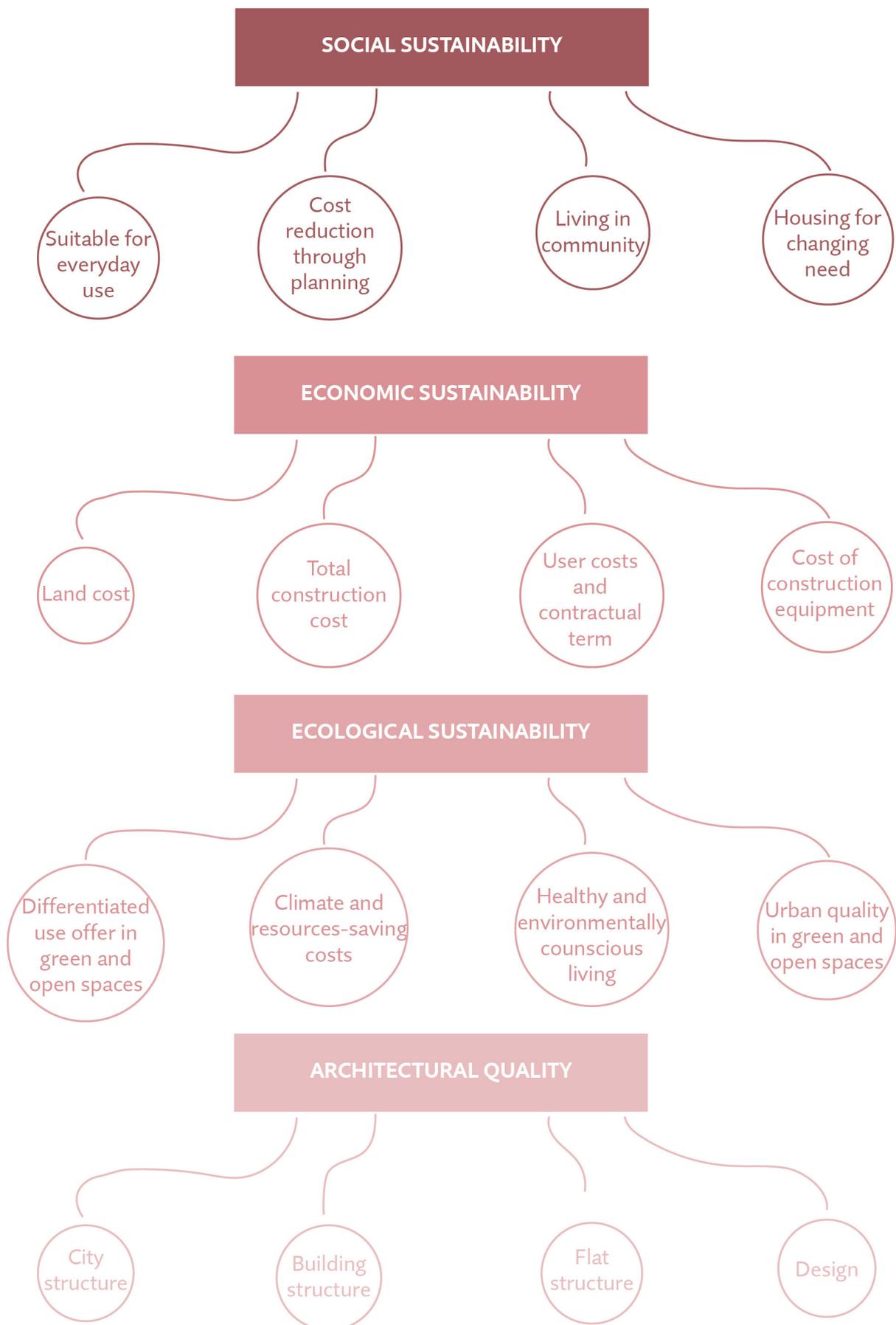
The strategy, thus, consists of deepening the administrative and political panorama of the social housing system to understand how social sustainability could be reached by means of architectural design.

1.2 Project sustainability

An important aspect when discussing the social housing system in Vienna is the recent introduction by *Wohnfonds Wien*, the municipal association managing the subsidies for social housing projects, of the so-called “sustainability pillars” in the competition for the realization of social housing projects. These are a variety of criteria that needs to be met in order to accomplish a successful and functional design, which deals with social sustainability, environmental sustainability, architectural quality and economic sustainability. Although all these “pillars” will be mentioned in this section, the most interesting for this specific research is the one focusing on social sustainability, which thus will be thoroughly analysed. Each project entering a competition can receive a maximum of 44 points, 11 for each category, and is classified in one of five categories (from A to E). If for one of the four pillars no points are assigned, the project is automatically excluded by any possibility of receiving financial support.

It is important to notice that the three basic principle of ecology, economy and society follows the classical definition of sustainability, in this case the so-called strong sustainability which “suggests that the different forms of capital are complimentary but not interchangeable” (Thatcher, 2013, p. 3). On the other hand the architectural quality is added as another pillar: it is regarded as a separate set of criteria to consider, even though in the design process, the quality of the space created -indoor and outdoor- as well as the design intended more in its aesthetic nature, represent

→ *Figure 1: Evaluation criteria of the sustainability pillars*



a consequence of all the previously named criteria and pillars. Being aware of these considerations, though, in this research the accepted subdivision of criteria is the one suggested by *wohnfonds wien* itself.

Environmental sustainability aims at fostering more ecological types of constructions, avoiding waste of material and energy, and fostering a more ecological lifestyle in its inhabitants as well. This means also researching new and performing technologies that although maintaining the aesthetic quality can positively contribute to the impact that the building has on the environment.

Architectural quality indicates the intention of reaching a high accuracy level on the design, although maintaining a non-luxury standard. The design quality comprehends not only the aesthetic of the building but also the relationship with the external environment and the interconnection in-between the spaces, that have to be functional according to the need of the inhabitants.

Economic sustainability deals with the financial side of the project. Being social housing financed with public subsidies, the jury that selects the projects during competitions evaluate how these subsidies are invested, always accounting for the main goal of maintaining the rent prices as low as possible. Also potential investments for renovations are considered functional in case it contributes at increasing buildings durability.

The synthesis of this interaction between the two disciplines is in the adoption of social sustainability as the main objective of an architectural and urban implementation. The expression of social sustainability includes a variety of concepts that have to be taken into account and which is important to define. The “New Social Housing”, the main topic of the *Internationale Bauausstellung* (IBA) -the International Building Exhibition, foreseen for 2022- aims at boosting new affordable flats construction, necessary because of demographic growth and a change in the social urgencies. Thus, social sustainability is intended as the pursuit of the diverse social necessities that the population manifests. The purpose of the IBA is to increment a mixture of activities in social housing

complexes -providing also healthcare- suitable for the weakest portion of the society (for example children and the elderly). Furthermore, a characteristic of the social housing system is the fostering of a social mix, which is one of the points of strength of the overall system, addressing the rented flats accessibility not only to those who have economic difficulties but to all the population strata that are not included in a “super-rich” minority. By doing so, the advantages are the avoidance of “ghetto” neighbourhoods, where people with difficulties or immigrants live all together, translating a social marginalisation to the physical and geographical level. At the same time, though, some issues arise. First of all, the exclusion of those who have low income or no income at all, an aspect discussed in the paragraph “Social housing problems” of chapter 2. At the same time, the creation of a social blend juxtaposes people with diverse social needs that have to be satisfied in a unique architectural complex. Therefore, social sustainability is defined as the capacity of a project to adapt to the necessities of the hosted inhabitants, that change from person to person, and that can evolve with time. The key concept to satisfy these conditions is, thus, flexibility. Furthermore, there is an increasing necessity for integration: a central role in this is played by the initiatives that can be organized at a neighbourhood level, to increase the social responsibility of people. The “establishing of a sharing concept [...] can contribute to a new culture of living together and at the same time promote affordability and social justice” (Prudic-Hartl, 2017, p. 32). In fact, the social housing communities, with shared facilities and in some cases, with activities organized by associations, promote the integration of new inhabitants. The importance of this aspect is growing also because of the current evolution of the demographic structure. This evolution is due to several factors: since 2015, because of the migration crisis, immigration is an issue of growing importance. Besides that, other structural changes foster a demographic differentiation that consequently is reflected in different needs also considering the services a city offers. The number of elderlies in the urban environment is increasing because of two main factors: the life expectancy is increased,

and people show a general preference for growing old in cities rather than on the coast or the countryside as had traditionally happened (Groove, 2018). Recent data also shows that the number of single households is increased as well as one of the single parents (Lukacsy & Fend, 2021), meaning different exigencies not only in the housing facilities but above all in the services offered by the surrounding district.

Another transformation in the way of conceiving urban life is surely due to the recent outbreak of the Covid19 pandemic. The limitation in mobility possibilities imposed in almost the entire world, showed the importance of planning districts with all the essential infrastructures in proximity, the concept of the 15 minutes city, assumes structuring the city neighbourhood to reach all the necessary facilities in around 15 minutes.

2 THE PRIMARY DATA

The primary data are in the specific case of this study also qualitative data. They are defined as the information collected and analysed directly by the researcher. The main source of first-hand data in the sociological analysis were the interviews to the stakeholders, illustrated in paragraph 2.2. Another paragraph (2.3) is instead addressed to another type of investigation made on field, even if less relevant than the interviews. Some social housing projects, part of recent developments and considered quite successful in Vienna, were visited, to study how the areas were planned, and which were the most significant urban and architectural element playing a role in the success of these projects.

2.1 The interviews

All the research elements part of the sociological analysis are thoroughly examined in chapter 4, which is totally centred on the interview conduction and on the results interpretation.

The interviewees were chosen among different stakeholders, thus all those people that influence or take part in some way to the development of a social

housing project. In the specific case of this research, the people selected are experts on the topic or people which through their profession participate to the development of the system. They are chosen among different sphere of governance. Some are part of municipal associations, thus collaborate directly with the city government, either working in municipal offices or in other associations owned by the city that provide funds for the projects. Some others are parts of limited- or no-profit associations, that collaborate with architects, landscape designers, sociologists, as developers of social housing projects, realized through the subsidies of the city. Some are instead part of private companies, mostly architecture studios, that cooperates in the development process. Some others are part of associations that assist people in need, excluded from the social housing system, as for example homeless and refugees.

The sample, although composed by people that are professionally involved, more or less directly, in the provision of subsidies and municipal flats, present a heterogeneity that is necessary in order to represent in the most complete way possible the three spheres of governance (private, municipal and no-profit), and to collect different points of view on a selected number of topics.

The interview is considered a semi-structured interview with a high structural degree, meaning that the questions are predefined by the researcher, but during the interview there is freedom of facing some new topics that might emerge, without, though, leading the focus out of context. The order of the questions was kept unchanged for all the interviews, and sometimes additional questions were introduced either to ask for clarifications or to invite the interlocutor to expand mentioned concepts. The questions were formulated starting from the previous analysis on the literature and the urban structure of the district, choosing among the issues considered as the most important or on which less information was found. The interview is subdivided into different sections and comprehends 12 questions. All the interviews are recorded (if allowed by the interviewee) and then reported in written transcripts. All the answer collected are analysed one

by one: the most significant facts are reported so to give a complete summary of the discussed topics and clarify the design program to which the project is addressed. The interview answers are the main primary data of this research: the interview questions were defined in view of the specific study, constituting the main qualitative data. Some of the information that were provided during the interviews, could be found already in the literature, but it was useful to understand the personal perspective of the stakeholders with respect to specific themes and which data were considered more important. For some other questions instead, the answers were more various and revealing different perspective also according to the professional role.

2.2 In-situ investigation

During the initial phase of the research there was the possibility of visiting in person some recent and successful social houses complexes. It was thus possible to analyse their connections and relations with the city structure and the point of strength and weakness for each of them. The main projects visited were *Seestadt Aspern*, *Sonnwendviertel*, *Sargfabrik* and *Nordbahnhof*. *Seestadt Aspern*, which is only partially addressed to subsidised flat, is placed on the 22nd district, in an area which is underdevelopment and quite detached from the city centre. Despite that, it is easily reachable by metro, with the line 2, but the development results a small “satellite city”, isolated from the rest of Vienna and for that reason highly criticized. The complex is well structured above all for the use of the open-air spaces which are public but at the same time provide some privacy level in correspondence of buildings groups part of the same project.

Sonnwendviertel is located inside the 10th district, which present a multi-ethnic population, destination of the majority of immigrants groups that move to Vienna. The settlement is developed around a wide green park, and present features similar to *Seestadt Aspern*, with outdoor areas open to the public, but also private gardens and courtyards.

Sargfabrik, differently from the already presented settlement, is a building complex composed by two buildings, that developed inside the inner courtyard of a

building block. It has been one of the first “*Baugruppen*”, buildings designed by the future inhabitants.

Nordbahnhof presents similar characters to the other large settlements with different usages integrated in the development, different typologies of buildings that come together in a unitary project. The outdoor areas present several spaces dedicated to children with different forms of playgrounds. The complex is still under construction, together with the neighbouring *Nordwestbahnhof*: they will boost attraction in districts 2 and 20, where they are located.

3 THE SECONDARY DATA

Among the secondary data, thus not elaborated from the author but already existing in the literature on the topic, we can individuate research papers and essays that are illustrated in paragraph 3.1 of this chapter, and statistical data from official government source, that are instead presented in paragraph 3.2.

3.1 Literature review

For what concerns the literature review, the most important articles and research that shaped the various chapters of the thesis are briefly presented. Since each of the four chapters that constitute the body of the thesis treats a specific topic, it is possible to articulate the analysis of the literature as subdivided into different thematic sections. It is important, though, to consider that the entire work complies with the overall bibliography in each chapter. Thus, the subdivision afterwards presented is not to be accounted as a rigid partition of the two disciplines (architecture and sociology) that instead are thoroughly interlaced in the entire study.

For what concerns the brief historical overview of the first paragraph of chapter 2, different sources were examined. One of them, considered particularly important because it was a reference for the overall work and not only for this specific section, is “The Vienna Model 2. Housing for the twenty-first-century city” by Wolfgang Förster and Menking (2018), which constitute a catalogue of projects, existing, in construction, or

solely designed, considered pioneers of the Vienna social housing. This book, apart from offering a broad set of project examples and a valid section treating the comparison of the Viennese housing market with other countries, contains a brief introduction to the history of social housing. This was also integrated with information from “Municipal Housing in Vienna. History, facts & figures” by Christian Schantl (2016) and from “80 years of social housing in Vienna” by Wolfgang Förster (2002).

For the paragraphs entirely concerning the organization of the social housing system in Vienna, only the main papers that allowed a clear delineation of the system and the articulation of the chapter will be reported, since the literature regarding the topic is broad and comprehends various themes and points of view.

“Social Housing in Austria” by Cristopher Reinprecht (2014) offers a general view of the social housing panorama of the Austrian regions. In fact, being Austria a federal republic, the so-called *Länder* have quite a large independence for certain administrative and political issues. One of these issues is the management of social housing, which quite differs from Vienna to the other regions. This study did not present an exhaustive history of the social housing in Austria, starting from the Red Vienna period, but concentrated instead on the more recent events and data. After a short introduction illustrating the most important percentage data of the present Austrian housing stock, the paper proceeds with a brief historical development analysis mostly concentrating on the legislative history of the system. This was useful to understand the political evolution of the system and of the laws that regulate it. Another interesting aspect outlined in the paper is the financial instruments and mechanisms for what concerns loans, subsidies and allowances. The paragraphs regarding the demographic and the rent (where the social housing rents are compared to the private stock), provided outdated data: the study refers to a period antecedent to 2014, thus, to present an updated description of the system, more recent sources were examined.

A second study about how the Austrian system is structured is “The Austrian System of Social Housing Finance” by Wolfgang Amann and Alexis Mundt (2005).

This study has a similar approach to the previous one, divided into chapters that detect different aspects of the social housing, but with a more specific focus on the subsidies and different capital market instruments come into play in the subdivision of the subsidies, differing for each *Land*.

These two works were useful to illustrate all the factual information of the system (namely paragraphs 2, 3 and 4 of chapter 2) and the way in which it works, supported with more updated sources for the statistical data and for confirming the correctness of the material.

For what concerns the paragraph dealing with the new challenges that the social housing needs to face, “Programme for the international building exhibition Vienna” by Sabina Prudic-Hartl was the main source: it is a *memorandum* of the Viennese *Internationale Bauausstellung* where the main purposes of this exhibition are illustrated with a focus on new issues and contexts that the entire system has to face and be adapted to.

The third chapter, centred on the analysis of *Leopoldstadt* and *Brigittenau* districts, is based mainly on the statistical data (discussed in the following paragraph), with the purpose of providing an updated picture of the context in which the area analysed afterwards is located.

Apart from the numerical and statistical data, though, some historical information on the territorial evolution of the districts is provided thanks to the material collected on the website of the Vienna government that, through the platform called *Wien Geschichte Wiki*, presents different topics concerning the city from a historical point of view: particularly useful for this research were the sections dedicated to the two neighbourhoods (*Leopoldstadt* and *Brigittenau*), the Danube regulation and the *Donauinsel*.

For chapter 4, which presents the sociological aspects of the research, the handbook “La ricerca sociale: metodologia e tecniche” by Piergiorgio Corbetta (2015) was the main source. The book illustrates the main basics of sociological research, differentiating quantitative research from qualitative research and

the methodologies that characterize them. For the interview campaign, structured for this thesis, it was particularly useful the third volume which treats the qualitative techniques, and the second one which deals with the data analysis. A semi-structured interview like the one presented is a part of the qualitative research: the data collected are limited, derived from open questions and the interviewees have the possibility of digressing towards other topics from the one suggested, providing different points of view and cues to the researcher. The handbook thus was providing the guideline for the entire sociological analysis, from the selection of the stakeholders to the formulation of the interview questions to the final examination of the collected data.

The last chapter that addresses the delineation of guidelines for a strategy of development, is of course the outcomes from all the previously analysed data (primary and secondary), and thus it is mainly based on the observation developed by the author. Nevertheless, it is possible to identify mainly three sources that contribute to the final result.

The book entitled “Happy City: Transforming our lives through urban design” by Charles Montgomery (2015) was an inspiration for many of the considerations on the way the street and the public spaces should be used and designed. The book reports a series of stories and anecdotes to explore the basic principles of a healthier urban design. One of the topics on which the author insisted more is the necessity to address the urban space more to pedestrians and less to private vehicles, showing numerous examples in which the prevalence of pedestrian space had a positive impact on the lives of the citizens and on the urban space. Another subject on which the book focuses is the impact of commuting on people’s lives with the intention of underlining how commuting by private car is not only less ecological but also more stressful and a way to enhance social inequalities.

The book entitled “Il doppio spazio dell’architettura. Ricerca sociologica e progettazione” by Bernardo Chiesi studies the relationships that exist between the architecture of a project and the way a space is

perceived: it puts the accent on how the intangible space of social relations and the tangible one of an architectural project should be studied together to obtain a successful design. In particular, chapter 4 was useful in giving the definition of “potential space” and “effective space”. This distinction is explored in paragraph 3.1 of chapter 5 to address the functions of a potential design in a specific area, to possibly find the closest possible correspondence between potential and effective space, and thus to create a successful project that adheres to the designer expectations also in the way in which the space is used by its inhabitants.

3.2 Statistical data

Another important source of information that has been broadly used in particular for the description of the two districts’ demographic, but also for updated data about social housing, are the statistical reports published by the Vienna government.

The report “Statistisches Jahrbuch der Stadt Wien 2021” is a report published by the municipal Viennese government every year concerning statistical data on any aspect of society, from jobs to the transportation system, free time activities or sport. It depicts through numerical data the demography and society of the city. Some of the data derive from the national census and thus refer to 2012, the year of the last census published data. For some other statistics instead, it was possible to relate to more recent information.

Other two reports published by the Viennese municipality as well consist of two brief infographic pamphlets collecting all the basic information about *Leopoldstadt* and *Brigittenau*, called “Brigittenau in Zahlen” and “Leopoldstadt in Zahlen”. These are useful for direct comparison among the demographic of the different *Bezirke* (districts) and between the general average Viennese data and the one of a single district. These three reports were extremely useful in chapter 3, which depicts the two district features from a social and urban point of view.

The report “Zahlen, Daten und Indikatoren der Wohnstatistik” specifically regards all the data about the housing markets, both private and no-profit. The data are elaborated by Statistik Austria a no-profit,

independent, federal institution which elaborates statistical data for the overall country: in fact, in Austria the national statistical system is centralised and the *Länder* may produce some statistics on their own maintaining small statistical services. The mentioned report was particularly useful to update all the information about the Viennese housing market in chapter 2 since in some cases the bibliography adopted presents outdated statistical data.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE SOCIAL HOUSING SYSTEM

- 1 historical background
- 2 social housing current position
- 3 social housing provision
- 4 social housing problems
- 5 new challenges

The first chapter of this research work aims at clarifying the concept of social housing and how it has been historically developed in Austria, in particular in its capital city Vienna. The definition and the structure of the social housing system is not universal: the management centrality, the target population and the subsidies differ from country to country; nevertheless, the basic principle on which it is built is that housing is a basic human right that every government should guarantee to its population.

Project examples are proposed in the historical section to trace an evolution of the architectural style of social housing and to analyse the evolving necessities of the public through time.

1 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The origin of the Viennese social housing system dates back to the 1920s when the social democratic government decided to solve the deplorable housing situation, resulting from Hapsburg dominion. The average dwellings were composed of one room and one kitchen without toilet plumbing, air, light and equipped with very small windows, usually facing inner narrow courtyards (Winter, 1937). In addition, landlords had political prominence and could exercise extraordinary control over tenants, which resulted in a rooted resentment in the Vienna proletariat. They could raise the rent at any time, and one-month contracts were very common for workers, forcing them to live as nomads (Förster, 2002). The very first initiative, that anticipated the social housing reform, was the institution in 1917 of the so-called *Mieterschutz*, protection of the tenants, that was a socialist housing policy to protect tenants against power abuse by landlords: it prevented the rent increase and eviction (Winter, 1937). The housing reform was built on this premises, as the natural evolution of the existing protection strategy.

The reform consisted of the implementation of a Marxist theory on the housing market, which became only partially prerogative of the private sector, promoting instead a municipal management. The novelty was that this evolution happened in a democratic government

framework, differently from Russia, Hungary or Bavaria, and thus became a model for other European cities (Förster, 2016). The city built in 15 years 60000 apartments for low-income households creating a new quality of life from a social and urban perspective (Prudic-Hartl, 2017). An emblematic building of that time, which became a sort of monument celebrating the Red Vienna period and its important innovation, is *Karl Marx-Hof*. The so-called “*Höfe*” (literally courtyards) were constructions developed around a courtyard, which constituted the central area of the structure and functioned as a communal area. The building presents several courtyards and a central square, surrounded by an arched-body structure. It hosts, apart from 1000 apartments, “two kindergartens, laundry facilities, meeting rooms and even a permanent exhibition showing cheap new furniture for the smaller apartment” (Förster, 2016, p. 49). It is thus clear the intent was not to simply increase the number of exploitable apartments, but to guarantee to low-income workers a higher life quality, offering them all the necessary services and communal spaces to ensure a social interaction among the dwellers.

The social democrat endeavour was interrupted by the Second World War and Austro-Fascism. The authoritarian government, in fact, after an interruption of the construction, concentrated the effort on emergency dwellings and houses for the middle class. The main effort was addressed towards resettlement policy (*Nebenerwerbssiedlung*): additional agricultural jobs and new accommodations on the other side of the Danube were assigned to those who had lost full employment in the industrial sector, in exchange for an almost primitive lifestyle (Winter, 1937). The issue of these kinds of settlement is the consideration of former workers as pure workforce: in fact, it was not expected an improvement of the life quality and living standards, but the working tools and facilities to undertake the agricultural job, were considered even more important than the house itself, which was a *Kernhaus*, a skeleton house (Winter, 1937). The resettlement policy had thus the purpose of re-absorbing those who have been victims of the industrial shrinkage in Austria, more than creating a favourable housing condition for the low-

income population.

After the Second World War, Vienna was, like Berlin, divided into four sectors, and since circa 20% of the existing housing stock had been destroyed because of the war, the reconstruction of social housing infrastructures restarted at an impressive pace, until 10000 dwellings per year (Förster, 2016). It is at this time, with the institution of the Second Republic of Austria, that the system of Limited- or Non-Profit organization was implemented and increased its importance until today. In this context, in 1948 and 1954 new legal frameworks and subsidies scheme were established: tax reductions and access to direct subsidies were granted to the social housing associations (Reinprecht, 2014). The housing quality was though lower than the buildings from the 1920s and there was a tendency to design modular, prefabricated high-rise constructions, as it is visible in *Per-Albin-Hansson Siedlung*, in the 10th district, *Favoriten*, which presents a series of nine-storey buildings, made of pre-cast concrete and arranged parallelly and in groups, with surrounding gardens and green areas.

In the 1970s-1980s, when the problem of housing shortage was solved, together with a massive urban renewal, innovative and experimental projects were started (Schantl, 2016), such as *Alt Erlaa*, a residential park designed by the architect Harry Glück, completed in 1985 which is composed by different high-rise towers, larger at the bottom, that include several services, such as sauna, solarium, common rooms, shopping centre, roof swimming pools, which make it a sort of “city inside the city” (Förster, 2018).

With the fall of the Iron Curtain in 1989, the population rapidly grew due to the massive immigration, in addition to an increase of the single households: there was the necessity of producing high standard buildings with stabilized rental costs, and thus “developer competitions” were introduced (Förster, 2018). In 1982 a “New Tenancy Act” (*Mietrechtsgesetz*) was created, which limited the historical protection of which tenants could benefit, facilitating short- and fixed-rent tenancies and deregulating the private sector (Reinprecht, 2014). In 1985 the Housing Promotion Law partially decentralized the control over the management of the

subsidized for construction, renovation and housing benefit, fragmenting social housing policy (Reinprecht, 2014).

Although the number of apartments managed by the municipality and the one managed by No-Profit Companies is roughly the same, municipal housing are all part of the older stock, as the city stopped to act as a contractor in 2004 with *Rößlergasse* no. 15 (Schantl, 2016). This means that the social housing sector has been completely entrusted to Limited- or Non-Profit Housing Cooperatives, that were introduced in the system after the Second World War, but that increase importance mainly since 1984, when the city-owned association *Wohnfonds Wien* bought the land for new housing development (Förster, 2018). Only in recent years, since 2019, the housing program *Gemeindewohnungen NEU* was implemented, as a response to the high demand of affordable flats. The quality of these new municipal flats is comparable to the one of subsidized housings but are managed by the city of Vienna and present the advantage of being without equity when moving in (*Gemeindewohnungen Neu*, n.d.).

Today differently from the period of the post-war economic boom of the 1960s-1970s, during which, because of a housing urgency there had been a predominance of standardized mass-production, the social housing sector presents avant-garde models for social, economic and environmental sustainability.

2 SOCIAL HOUSING CURRENT POSITION

2.1 Housing stock

The Austrian social housing system is known for its proportion: in fact, about 80% of new residential constructions take advantage of public subsidized, directly or indirectly (Reinprecht, 2014). Nevertheless, it is fundamental to make a distinction between Vienna and the rest of Austria.

According to the data of *Statistik Austria* of 2020 (Schöber, 2021), in Austria the owner occupied flat are 48% of the total housing stock, whereas in Vienna are instead 20%. In Austria the social housing sector

account for the 24% of the total housing market (7% owned by municipality, 17% managed instead by No-Profit cooperatives). In Vienna, this sector covers the 43% of the total housing market (22% are municipal flats, 21% subsidized flats). The private rental sector comprehends the 18% of the total stock in Austria, and the 32% in Vienna. The 48% of flats is owner-occupied in Austria, in Vienna only the 20%. The remaining percentage (9% for Austria and 4% for Vienna) refers to other special status.

The most favourable periods for the construction of new social housing had been around the 1990s and the first decade of the 2000s. Nowadays despite the increased housing demand due to an development of the demographic situation -which means an increased population due to phenomena as immigration and ageing- the implementation of the new buildings has decreased, replaced by a growing rate in the refurbishment of existing buildings which amount to 5-6% units per year (Reinprecht, 2014). The growing rate of apartments refurbishment has different motivations. First of all, the quality of social housing is increasing, thanks to the implementation of developers' competitions, which require a higher quality standard for the social housing flats. Apart from that, there is also a tendency increase the city density in areas where the infrastructures (such as transports for example) already exists, following a concept of "city of short distance", which has also a more ecological footprint (Förster, 2018).

2.2 Institutions and organizations

Different institutions, public or private, and cooperation play a role inside the housing sector. Indeed, the management scheme of the housing sector is regulated by a system of interaction between the federal government, which delineates the legal framework, and the nine *Länder* (federal states) governments which are instead responsible for the housing policy, which regulates the action of municipalities, Limited-Profit Companies, banks, tenants and special housing financial institutions (Reinprecht, 2014). The afterwards described organizational structure is the result of a late-80s reform which promoted a decentralization

of the municipal power, partially transferring the housing sector control from the central government and municipalities to the provinces, which though had little effect on Vienna, since it is both a municipality and a federal province. Another aspect to consider is the transition towards a major involvement of the private sector, that resulted in new public-private partnerships. The Federal State, thus the central national government, controls the housing legislation, even though the housing subsidy mechanisms are decided at a local level, by the *Länder* authority, which is the reason why each *Land* have some diverging housing policy aspects. The four housing laws, which are under the Federal State control are the Tenancy Act of 1982, of which some parts are applied generally for all rental dwellings, is mainly applied only to a small portion of the housing stock, namely on dwellings built before 1945; the Condominium Law (*Wohnungseigentumsgesetz*) of 2002, regarding flat owners; the Limited-Profit Housing Act (*Wohnungsgemeinnützigkeitsgesetz*) of 1979, which controls the Limited-Profit Housing Association for the rent cost, the "right to buy" and the maintenance; the Civil Code (1811) which regulates the rented single-family houses (Amann & Mundt, 2005). Furthermore, the State has to finance non-profit developers with direct subsidized.

The *Länder*, apart from the before mentioned tasks, has the control of Limited-Profit Housing Act social welfare, regional planning and building codes (Amann & Mundt, 2005). Because of this decentralization of the housing management, the *Länder* differ from each other in different aspects, for example, the administration of the subsidies and the definition of the recipients and the quality standards.

Municipalities power in the housing sector depends upon the *Länder* management. In general, their contribution to the social housing sector is given "providing land or abating property tax" (Amann & Mundt, 2005, p. 9).

Some private bodies are involved in the housing sector too, such as private builders, who can have access to subsidised loans and commercial housing developers, that in some instances have access to the subsidies even for social housing, and in this case, they refer

partially to the Limited-Profit Housing Act.

The most representative institutions in the sector are represented by Limited- or No-Profit Housing Associations, which were initially introduced after the Second World War and are controlled by a local level by the governments of the federal provinces. These companies which are about 200 in the whole country, have the obligation of re-investing and their business activities are limited to the new construction, renting, managing the structures and renovating them. Furthermore, profits are either non-existent or limited. Since these associations are the core institution that makes the Austrian social housing system so efficient and unique, they will be further analysed in the following paragraph, dedicated to social housing providers.

3 SOCIAL HOUSING PROVISION

3.1 Providers

Social rentals are divided into two different categories: municipal rentals, that are called *Gemeindewohnungen* or *Gemeindebauten*; the non-profit rentals are owned by *gemeinnützige Bauvereinigungen*, in short GBV, (that indicates the non-profit sector in general) being circa 190 (Deutsch & Lawson, 2012). An example of the first category in Vienna is the association “*Wiener Wohnen*”. For what concerns the second typology, instead can be divided into two sub-categories: housing associations, which were implemented in XIX century and are based on the concept of shared ownership among interested tenants and non-profit corporations which are founded on corporate ownership. The first type was submerged into the Austrian Common Good Housing Law of 1948, which had as dominant component the non-profit corporations, conceived after the Great Depression of 1929, to protect the companies (Deutsch & Lawson, 2012). For what concerns the second sub-category, instead, despite its prominence, certain features of the housing associations remain, such as “non-speculation, cost-based accounting, restricted asset trade, auditing by special bodies, and decision-making involving tenants” (Deutsch & Lawson, 2012,

p. 9). Even though the two typologies are usually both permanent bodies, the housing associations, differently from the non-profit corporations, could be founded and then dissolved by the parties; another difference is that corporations do not benefit from the same decision right of the associations: these latter are usually founded by outside members so to protect the tenants by undesired changes in the ownership structure (Deutsch & Lawson, 2012).

The way the Limited-Profit housing organizations are monitored is a type of self-control through GBV: it has the task to supervise the associations and to represent their interest in the legislation process (Amann & Mundt, 2005). The GBV is, in turn, controlled by the regional government. This “self-efficient” structure has resulted efficient in its implementation in Austria, where there had never been any money lost because of bankruptcy or moral hazard (Amann & Mundt, 2005).

Thanks to the social function they occupy, Limited-Profit Housing Associations can benefit from company income tax relief, and they have preferred access to subsidies, which, though, has always to be reinvested in housing construction, refurbishment, and management; they are also allowed to add a part of commercial space, but not to make a profit: only 2% of the registered capital may be divided among the owners and the shareholders. The legal position of tenants is established by both Tenancy Act and Non-Profit-Housing Act, and those who contribute to construction costs, gain the right to buy after 10 years.

3.2 Financing

In Austria, the public support for housing construction has a considerable size and is mostly constituted by direct construction subsidies, which are intended not only for social dwelling (only circa half are used for this purpose) but also for private rental and owner-occupied. Housing affordability is not reached relying on demand-side assistance, meaning that it is not based on consumer demand, but through the reduction of housing supply costs (Deutsch & Lawson, 2012).

The funds are handled by the regions -which partially contributes- but are earmarked by the central government and are financed through an income tax,

a corporation tax and a “housing contribution”, that are paid by all the employees (Reinprecht, 2014). The public assistance scheme works through the so-called *Wohnbauförderungsmittel* (WBF), that is the “Austrian fund for housing construction and modernization” (Deutsch & Lawson, 2012, p. 12) that collects the contribution from the federal government, then administered by the *Länder* and addressed towards different kind of housing objectives, including a social sense of community, environmental direction thanks to sustainable construction methods, economic growth and stability of labour market (Deutsch & Lawson, 2012). Every *Land* adopted a diverse subsidy scheme for building social housing, and usually a part of the cost is covered by providers’ equity and bank loans (Reinprecht, 2014). Since the mid-1990s the financing of new housing has been mostly prerogative of the central government, with a progressive weakening of the regional contributions, for different reasons: between 1996 and 2008 the government subsidies remained fixed, causing a reduction of the 15%; housing costs increased, in terms of construction expenses, materials, and energy efficiency standards; many federal states moved from direct public loans (money are landed by the central government with no intermediary), which had to be repaid, to subsidized mortgage payments (constituted by low monthly payments and stable interest rate), which accumulated in time until they accounted for a considerable portion of housing budget; in 2001 and 2008 some legislative reforms gave permission to regions to allocate subsidy funds to other projects, outside the housing stock field; a considerable part of the funds are invested nowadays in modernization of old buildings and direct contributions to consumers (Reinprecht, 2014). In addition to *Wohnbauförderungsmittel*, other instruments provide capital market fundings: *Bauspar* (contract saving) scheme and *Wohnbaubanken* (housing banks) (Amann & Mundt, 2005). The *Bauspar* scheme allows Austrian private citizens to have saving contracts that ensure a premium by the state after six years of saving. It represents a medium profitable investment, but certainly very safe. Customers benefit from very low-interest loans which are usually invested in single-

family houses (Amann & Mundt, 2005). Other financial tools implemented in Austria are the so-called Housing Construction Convertible Bonds (HCCB), issued by Housing Banks, which are convertible debt securities, meaning that they could be paid back with either different types of securities or with the same value. These bonds benefit from two privileges: first, a capital income tax relief for the first 4% of returns; second, they are considered a special expense in assessing income tax (Amann & Mundt, 2005). The money raised with these bonds has to be invested within three years into a new housing construction program eligible for additional object-side subsidies (Amann & Mundt, 2005).

Apart from the subsidies for housing construction, also the land price has to be taken into account: usually, municipalities do provide it for accessible costs to Limited-Profit Housing Associations. In Vienna, until the 1980s, there used to be a strong monopolization of the land by the municipality. Today, this strategy is no longer implemented, even though the Vienna government still owns large estates, especially in the suburbs.

Thus, in general, the Austrian system favours direct subsidised for the construction, rather than the individuals financing, even though, since the second half of the 1990s, there had been an increase in economic support of consumers. In 2011, 0.9% of GDP has been spent on housing subsidises (Reinprecht, 2014), but “since most of these subsidies are provided in the form of repayable, long-term low-interest loans for new housing construction, the decade-long existence of the system has produced a revolving-fund component: nowadays (in many regions), repaid loans can be used to finance new construction and therefore decrease the financial burden on regional budgets” (Mundt, 2018).

3.3 Access, Demographic and Rent

Income limits to access social housing are rather favourable including most of the Austrian population. Generally, municipal housing is addressed to working-class or disadvantaged people, including those with an immigrant background, and have income ceiling lower

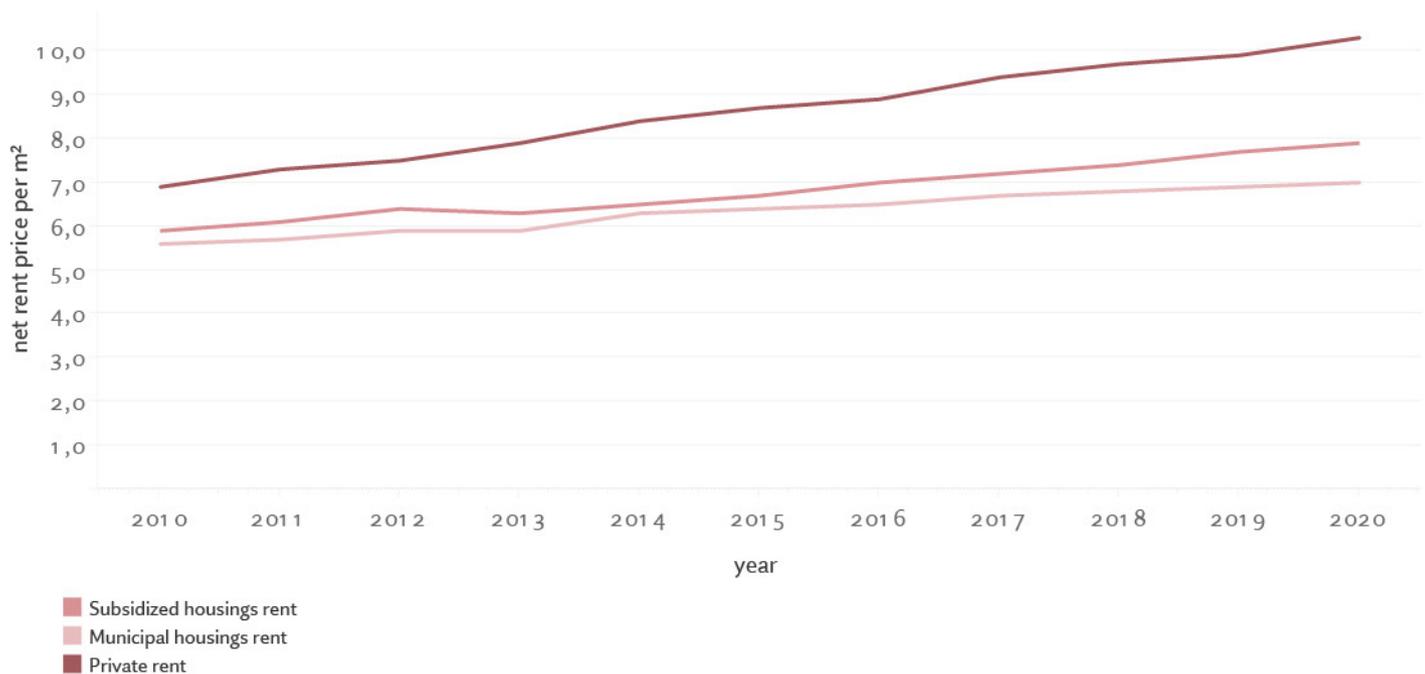


Figure 2. Evolution of the rent prices in private, subsidized and municipal housing markets

than association homes (by Limited-Profit Housing Associations), focusing instead on middle-class, with the implementation of a social mix as one of the primary goals (Reinprecht, 2007). The access is granted for those who have job security and an income sufficiently high to pay the rent and to contribute with the down payment as a contribution to land price cost, which is then returned when the tenants move out (Reinprecht, 2007). These limitations create a barrier for those with a particularly low-income situation, even though specific programs offer emergency dwellings (usually in the municipal housing stock) to the homeless and those in extreme housing need, because of economic and health issues (Reinprecht, 2007). A peculiarity of the system is also that the income of tenants is not monitored but is considered solely at the time of the entry into the system, creating diversity in tenant structure over time.

Priority is given not only to those in housing need or with low-income or with numerous family members but above all to who is a victim of violence, sometimes for temporary situations. It is not possible the assignation

for touristic or commercial purpose (Bundesgesetz vom 8. März, 1979).

For what concerns the demographic composition of the inhabitants of social housing, it is noticeable that in 2020 the percentage of households that can be classified as low-income was 15% in municipal housing stock, 14% in the subsidized housing and 33% in the private stock. The education and status levels in Limited-Profit Housing Associations housing are in the average, whereas in municipal housing are lower; elderly group (above 65 years old) is accommodated in larger proportion by the social housing sector (18%) than by the private one (8%) (Göttlinger et al., 2021).

An important development of demographic is due to a legal act of 2006 by European Union, namely the Directive 2006/123/EC (2006), which introduced the accessibility to social housing stock for “non-Austrian who hold a long-term residence permit” (Hatz, 2005, p. 318). This brought an increase of non-Austrian citizens living in social housing in Austria. In Vienna, in 2014 the citizens with an immigrant background living in social housing were the 17% and Austrian citizens 53% (Reinprecht, 2014).

Rent situation has radically changed since the 1980s: there is a distinction between rents for construction

from after 1953, not regulated, and the older stock, evaluated through a benchmarking method, accounting for the quality of the accommodations, classified in 4 categories, from A (dwellings with bathroom and central heating) until D (dwellings indoor toilets and sometimes without running water), and for the location. Between the 1970s and 2011, there has been an increase until 27% of high standard new buildings and a decrease of the strictly regulated ones (from 41% to 9%).

In figure 2 the trend of the prices between 2010 and 2020 in the Viennese rental market are showed. The price increase of the private rents is wider than in the case of social housing: in 2010 the average price for renting a private apartment was of 6.9 €/m², in 2020 10.3 €/m² (Kössl, 2021). For what concerns the rent of social housing, we can notice a slight difference between municipal housing and subsidized housing; the former increased from 5.6 €/m² in 2010 to 7 €/m² in 2020. For the subsidized stock, the increase was instead from 5.9 €/m² to 7.9 €/m² (Kössl, 2021). This rental increase has enhanced income and consequently social inequalities: in 2020 in Austria, those who are part of the poorest strata of the population, spend up to 93% of their income on rent, whereas for the richest portion of households, housing expenditure is up to 14%. (Göttlinger et al., 2021). This situation results in difficulties in finding adequately inexpensive accommodation for those who have a less advantageous economic situation.

4 SOCIAL HOUSING PROBLEMS

Austrian social housing system, despite being efficient and historically important and having received substantial academic relevance, presents some issues, that will be analysed in this section.

Even if the social housing scheme had worked as a buffer for the consequences of the Great Financial Crisis (GFC) of 2008, the demand for economical dwellings has outgrown the supply (Mundt, 2018) originating an affordability crisis. The public demanding this affordability is a growing public composed of a rising number of unemployed people, refugees coming from outside the European Union (thus that

cannot benefit of Limited-Profit Housing Associations and municipalities infrastructures), more vulnerable households such as single parents or low-income early retirees. In addition to that, a second concern is represented by what Mundt calls the “insider-outsider problem”: there is a strong difference between the sitting tenants, who still take advantage of “long-standing contracts and historically low rents” (Mundt, 2018, p.17), and those who enter the new housing market, characterized by higher prices and more precarious contracts. These differences are due mainly to three different reasons: private rents had increased massively, constituting several times the only possible alternative which is though much less convenient than the social sector; the private old stock is usually still rent-controlled whereas the new constructions follow market dynamics; because of an extensive renovation of low-quality apartments, the alternative of finding dwellings in modest conditions but for a reasonable price does not exist anymore, causing difficulties to the weakest part of the population (Mundt, 2018). The problem of affordability and the derived contrast between insiders and outsiders increases income inequality which is also reflected on a social level: it also influences the access to the labour market, through a spatial exclusion and marginalization of certain groups, resulting in a vicious circle of deprivation, exacerbating the social gap between those who are in a favourable economic condition and those who are not.

An increasingly urgent topic regards the inflow of asylum seekers -which interests, in general, many European countries- that must face a reality of declining quantity of affordable dwellings and the difficulty to access the social housing sector. The research made by Anita Aigner (2019) analyses the different ways in which immigrants and asylum seekers try to settle in an affordable dwelling in Vienna. The author traces all the informal and formal relationships that help immigrants in this research: some rely on other migrants already settled, some attempt through voluntary association managed by locals, some are forced to search alone on the private rental market, some manage to pass through NGO-assisted living facilities (Aigner, 2019). Despite different relationships and paths to reach the same

purpose, none of the interviewed people confirmed satisfaction. A consistent part of the population is still excluded from the social housing sector, not because of high-income disposition, but because they cannot afford subsidised loans and down payments. The housing programs addressed to immigrants usually offer solutions between emergency shelters and integration houses, with low living standards and just for temporary use. In addition to that, who looks for a solution through the private rental market, is usually a victim of refusal and discrimination or exploitation, with precarious contracts (Aigner, 2019).

5 NEW CHALLENGES

The “*Internationale Bauausstellung*”, also called IBA (international Exhibition) program started in 2016 and will end in 2022: the purpose is not only to exhibiting architectural projects proposals, but it is, in fact, a sort of laboratory for the development of new strategies and programs aiming at facing the challenges that the city of Vienna presents in the framework of social housing shortage, focusing on both new constructions and existing housing stock. It involves not only architects but also property developers, sociologists, landscape architects, social agencies and all those stakeholders that take part in an urban project.

The starting point is the individualization of the demographic changes which interested not only Vienna but in general European capital cities, to respond to new needs and requests from the population. Apart from a general increase of Vienna population size -only in 2016 the increase was 2.4% (Prudic-Hartl, 2017)- also older people and children are increasing proportionally: thus, there is the necessity of paying more attention to the increasing demand for health care services, educational facilities, and spaces for trigger intergenerational activities and social involvement. Another demographic segment that is acquiring increasing importance, is the group of single households, which is transversal to different age groups (Prudic-Hartl, 2017). In addition to that precariousness in working life is growing, with all the social consequences that this produces.

The initiative has environmental, social and economic

sustainability targets: the refurbishment and the new constructions are led towards less consuming and more sustainable solutions, implementing the use of new materials, technologies and smart urban structures that could lead to a more environmental-friendly way of conceiving cities.

The social mix has always been one of Viennese social housing main objectives. It has to be considered, though, the fact that nowadays society is quickly evolving and there is a necessity to create a flexible city, that changes with its citizens' requirements. Not only a social mix but also a public involvement has to be considered, accounting for differences not only at the socioeconomic level but also in age, culture, ethnicity and lifestyle choices. Urban public spaces become, thus a fundamental element to endure social interaction and to leave to citizens the possibility of claiming, consciously or not, the space. From an economic point of view, the main aim is to maintain rental affordability, trying to include as much of the population as possible, to create a stronger social mix.

The issue faced in this instance is the necessity of addressing social housing dwellings to those in economic needs, but still avoiding their marginalization and the creation of ghetto-like districts, thus boosting the social and cultural mixture, that had always been one of the major strong points of the city.

On these premises, this research work will attempt at the creation of a strategy for the design of urban space, based on a previously conducted societal analysis, in the framework of the challenges proposed by the IBA Wien program. The history of social housing, its developments until today, and the problems that are currently present are the starting point of the project that will be developed on a suggested area, not object of study by the IBA program, but that presents an opportunity for creating a new urban “dialogue” between the city itself and the Danube River, an important element of the city structure.

DISTRICTS ANALYSIS

1 brigittenau and leopoldstadt

2 the districts today

3 project area

This chapter aims at developing a historical and urban analysis of the second and the twentieth districts of Vienna, namely, *Leopoldstadt* and *Brigittenau*. The intent is to create a framework to address the implementation of an architectural strategy development -the final purpose of the research- along the Danube River, in an area previously analysed. Thus, it is necessary to critically investigate the urban history and development of the districts hosting the project. The first paragraph outlines a presentation of the two districts and their urban features. The second paragraph illustrates some statistical data about the population and describes the main urban features of the neighbourhoods. The third paragraph gives an overview about the reasons for the choice of the project site. The investigation is combined with graphical representations of the districts to illustrate their urban structure and characteristics.

1 BRIGITTEAU AND LEOPOLDSTADT

Vienna comprehends 23 districts, developed in different periods. The 2nd and 20th districts are nowadays in a central position even though, at the time of their formation, they were part of the suburbs of the city.

1.1 Historical development

In 1850 the *Provisorische Gemeindeordnung* (Provisional Municipal Code) was introduced, instituting the Viennese districts administrative role as it is known today. Before this date, the area outside the fortification (the internal sector is the current historical centre, *Innere Stadt*) included the so-called *Vorstädte*, the suburbs. From 1850 onwards, with the abolition of landed estates, they were grouped, forming the new districts, and the previous territorial subdivision lost its significance. In this occasion, the second district was formed: it included the suburbs of *Leopoldstadt*, *Jägerzeile*, *Prater*, *Brigittenau*, *Zwischenbrücken*, part of *Aspern* and *Keiserebersdorf*. The covered area extended from the *Donaukanal* (canal of the Danube), a natural river canal, especially important for its proximity to the city centre, to the right bank of the Danube, today called *Alte Donau*. Figure 4, an historical map representing 1862 Vienna, it is visible the extension

of *Leopoldstadt*, also including *Brigittenau* territory. Only since 1900, the suburb *Brigittenau* became an independent neighbourhood also including the area of *Zwischenbrücken*. Since 1905 with the formation of a 21st *Bezirk* (*Floridsdorf*), incorporating some villages on the left bank of the Danube River, *Brigittenau* and *Leopoldstadt* lost their peripheral position in the overall urban structure.

The two districts flourished in the XIX century thanks to the regulation of the Danube (1870-1875). In this period, five new road and railway bridges, which still exist, were built to cross the river, and *Leopoldstadt* became the direct connection of the city centre with the opposite side of the Danube. They are *Floridsorfer Brücke*, and *Kronprinz-Rudolfs-Brücke* for private traffic, *Nordwestbahnbrücke*, *Nordbahnbrücke* and *Stadlauer Brücke* for railway traffic. Fundamental for the relevance of the district in the urban structure was the construction of two railway stations: *Nordwestbahnhof*

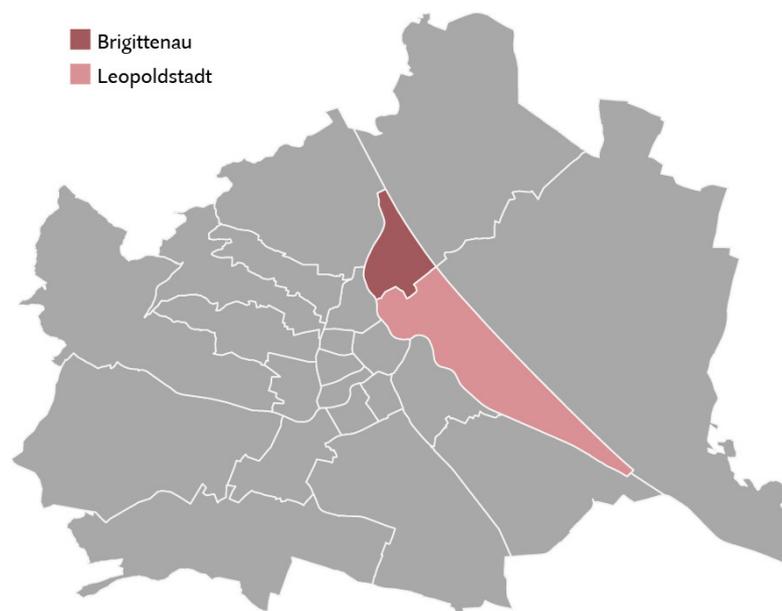


Figure 3. Localization of Leopoldstadt and Brigittenau districts

and *Nordbahnhof*. The former was built in 1870 in today's *Brigittenau* and demolished in 1952, because of severe damage. The latter dates back to 1839 and its dismantling to 1965. Both the railways are not in use today, and the areas where they developed are part of

large-scale urban projects planned for 2025 and 2033 (Sebesta & Wladyga, 2021).

A further impulse to the evolution of the district was the *Weltausstellung* (World's Fair) of 1873, held for the first time in a German-speaking country from the 1st of May to the 31st of October in the *Prater* area, nowadays hosting the amusement park. The project comprehended an extended central construction of almost one-kilometre length, *Industriepalast* (Palace of Industry), which burned down in 1937, and other smaller pavilions built in various styles, where international exhibitors could present their products. An essential contribution to creating the district character in the XIX century was the growing proportion of Jewish immigrants, which started with migration flows from

Galicia and Bukovina (Leopoldstadt, n.d.). The economic structure of the district comprised a business centre and an early industrial area. The development of big-scale business and industrial activities was mainly due to the importance of vicinity to the train stations. The rising number of Jewish people resulted in an increase in small businesses and retail trade, which had central relevance for the economy of the neighbourhood. During the Nazi Era, because of the expulsion and murder of the Jewish people, these activities diminished drastically. In fact, due to its large Jewish population, *Leopoldstadt* received by anti-Semites the derogative name of *Mazzeinsel*, literally meaning "azyme island" and from 1938 onwards it became a theatre of discriminations and murders perpetrated against Jews.

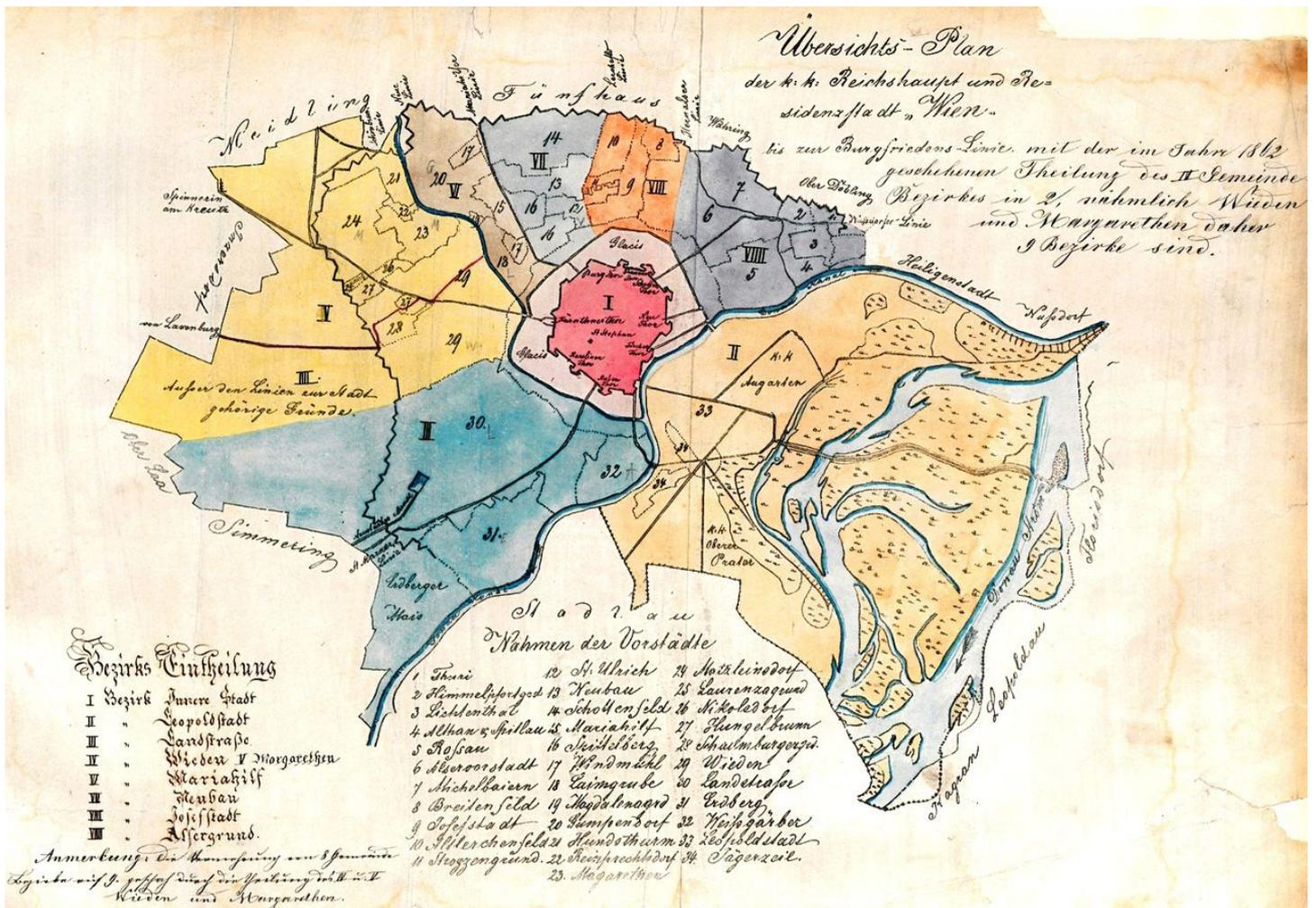


Figure 4: General map of Vienna with district divisions in 1862

This fact also brought to a substantial diminution of the district population (Leopoldstadt, n.d.).

During the last phase of the Second World War, *Leopoldstadt* became a target of Allied bombardment. In addition to that in 1945 when German troops were retreating their last defence line along the *Donaukanal*, heavy destruction occurred on both sides of the canal, which led to a complete transformation of the area after the war.

During the Second Republic, from 1945 to 1955, when Vienna was subdivided among the winning countries (USA, United Kingdom, Soviet Union and France), the 2nd and 20th districts became part of the Soviet Union territory (“*der russischer Sektor*”).

In 1955 the so-called Austrian Independent Treaty was signed and entered into force on the 27th of July: from that moment, Vienna was re-established as a sovereign state. This date marked a flourishing period for the city, which is evident in the development of the two *Bezirke*. What boosted *Leopoldstadt* growth was the evolution of transport infrastructures: an expressed railway was established on the area of the *Nordbahn*, as well as underground metro lines. In addition, two meaningful roads connection have been passing through the 2nd district territory: *Ost Autobahn A4* (A4 motorway) and the *Südosttangente* (urban motorway A23). The former, 66 km long, was built in 1986 and extended in 1994: it connects Vienna with the town of *Nickelsdorf*, at the border with Hungary. In Vienna, it crosses *Simmering*, *Schwechat*, and Vienna International Airport (Leopoldstadt, n.d.). The latter, built on the south-eastern outskirts of Vienna, is around 18 km: although being the shortest motorway of Austria, it is also the busiest. It constitutes the principal connection between the A2 motorway (*Süd-Autobahn*) and the A4 motorway (Leopoldstadt, n.d.). Apart from the transportation infrastructure, various noteworthy architectural projects developed in particular in the area of *Leopoldstadt*, as Sofitel and Uniqua Tower realised in the first decade of the 2000s.

1.2 Danube River regulation

The historical development of the Danube River represents a fundamental step for the history of the city



Figure 5: Vienna and the Danube today, the extension of the historical floodplain is highlighted with blue shading

itself, it continuously influenced the urban expansion and constitutes a source of livelihood. In fact, from the establishment of the royal family of Hapsburg, it served for the production of energy through ship mills, and it was employed for transportation purposes, exploiting the swift flow (Winiwarter et al., 2013). Furthermore, it constituted the major food supplier through the ship mills providing grain, the fishing activity and from the 16th century on the river floodplain also provided orchards, pastures and firewood collection (Winiwarter et al., 2013). As visible in figure 5, the districts *Leopoldstadt* and *Brigittenau* are settled in what was previously identified as the floodplain of the Danube. The current shape of the river results from a series of protective infrastructures and regulations, which took place from the 19th century onwards. Thanks to those precautions, the former floodplain of the Danube -which extended for 6 km in width- hosts today around one-fifth of the Vienna built-up area.

The motivations that led to a regulation of the Danube were two, namely the flooding risk and the movement of the riverbed towards the northeast direction. This slow shift of the natural asset of the river away from the city could cause a decrease in its economic power. During the 19th century, the destiny of the Danube remained uncertain because of divergent opinions on

its possible regulation. Only after the massive floods of 1830 and 1862, the municipal government started planning the regulation and in 1870 there was the official inauguration of the construction works. On this occasion, the riverbed was newly excavated with the use of excavators employed for the Suez Canal construction (Donauregulierung, n.d.). The extracted material was used to backfill the Danube arms and to build dams. This operation gave the possibility of further expanding the urbanized area of Vienna. Despite the success of the operation, which freed some zones by the risk of flooding and that allowed the construction of several bridges crossing the river, other construction works were necessary in the 20th century (Donauregulierung, n.d.). Thus, the nowadays configuration of the Danube River is due to further regulations implemented in the 1970s and 1980s. In fact, in 1972 the New Danube (*Neue Donau*) and the Danube Island were created. The New Danube corresponds to the eastern canal flowing right next to *Leopoldstadt* and *Brigittenau* separated from the so-called *Alte Donau* (Old Danube) by the Danube Island. This island already existed during the first regulation of the 1870s, a 20 km long and 300 m wide spillway, which today also represents a recreational area (Donauregulierung, n.d.).

Thus, the presence of the river is fundamental for understanding the urban history of the city. At the same time, the city structure of the 2nd and 20th districts rejects the riverbank of the *Neue Donau*. The buildings are all oriented towards the city centre and along the river. The traffic artery called *Handelskai*, and a logistic railway, *Donauuferbahn*, constitute a physical barrier for accessing the riverbank. Although the past flooding risk influenced the city development, the current situation is surely different from the past. That is detectable also in some new design projects that the city is developing as the Marina Tower or the BAI Tower, luxurious buildings with a privileged position.

The aim of conceiving a new design development for this city area is reversing the beforehand described perspective. The *Donau* riverbank is seen as a potential site for its integration with the overall city, not considering its position only for a few entitled, but as a further continuation of an ongoing development plan.

This section offers an overview of the current situation of the districts from an urban and statistical point of view. The first paragraph examines the population composition based on *Leopoldstadt* and *Brigittenau* data and its current trends, based on the statistics provided by the city government and updated to 2021. This phase is fundamental for understanding the statistical trends of demographic growth or de-growth and the composition of the population to which the project will be addressed. Furthermore, the statistical data outline a theoretical framework, useful for both the formulation of the interview questions and the interpretation of the collected answers.

The following paragraphs concentrate on analysing the urban environment, to examine the direction of the district development, the existing services, the current legislative constraints, and the specific situation of the social housing sector at a local level.

2.1 Population

The composition of the population of the two districts is dissimilar, despite their geographic proximity. The first data that underlines a strong difference in how the two districts have developed their urban structure is given by the population average density: in *Brigittenau* 14931 people/m², whereas in *Leopoldstadt* is 5469 people/m² (Lukacsy & Fendt, 2021). This is due to the fact not only does *Brigittenau* present a denser urban fabric, but also a less extended green area: in fact, the natural environment in *Leopoldstadt* amounts to 56.0% of the entire surface (19.2 km²), whereas in the 20th district it is only 29.7% of 5.7 km² (Lukacsy & Fendt, 2021).

Concerning the demographic trend, as it is visible in figure 6, especially the 2nd district presents in some areas a demographic growth of more than 50%: this is due to the strong development that interested the neighbourhood in the last years (as it will be analysed in the next paragraph). The growth rate in *Brigittenau* is lower, even though in certain areas is still observable a demographic expansion (the rate is between 0% and 50%). This is also because the district did not evolve as much as *Leopoldstadt*: the future development that is

taking place in the former railway station, at the border of the two neighbourhoods, will certainly lead to a further expansion of the local population.

A strong component of the Viennese population is the high rate of inhabitants having an immigration background: circa 42% of people living in Vienna come from foreign countries (Lukacsy & Fendt, 2021). This trend is visible also in *Leopoldstadt* and *Brigittenau*, especially in the latter, that in some areas counts more than half of the inhabitants with an immigration

background (figure 6). The rest of the district counts for a percentage between 30% and 50% of foreign people, as it is also detectable in the data of the *Leopoldstadt* population (figure 6). The major foreign citizenships present in *Brigittenau* are Serbian (6.0%), Turkish (4.9%), Polish (2.5%), Romanian (2.2%) and German (2.0%) (Die Brigittenau in Zahlen, 2020); in *Leopoldstadt* Serbian (4.4%), German (3.8%), Turkish (2.3%), Polish (2.1%), and Romanian (2.1%) (Die Leopoldstadt in Zahlen, 2020). The so-called *Wanderungssaldo* (migration

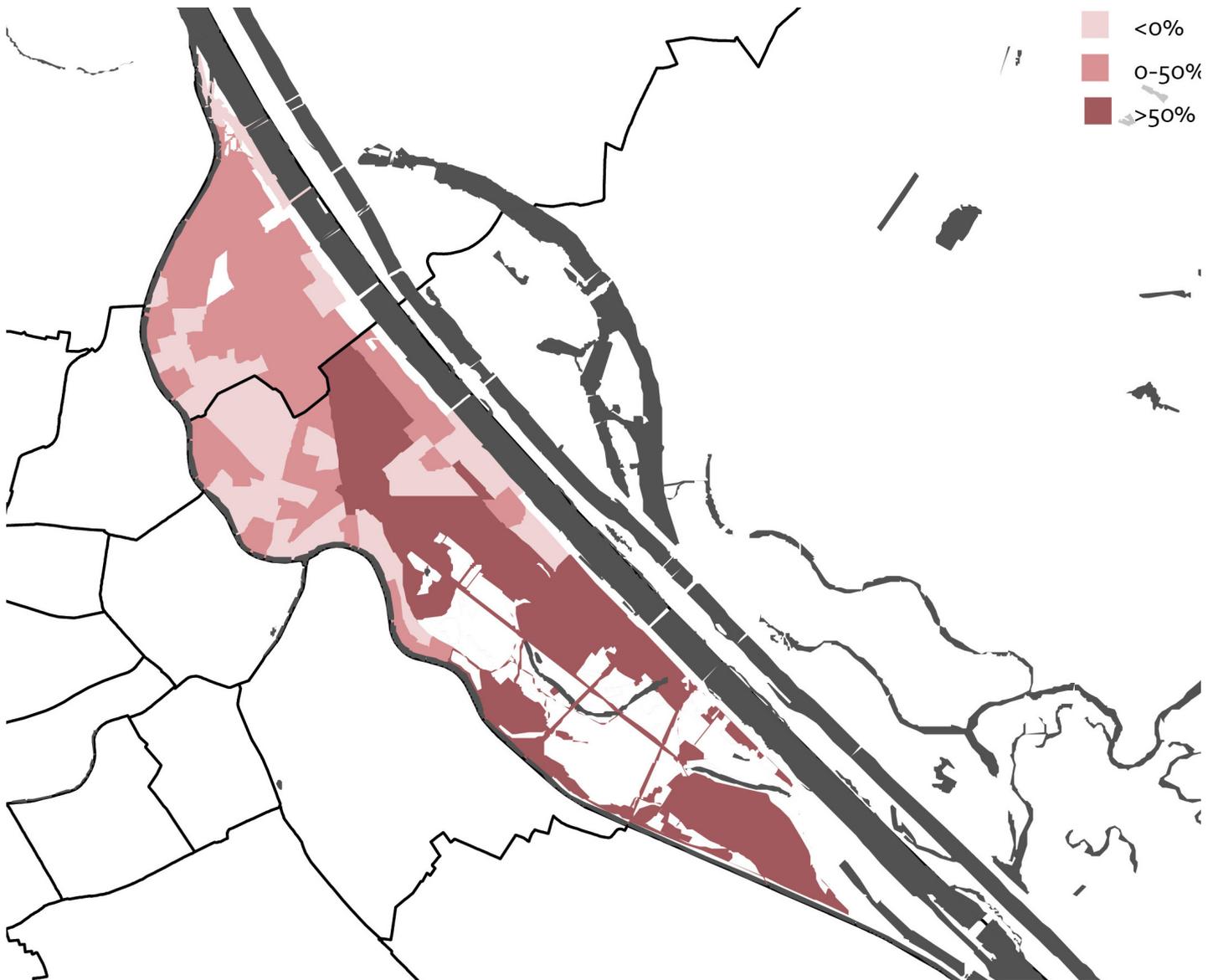


Figure 6: Population development in 2019-2020 of district 2 and 20.

balance) for the two neighbourhoods indicate in both cases growth in 2020 (+534 people for *Brigittenau* and +1221 people for *Leopoldstadt*) (Lukacsy & Fendt, 2021). For what concerns the nationalities of migrants in the years between 2010 and 2019, in both districts among the five most common there are Syrian (+1263 in 20th district and +1587 in the 2nd) and Afghans (+1028 in *Brigittenau* and +805 in *Leopoldstadt*), although in the 2nd district the higher number of immigrants is from Germany. In addition, in *Leopoldstadt* there has been a

high number of Romanian and Hungarian immigrations (*Die Leopoldstadt in Zahlen*, 2020), in *Brigittenau* of Serbians. (*Die Brigittenau in Zahlen*, 2020). It is thus possible to conclude that the population of the considered areas are expanding thanks to both internal movements, due to a recent urban expansion, and external immigration. The cultural components of this immigration are diverse: newcomers from neighbouring countries or refugees (namely from Syria and Afghanistan).

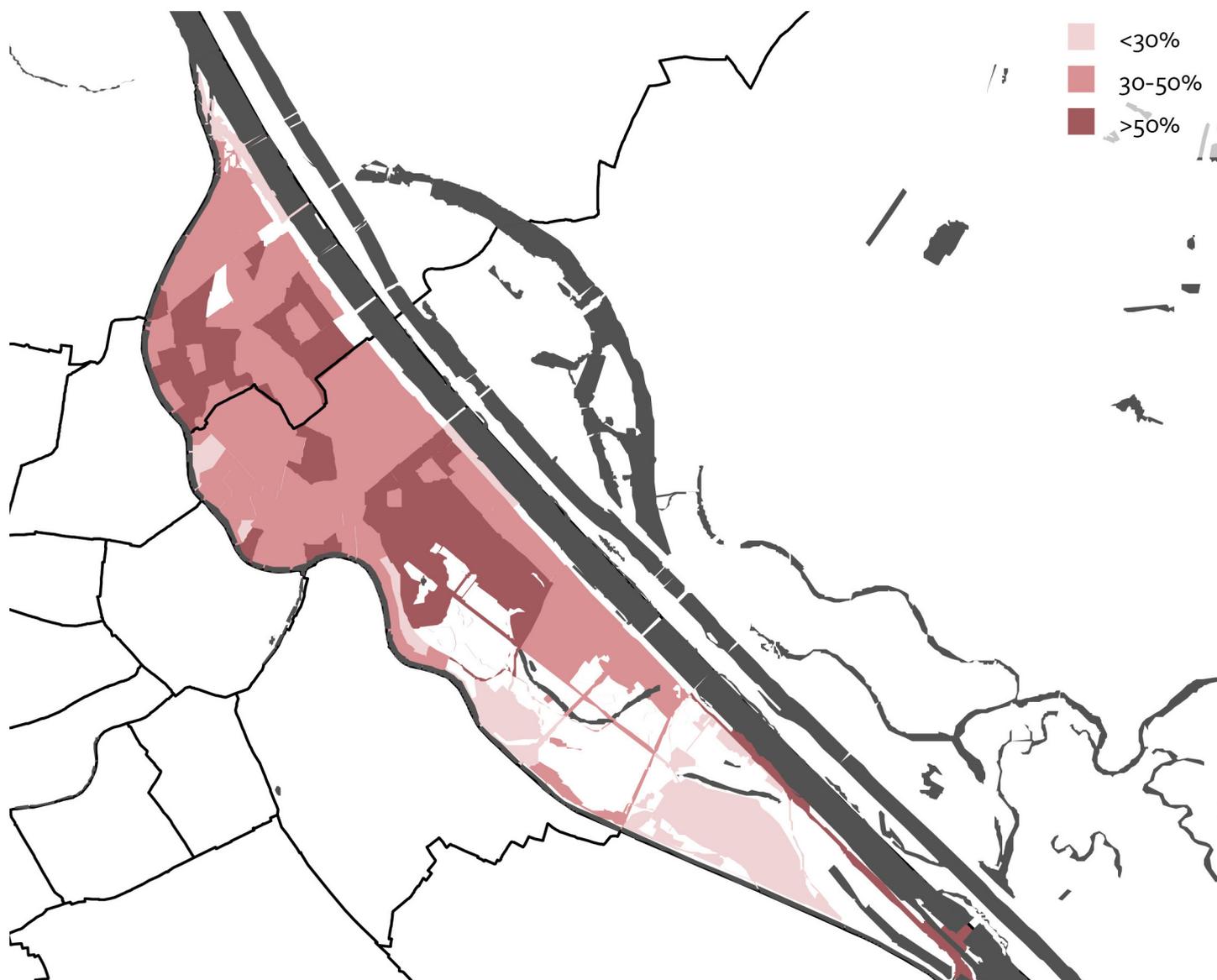


Figure 7: Population with immigration background in district 2 and 20

2.2 Recent development

In figure 8 the most recent and the future urban and architectural developments of the two districts are represented. In 2008 the metro line 2 (*U-bahn 2*) was extended until completely crossing *Leopoldstadt*, until *Seestadt Aspern*, a new development under construction in the outskirts of the city, in the 22nd district. This extension constituted an input for the growth of the surrounding areas, and it is possible to trace the history of this evolution from 2007/2008 until the ongoing constructions. The majority of the new constructions are situated in the second district: in fact, its urban structure is less dense than the one of *Brigittenau*, and thus presents a higher possibility of expansion. The two main future projects are located in the former railway areas of *Nordwestbahnhof* and *Nordbahnhof*: they should end by 2033 and 2025 respectively, including among the residential buildings also a percentage of subsidized flats, varying from 50% to 70% for *Nordwestbahnhof* and from 20% to 50% of *Nordbahnhof* (Sebesta & Wladyga)

2.3 Transport

The public transport system in Vienna is mainly constituted by the metro lines (in German *U-bahn*), the so called *Schnellbahn*, which is a city train, similar to an aboveground metro line, buses and trams. Between 2008 and 2019, the users of the subway have slightly decreased, with a consistent diminishing in 2020 probably due to the Corona virus spread out (the same happened also for trams and buses). The use of the trams is instead significantly increased between 2008 and 2019 and those travelling by bus have only marginally grown (Lukacsy & Fendt, 2021).

Despite the efficient public transport, the rate of car possession is still quite high: 37 cars each 100 inhabitants. In *Brigittenau* the rate is of 28 cars per 100 people (Die *Brigittenau* in Zahlen, 2020) and in *Leopoldstadt* of 31 cars each 100 people (Die *Leopoldstadt* in Zahlen, 2020).

In the following map, the transportation system of the 2nd and 20th district is illustrated: it comprehends the metro lines U1, U2 and U6, which intersect the area from south-west to north-east, crossing the Danube

River; the *Schnellbahn S7* which connect *Floridsdorf*, the 21st district, to the International Vienna Airport. The trams crossing the two districts are 2, 5, 31, 33, 0; the buses 5A,5B, 11A,11B, 37A, 82A pass in *Brigittenau* territory, whereas 11A, 11B, 77A, 82A in *Leopoldstadt* area. Despite the railway station of *Nordwestbahnhof* and *Nordbahnhof* are in disuse, there is still the so called *Donauuferbahn*, the railway of Danube riverbank, that run along the right river side, sharing only a small portion of the route with the S7, and nowadays exploited mainly for goods transportation. Next to this railway, one of the major traffic arteries of the city, *Handelskai*, crosses the districts from north-west to south-east.

2.4 Zoning

The following map illustrates certain protected zones and construction/banned areas in the territory of *Brigittenau* and *Leopoldstadt*.

Construction ban according to § 8 (1): areas without a development plan there is a ban. Building authority can remove the ban if the new constructions and demolition (also including modification of façades, addition, functional conversion, change in land area and land division) follow some specific conditions:

- compatibility with legal objective of urban planning, accounting for the existing buildings stock and not negatively effecting the cityscape. If there is a zoning plan, the project must be compatible with it and approved by municipal council committee.

- new buildings must be connected with the existing road network and have access to drinkable water and waste disposal.

- the interests of the neighbourhood must be respected and not obstacle by the new development.

(Wiener Stadtentwicklungs-, Stadtplanungs- und Baugesetzbuch, 2018)

Construction ban according to § 8 (2): a temporary ban can be imposed over a building or area, with the effect that no proclamation of development regulation takes place has to be announced. The approval of land subdivision or new building will take place only in special conditions:

-the existing development plan must be respected
-the project must not compromise the urban target present when the ban was imposed. (Wiener Stadtentwicklungs-, Stadtplanungs- und Baugesetzbuch, 2018)

Construction ban according to § 8 (6): a ban as the one of § 8 (2), becoming effecting after the public announcement of a project of determination or modification of the zoning or development plan. It expires, at latest, seven months after the enter-in-force date. (Wiener Stadtentwicklungs-, Stadtplanungs- und Baugesetzbuch, 2018)

Protection area (*Schutzzone*): some areas considered worthy of preservation can be selected as protected zones. For their designation, the spatial structure, natural features, garden areas and special design features must be accounted. The borders of the protected areas must be clearly demarcated. The development plans in those areas, should account for the considered protected feature, which can also include building decorations, fountains, windows, parts of buildings, roof superstructures. If a temporary ban is imposed on protected areas, this should not affect the obligations on them. (Wiener Stadtentwicklungs-, Stadtplanungs- und Baugesetzbuch, 2018)

Landscape conservation area (*Landschaftsschutzgebiet*): among the several nature protection regulations, some areas are preserved because of the character of their landscape, that can serve cultural or recreational function (Schutzgebiete und schutzobjekte, 2006). The area indicated in the map is the *Prater* area, extended for 5.13 km².

2.5 Social housing structures

The map showed in figure 12 was completed only after the interviews, since not enough information on the position of subsidized housing were available. A first investigation was conducted on the websites of the no-profit associations, part of the GBV (*Gemeinnütziger Bauvereinigungen*), that manage projects in Vienna: in fact, not all of them deal with housing complexes in

the capital city. Nevertheless, not all the companies published on their websites all the projects they realized in Vienna, and thus the retrieved information resulted incomplete. Thanks to a question of the interview, specifically focusing on the possibility of mapping municipal and subsidised housing on the area, the interviewees provided useful information for achieving a higher precision level of the data reported. Nevertheless, the map might still present some inaccuracies due to the high number of social housing flats, which make it complicated to map all of them. Concerning the municipal housing, the data were already available and easily accessible on the website of Vienna city government.

3 PROJECT AREA

The urban analysis aims at deepening the knowledge of the considered districts, to illustrate the role of the area chosen for the project in a broader context. The examination shows how the urban developments concerning *Leopoldstadt* and *Brigittenau*, hardly regard the area on the right riverbank of the river. This fact is due to several reasons, which are also explored during the interviews with the social housing stakeholders. Apart from the already mentioned physical barrier constituted but *Handelskai* and the *Donauuferbahn*, the lack of connection with the Danube has historical roots, linked to the fact that in the past the river constituted a potential danger. Few projects are foreseen for the riverbank zone, but they mostly concern isolated buildings or groups of buildings that do not relate to the city structure. What is missing is a larger-scale project, conceived as a concrete connection between the city and the river, avoiding the creation of a sort of “urban island” in-between the *Donau* and the mobility arteries.

Thus, through all the analysis, it is possible to individuate some potential portions along the river for a possible urban plan that exploits the area with three main purposes: (1) connecting the river and the city centre, (2) creating new public spaces attractive for the whole city, (3) achieving the social sustainability through the implementation of a social housing

project in the framework of the Viennese tradition. The preconditions for the fulfilment of the project are explored not only through the previous urban and statistical analysis but also through the qualitative data obtained from the interviews.

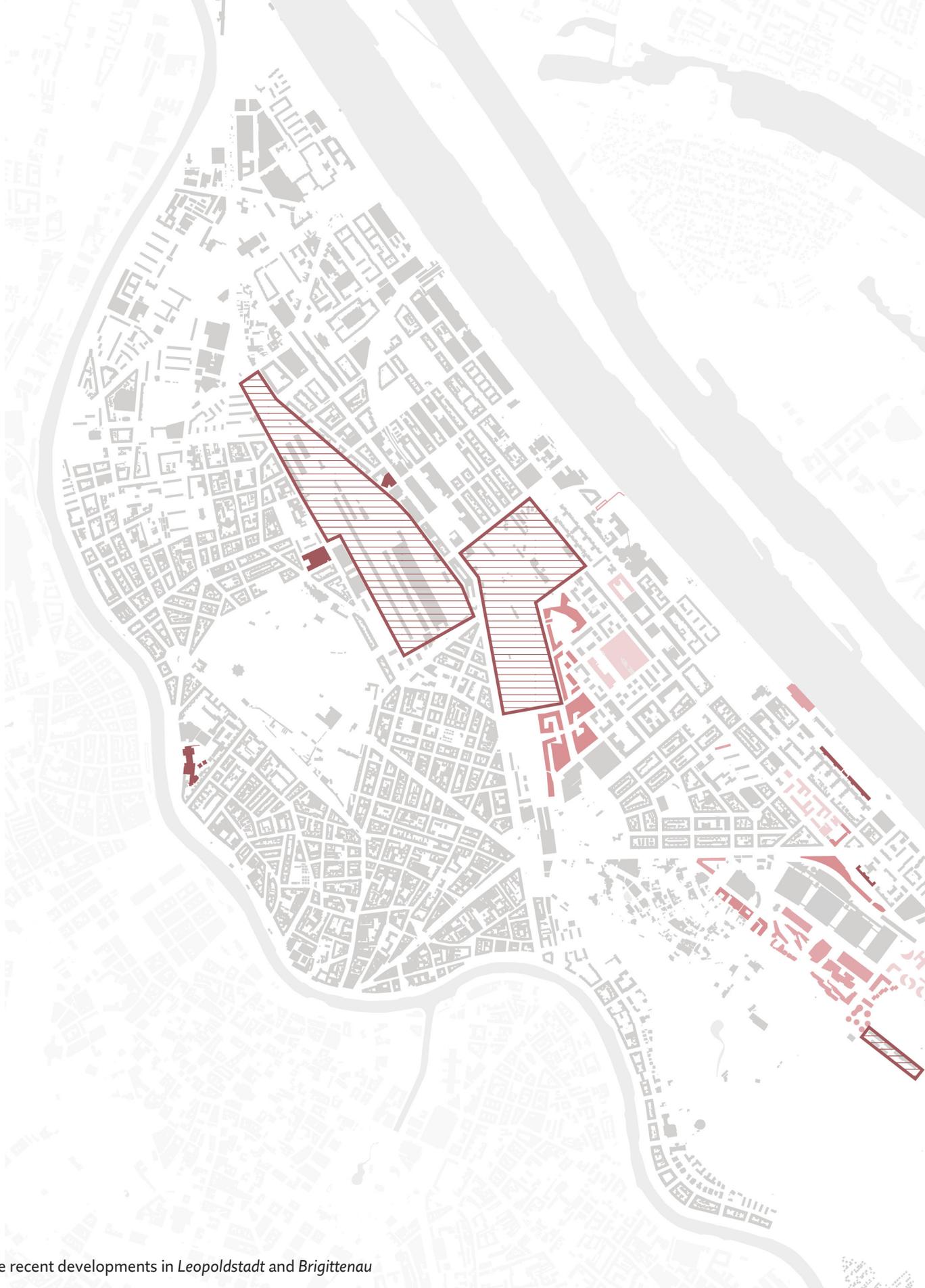


Figure 8: map of the recent developments in Leopoldstadt and Brigittenau



Stadion Center

Shopping centre, with around 27000 m², it hosts more than 60 stores. It is Located nearby the metro line 2 stop *Stadion*.

Rudolf-Bednar Park

The park has been co-financed by European Regional Development Fund. Thanks to its large extension (31000 m²) it constitutes the "green lung" for the western area of district 2, attracting lot of citizens.

Maimonides Zentrum

Only Jewish retirement home in Vienna, located close to the campus of Jewish Community that includes school, kindergarten and recreational facilities.

Former Wilhelm-Kaserne

Two houses complexes were built in place of the former barrack. Here can find an accommodation those in need of inpatient care, independent elderly, and single mothers with children.

Catamaran Center

Seminar and event centre, it is located close to *Donaumarina* metro 2 station. It also hosts the Austrian Trade Union Federation headquarters.

Campus Gertrued-Frölich-Sandner

Located in the 2nd district, it is an educational institution for children, from kindergarten to elementary school. It hosts nowadays 670 children and 90 teachers.

Pflegenhause Leopoldstadt

Nursing facility, specialized in the assistance of those who need intensive care. The building present group of rooms group together in a colourful house-like structure, so to avoid the classical hospital structure.

Viertel Zwei

The project is developed in three phases, the first of which ended in 2010. The open common spaces are developed around the element of water.

21er Schleife Campus Lodge

Housing complex that comprehend 111 privately financed apartments and 47 short-term fully-furnished flats. The location is in place of the former reversal loop of street-car line 21.

Ausstellungstraße 40

Hotel with over 350 rooms in proximity of the line 2 metro station *Messe-Prater*. part of the construction is destined for students flats. The construction also includes a clubhouse and a kindergarten.

Campus Wirtschaftuniversität

The campus surface is of more than 100000 m² and can host 25000 students. The open space in between the campus buildings is public.

Schiffahrtszentrum Donauraum

The Danube Navigation Centre, located close under the brook *Reichsbrücke* is the third gateway of the city -after Vienna airport and main station- from which tourists and visitors arrive.

Sportzentren im Prater

Close to the athletic centre, refurbished in 2013, this sport centre offers facilities for a wide variety of sports, like volleyball, paddle tennis and rugby.

Judith-Deutsch-Steg

Footbridge connecting the 2nd district with the river bank, crossing *Handelskai* street and the train tracks. The pathway is accessible by all pedestrian and bicycle traffic.

Viertel Zwei Plus

The second phase of the project *Viertel Zwei* was terminated in 2017. The overall project presents mixed use facilities.

Messecarrée Nord

Multifunctional complex, it hosts a restaurant a fitness centre, a student residence and some rented flats. The architecture contest was launched in 2006 and the building was finalized in 2018

Austria Campus

Multifunctional infrastructure, financed by UniCredit Bank Austria AG. It offers working space which are flexible, designed with a perspective of a new concept of work, no longer bound with fixed structures.

2007

2008

2009

2010

2012

2013

2014

2015

2017

2018

2019

Hauptfeuerwache Leopoldstadt

The location of the new main fire station was chosen also because of the proximity with the Danube. The structure also includes an internal courtyard which is used as a training area.

Sigmund Freud Universität

A new campus for the private university *Sigmund Freud* was built in 2019. The building presents an internal courtyard, publicly accessible, with retails and shops at the ground floor.

Wohnhalle mit Bildungscampus

The project is part of a new urban planning model developed in 2014. It comprehend an educational campus, 770 apartments and 90 home units and a Romanian orthodox church. Stores and facilities are offered at the ground floor.

Donaumarina apartments and studios

Between Prater park and the Danube river, close to metro line 2, the new project presents 5 buildings of 8 and 10 floors, for a total amount of 4000 apartments.

Prater Glacis - Perspektivstraße

Project composed by three different buildings, one is an hotel, another one, hosts an hostel, apartments and a restaurant, the third, almost energy self-sufficient, is an office building.

Engerthstraße 259

Building designed for around 130 community housing flat, providing also underground parking lots. The ground floor will host shops.

Marina Tower

130m-high residential tower, positioned directly on the Danube riverbank, close to the *Donaumarina* metro line 2 station. At the ground floor, restaurants, shops and a kindergarten will be designed.

Handelskai 214

With around 19000 m² of area above the ground, it will offer space for 332 communal apartments. The flats are designed with a 1 to 5 rooms and a surface of 37-100 m².

Leopoldsquartier

The design is part of a competition for the development of green and open space, mobility and traffic. Among finalists, Gangoly & Kristiner Architekten from Graz convinced the jury with the development proposal.

Viertel Zwei Plus

Last phase of "Viertel Zwei" project, it will host 891 flats, none of which financed by Vienna government or no-profit associations, thus solely for private rent or sell.

Nordwestbahnstraße 53

The area is currently used solely for business purposes. The new project foresees a design for a mixed use, with around 87000 m². At least one third of the residential units will be subsidized. Green areas and external public spaces are part of the design.

Fernbus Terminal

In proximity of the *Stadion Centre*, in the 2nd district, a new bus terminal will be located. The aim for the future is to increase an international bus connection. The terminal will also be closed to high-rise building planned for this area on the river bank.

BAI Tower

Next to Marina Tower and to *Donaumarina* metro station, a 113 meters-building will be realised. It will use for business purposes.

Frei Mitte

The area has a surface of about 32 hectares. It will hosts 5000 apartments and 25000 workplaces. The design foresees the constructed area to be on the perimeter, so to create an open green space in the core part of the site. It will constitute the third and final phase of the former Northern train station refurbishment and the entire project should host from 20 to 50% of subsidized flats.

Dresdnerstraße + Nordwestbahnhof

The aim of this mixed-use project is to create a new portion of urban district with a distinctive character, improving the life quality of the surrounding neighbourhood.

2020

2022

2024

2025

2026

2033

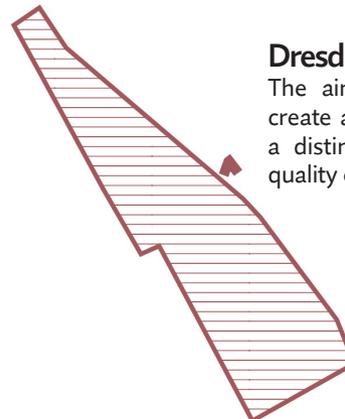
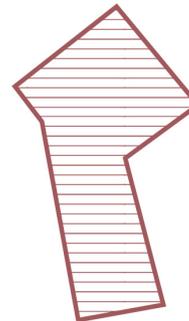
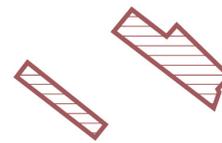


Figure 9: recent developments in Leopoldstadt and Brigittenau

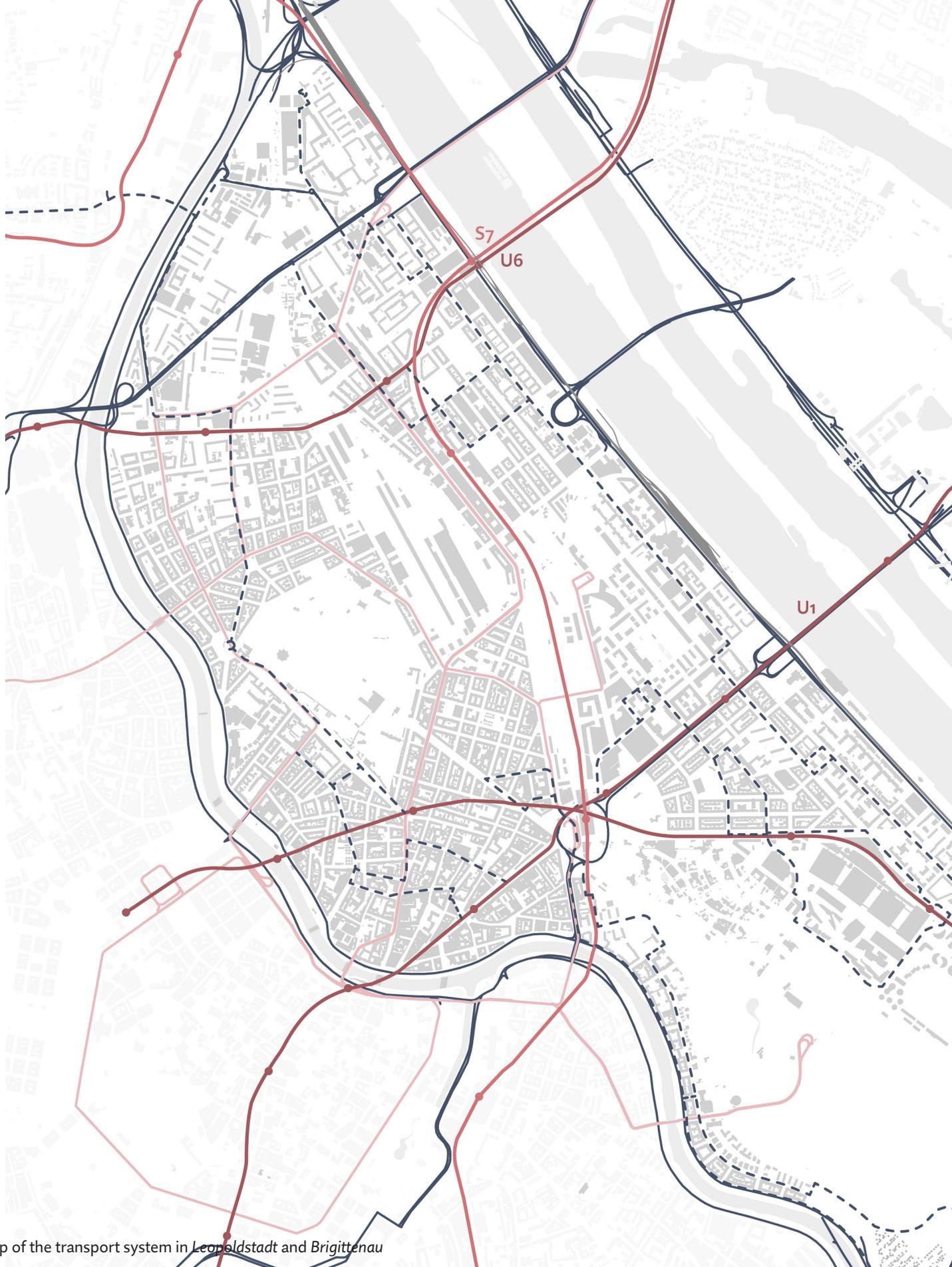


Figure 10: map of the transport system in Leopoldstadt and Brigittenau



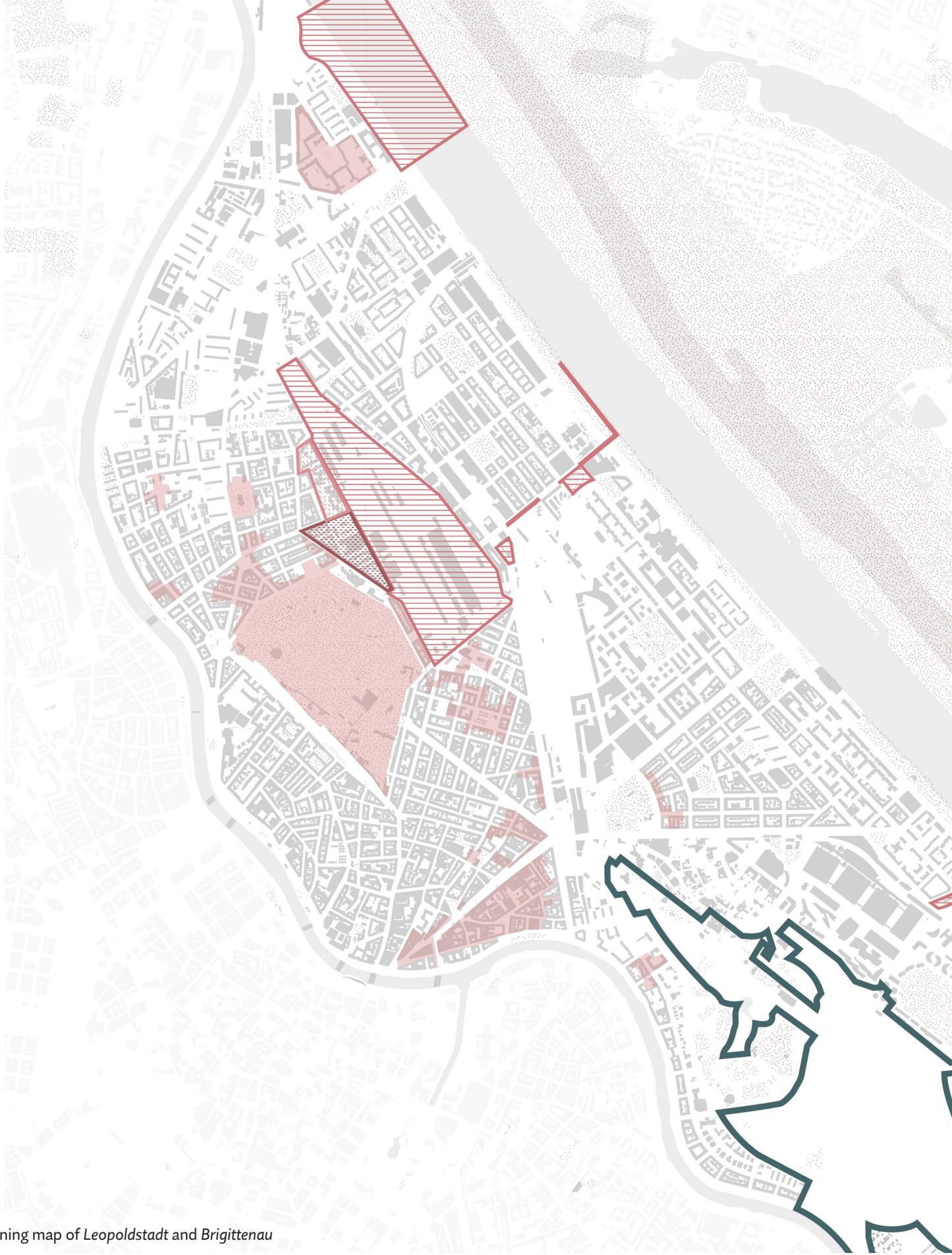
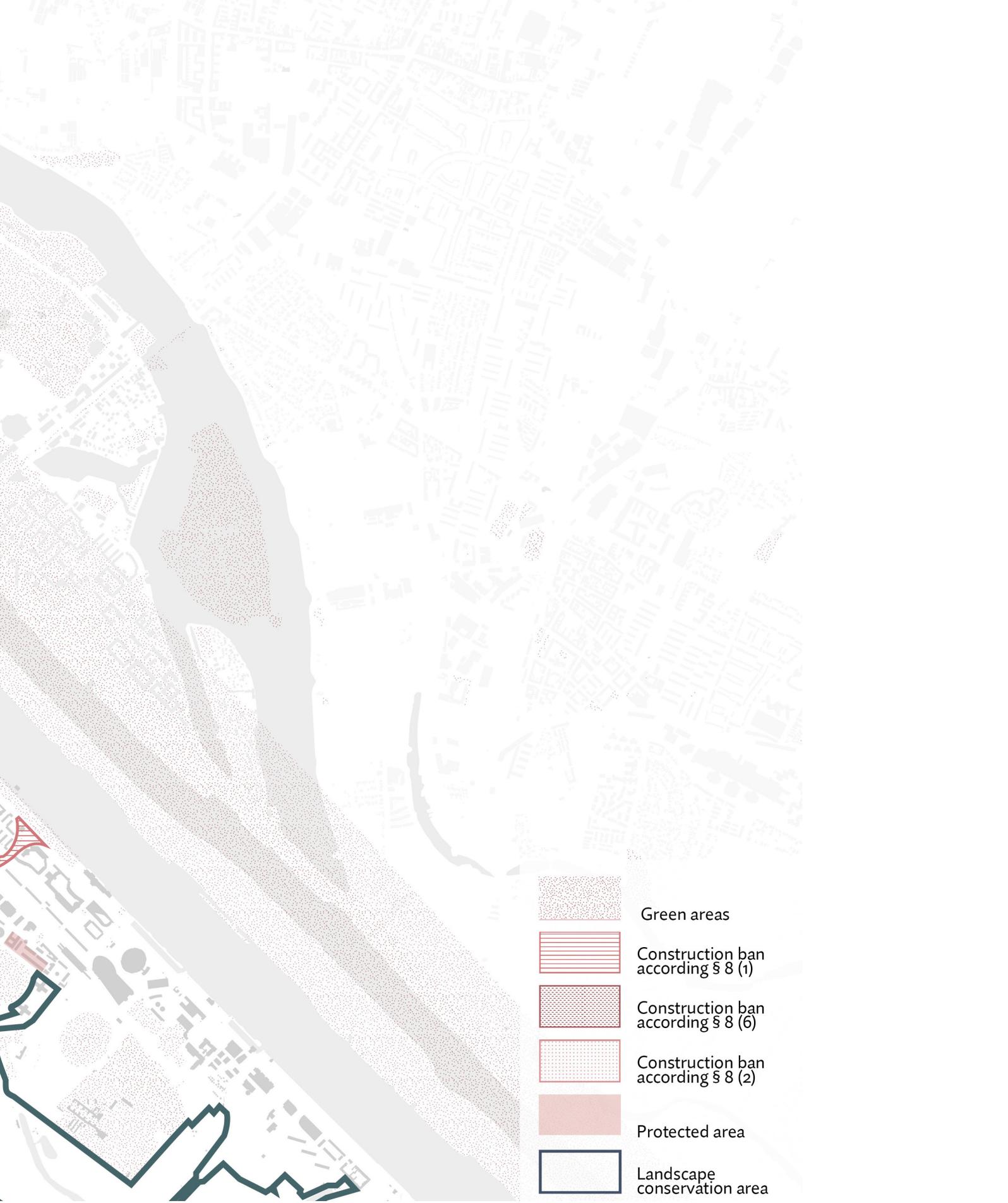


Figure 11: zoning map of Leopoldstadt and Brigittenau



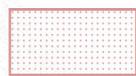
Green areas



Construction ban according § 8 (1)



Construction ban according § 8 (6)



Construction ban according § 8 (2)



Protected area



Landscape conservation area



Figure 12: map of the social housing in Leopoldstadt and Brigittenau



Subsidised Housing



Municipal Housing

SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

- 1 the interviewees
- 2 the interview questions
- 3 material analysis

This chapter reports all the phases of the sociological analysis. First of all, the selection of the interviewees and the motivations behind these choices are described in the first paragraph. Then, the interview questions, formulated on the basis of the urban analysis, illustrated in the previous chapter, are listed with an explanation of the considerations that led to privileging specific topics. In the third paragraph, the material obtained from the conduction of the interviews is thoroughly examined. Thematic aspects are selected indicatively for each question, and the most important considerations of the stakeholders are described, comparing the similar and opposite positions that each interviewee had on a specific issue.

The obtained outcome suggests an overall theoretical framework on the current social housing condition in Vienna from diverse perspectives.

1 THE INTERVIEWEES

The interviewees were selected among the stakeholders dealing with social housing in Vienna, considering the three governance spheres: municipal sector, private sector and no-profit sector. Thus, different managerial personalities were considered, so to have a balanced proportion among the number of interviewees.

For what concerns the municipal sector, four people were involved: D. G., part of the *Magistratsabteilung 50*, office that supervises the social housing subsidies; C. S. and J. G. part of the association *Wiener Wohnen*, managing the municipal housing stock; A. M., project manager for the *Gebietsbetreuung* of districts 1, 2, 7, 8, 9, 20. In addition to those employees of municipal departments, also C. R., sociologist and research fellow at the University of Vienna, was involved in the interview campaign, with the role of expert, considering their research publications on the topic.

As part of the private sector, those interviewees were mainly components of architecture studio, working with social housing projects: L. M. and F. B., part of *einszueins architektur*; C. M., founder of the studio *Superblock*, J. S. co-worker of *AllesWirdGut Architektur*. Only one person was part, instead, of a private developer company, *wohnbund:consult* (E. G.).

Five interviewees are part of the no-profit sector, even though from different typologies of associations. G. K. is part of the housing department in *Österreichischer Verband Gemeinnütziger Bauvereinigungen (GBV)*, the umbrella association, managing all the no-profit social housing developers of Austria; S. N. is project manager of *Schwarzatal*, a no-profit company which took part in several successful architectural projects. Always part of the no-profit sector are also Caritas and *Neunerimmo*, although not architectural project developers, but non-governmental associations for the support of people in need. Even if not focusing on the design and management process of the social housing, those two associations (together with others), are fundamental for pointing out the criticality that the system presents for some parts of the society. P. R., although their profession does not deal with design and architecture, is part of a cooperative for joints projects, that take part in participatory groups, and their contribution is important since is part not only of a particular type of developers' group but also a user of subsidized housing.

S. G. is a moderator of settlement processes, working as a freelance, thus could be considered part of the private sector. Nevertheless, their role can be considered closer to one of the NGO associations, since it strictly deals with the inhabitants of the social housing and support them in the settlement phase.

N.	INTERVIEWEE	ASSOCIATION NAME	ASSOCIATION TYPE
1	A.S., project manager	<i>Internationale Bauausstellung</i>	Municipal association
2	J.G., leader department of social affairs and services	<i>Wiener Wohnen</i>	
3	C.S., international relations	<i>Wiener Wohnen</i>	
4	D.G., housing research	<i>Magistratsabteilung 50 (MA50)</i>	Municipal office
5	A.M., project manager	<i>Gebietsbetreuung</i>	
6	C.R., research fellow and professor	<i>Wien Universität</i>	State institution
7	S.N., project manager	<i>Schwarzatal</i>	No profit association
8	G.K., housing department	<i>Österreichischer Verband Gemeinnütziger (GBV)</i>	
9	F.B. and L.M., architects	<i>einszueins architektur</i>	Private company (architecture studio)
10	C.M., company founder	<i>Superblock</i>	
11	J.S., project strategy and development	<i>AllesWirdGut Architektur</i>	
12	E.G., Spatial and Urban Research, Housing and Participation	<i>wohnbund:consult</i>	Private association (developer)
13	S.B., sociologist and moderator of settlement processes	freelance	Social worker
14	P.R., company founder	<i>HausWirtschaft e.Gen.</i>	cooperative for joints projects
15	J.M., project development manager	<i>Neunerimmo</i>	NGO
16	K.K.S, architecture, urban development and social management	Caritas	

Table 1: Interviewees and their associations

2 THE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

The interview questions are the outcome of preliminary analysis on the housing system and on the urban area considered for the project development. The interview is composed of three different sections of 3-4 questions each. Every section refers to a general topic and each question aims at exploring one specific aspect of that theme. The main purpose is to identify the main issues that arise from the current historical context and to address the architectural development strategy towards the solutions to those issues.

2.1 Section 1: social housing system

This first part of the interview, composed of four questions, focuses on the system in general terms to explore its peculiarities from administrative and urban planning points of view.

What are the main features of the Viennese social housing system?

Although the implementation of social housing is deeply analysed in chapter 2, further confirmation on its main characteristics is obtained through the interviewees' opinions. It is important to have the point of view of stakeholders from various sectors which could be considered as the most important elements comprehended in the implemented organization. The question is purposely general: in this way it can be understood whether the success of the Viennese model is due to an urban planning and architectural strategy or to a political and administrative organization.

What are the features that could be exported to other European cities?

Since the final outcome of the research work is the development of a strategy for implementing social housing projects, it is fundamental to individuate the features that are considered as potentially exportable in other contexts. Specifically, assuming that the European Union countries already follow specific common legislation, it is mentioned in the question the focus on the European territory. A universal model for affordable housing is thus something utopic since

in general the management of the housing market is based on cultural habits, traditions and political lines. For this reason, the applicability of the model is geographically restricted to European countries.

What are the architectural projects for social housing that had greater success in Vienna? And why?

This third question aims instead at collecting project references. It is useful for understanding which architectural and urban elements are most popular in Vienna. The projects mentioned becoming a sort of project catalogue of which the points of strength are highlighted, guiding the strategy implementation development.

What was the impact of the Corona crisis on the social housing development?

This research work has started and developed during the pandemic of SARS-CoV-2, which has had consequences from economic, social and political points of view. In order to contextualize the research outcome, it is thus necessary to account for the transformations that this exceptional situation has brought. The answers of the stakeholders shed light on the aspect that needs to be considered in the design process, for instance how the public and private spaces should interact with each other, or whether new necessities emerged.

2.2 Section 2: access and population needs

The second part of the interview comprehends three questions and aims at analysing which are the criteria for entering the system, the social strata that remain excluded and how those who instead have access deal with each other.

Vienna social housing system derives from the assumption that housing is a human right: how many people are still excluded by the system and why?

The question starts by stating an assumption that attempts at summarizing the Vienna housing policy. But what emerged from the literature previously analysed, is instead a difficulty from some parts of the population, to access the system. The sentence is thus slightly provocative: the affordable flats are not actually

addressed to whoever becomes part of the Vienna population, but certain criteria have to be met, in order to be suitable for the system. This “slogan” aimed at indicating transversality of the inhabitants of social housing, concerning the economic and social status, but this does not necessarily mean that everybody can access it. With this question, it is thus possible to individuate who are the excluded and then to try at possibly including them in the project strategy.

How to deal with people who recently immigrated and thus do still not possess Austrian or European citizenship (apart from providing temporary accommodation)?

Another main issue assumed from the literature analysis is the possibility of access to the system for migrants. In fact, because of some of the requirements to fulfil, it is very hard for them to benefit from affordable solutions in the social housing stock. The temporary accommodations available in some situations do not definitely solve the matter and the problem of migrants is urgently affecting all of Europe. Therefore, it is crucial to understand whether the housing policy of the city also considers this aspect and whether municipal and subsidised housing established some sort of solution for this issue.

What are the problems that may arise because of a mix of cultures in a social housing community?

Vienna population is growingly heterogeneous in terms of cultural background, and surely this aspect is reflected in social complexes inhabitants. Since the social projects include most of the time shared or semi-shared spaces, enhancing a communal lifestyle, it is interesting to consider which could be -if there are any- the main problems that might arise from multicultural relations.

2.3 Section 3: the project site

The last group of questions concerns different aspects of the 2nd and 20th district, with a particular focus on the Danube River connection. The aim is to collect further information about the area, from the viewpoint of stakeholders and developers that have a wider knowledge of the city past and future developments.

What are the reasons, from an urban planning point of view, for the lack of connection between the districts Leopoldstadt and Brigittenau and the right riverbank of the Danube River?

The area selected for analysing the possible developments strategy is situated along the right riverbank inside the district *Brigittenau* and *Leopoldstadt*. The choice is due to the fact that thanks to its proximity to the river it is considered to have a high potential, even though undeveloped. The question intends to explore the reasons for the lack of urban connection of the area with the city and of its underdeveloped potential.

How much important are Handelskai and the railway Donauuferbahn for the city?

Along the right riverbank a wide congested street and a train rail line run, creating a physical barrier between the riverbank itself and the rest of the city structure. The purpose of the question is to analyse the importance that those two traffic arteries have from the stakeholders' points of view and whether they are used at a local level or not.

In 2003 there was a proposal from Christoph Chorherr (Grüne Partei), for a 24th district along the Danube Riverbank to “exploit the potentiality of Handelskai”: what do you think about this possibility?

The proposal of Christoph Chorherr concerned the area of interest for evolving a design strategy. Since only few information has been found in the literature, the knowledge of the interviewees can lead to a better understanding of this project. The main purpose is to collect opinions of the different stakeholders to a potential development along the river to consider all the advantages and disadvantages for the city.

What services should be implemented to improve the attractiveness of districts 2 and 20?

This question aims at deepening a general knowledge of the two districts, in particular, the interest is on the services that could be implemented from the point of view of stakeholders. The collected answers give the possibility to address the project program so to satisfy

the necessities of the surrounding area.

What public spaces should be implemented to improve the attractiveness of districts 2 and 20?

As well as in the previous question, the purpose is to have a broader knowledge of the area. The types of public spaces, both indoor and outdoor, that are considered missing in the area, are introduced as a purpose of the strategy.

In this map municipal housings and subsidized housings are marked: do you think it can be considered complete or should other structures be added?

The last interview question originates from the necessity of mapping the municipal and subsidized housings in *Brigittenau* and *Leopoldstadt*, in order to obtain a complete overview of which buildings exist and where are located. The map in figure 13 is shown to the interviewees to know whether they recognize any missing complex. The main issue was to detect all the existing subsidized complexes, since no general database about all the buildings managed by limited-profit associations exists, whereas instead of municipal housing, there have been no major issues. Through the interviewees, it may be possible to individuate some other sources where to collect the information and complete the map, of which the final outcome is illustrated in chapter 3, paragraph 2.5.

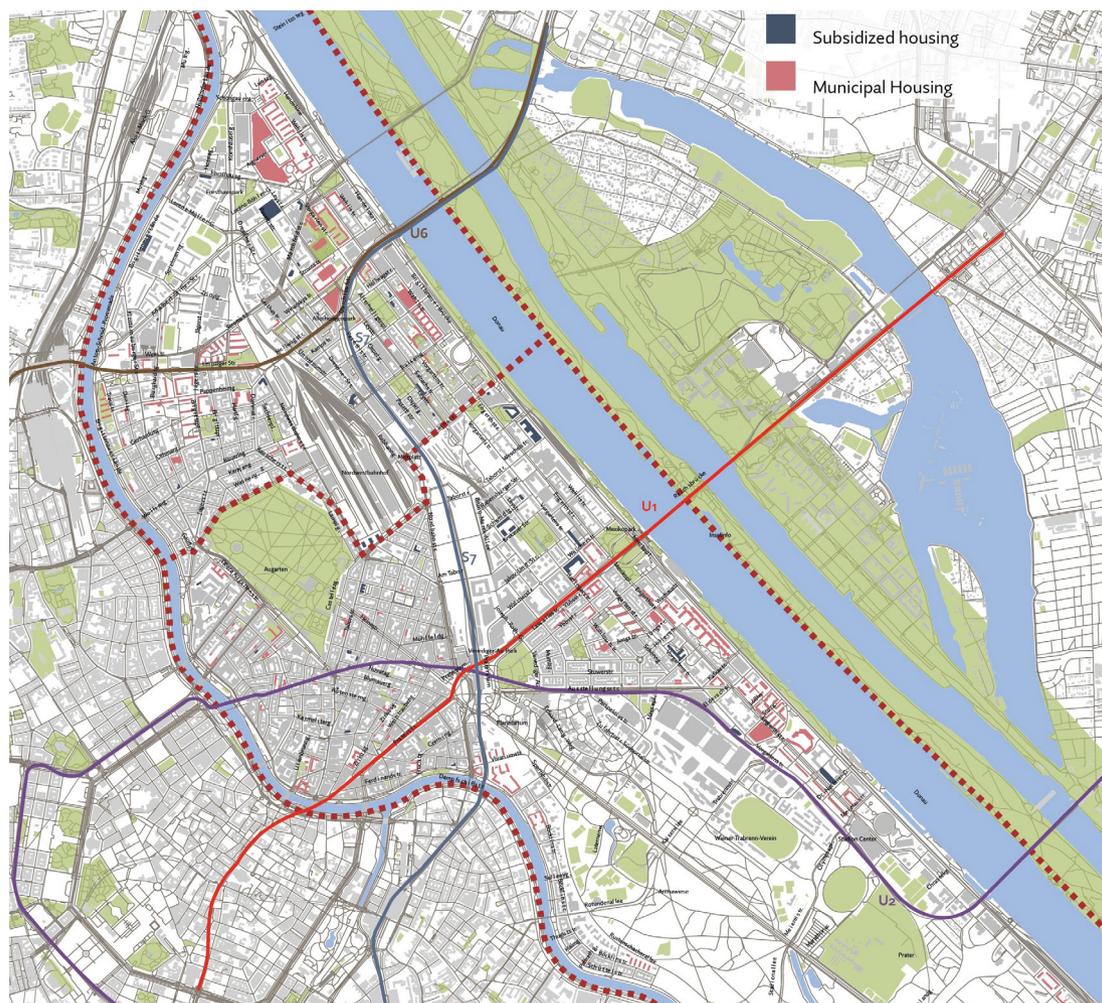


Figure 13: Leopoldstadt and Brigittenau map showed during the interviews

3 MATERIAL ANALYSIS

3.1 Social Housing system structure

The starting point of the analysis is the identification of the principal aspects that constitute the social housing analysis. Some features were mentioned by all the interviewees and are thus selected as the main points of this first topic.

“Mainly we have two different systems: one is the subsidized housing sector which amounts to 220000 apartments until now, and the other one is the municipal housing sector.” p. 132

C. S., *Wiener Wohnen* (municipal association).

The first main feature that is recognized as fundamental for the description of the social housing system in Vienna, is its subdivision into two different provision schemes: the municipal housing (*Gemeindebauten*), which is managed mainly by the association *Wiener Wohnen* itself, part of the city ownership, and the so-called subsidized housing, that is financed by the city but managed by No-Profit organizations (*gemeinnützige Genossenschaft*) as also illustrated in chapter 2. The number of apartments of these two groups is roughly the same, 220000, and cover around 60% of the Viennese rental market, as stated by another co-worker of *Wiener Wohnen*.

When mentioning the municipal sector, some interviewees not only from municipal offices but also in the private and no-profit ones, underlined its long historic tradition and the different asset that the system of Red Vienna had with respect to the current one. In fact, the original system was addressed to low-income workers, to improve their living conditions, whereas today the target is broader, concerning the income, including not specifically the working class, but who is integrated into the society and in the job market.

The no-profit organizations which manage the flats have to reinvest the money earned in new constructions or maintenance of the existing ones: it is a “circular exchange”, as the interviewee from *Schwarzatal*, a no-profit company, defines this process.

These associations are regulated by the Limited-Profit Housing Act (see chapter 2), which does not allow them to sell on the private market the buildings or to make any profit from them. They work as a private developer in terms of investment, know-how and resources, but have none or very low profit (around 3,5%, half of the private sector) as underlined by D. G., from the municipal office *MA 50 (Magistratsabteilung 50)*, that manages the housing subsidies.

“The Viennese model provides very inexpensive housing to a wide variety of inhabitants.” p. 164

C. M., *Superblock* (private sector - architecture studio).

“It is oriented to a broad range of income groups and provide good quality affordable housing based on cost-rent.” p. 151

G. K., *Österreichischer Verband Gemeinnütziger Bauvereinigungen* (no-profit sector).

From these two synthetic statements, other two fundamental elements are defined: the affordability of the flats and the broad target group to which are addressed.

The prices are in some cases compared to the ones of the private rental sector that are nearly double, even though the provided dwellings have generally a lower architectural quality. This is possible thanks to the subsidies supplied and to the low earnings of the no-profit developers, as already highlighted. One aspect which is mentioned solely by an architect from the architecture studio *Superblock*, is the cheap prices of municipal land, which cannot exceed 300 €/m², differently from free-financed housing projects, which deal with prices up to 1000/2000 €/m². As mentioned by the representative of GBV (no-profit sector), for implementing such an affordable system without no-profit developers, and relying on for-profit associations, the state should economically compensate the reduction of rent prices, since they would need to gain a surplus. The implemented system, thus, allows a very good control on the rental market prices: since half of the rental market managed by the social housing has very competitive prices, then also for the remaining

stock should not to exceed a certain amount.

The second aspect of these definitions is the portion of the population that can access the system: it comprehends different social strata. This characteristic is what avoids the creation of segregation or slums since the social housing includes people with diverse economic status and are allocated all over the city, as stressed by the project manager of the *Gebietsbetreuung*, the district municipal office. The created social mixture is mentioned as one of the principal features by several interviewees, from the different sectors, and the topic is further developed in other parts of the interviews, with a specific focus on the system accessibility.

“In Vienna, you have the four pillars of quality: economic, ecologic, architecture and social sustainability and those four are the basis for the so-called competitions where the city gives land for a fixed price to developers.” p. 171

E. G., *Wohnbund:consult* (private developer company).

“Now there are these competitions called Baurägerwettbewerb. [...] You have to prepare your project paying attention to architecture, economy and ecology and since 2009 also to the so-called fourth pillar of social sustainability” p. 174

S. G., moderator of settlement processes (freelance).

The other peculiarity of the system is the introduction of the so-called *Baurägerwettbewerb*, developers' competition, based on quality criteria, which ensure exceptional architectural features of the presented projects. This instrument was implemented in 1995 (wohnfonds_wien, 2018) including the criteria of economic, environmental, architectural and social sustainability, that form the “four-pillars model”, aiming at finding a balance among those different aspects. These criteria are the basic requirements that need to be fulfilled in order to win the competition and obtain the municipal land for construction. Teams formed not only by architects and urban planners but also by sociologists, developers and all the experts that can contribute to reach the highest possible quality, collaborate to manage all the different components

of such complex projects. The interviewee working for Caritas remarked on the active participation of the association in the developers' competition, taking care of the needs of those weakest social groups as, for instance, elderly, but also of participation activities and process of settlement, activated once the project has been completed. The *Baurägerwettbewerbe* are also recognized by the architecture studios co-workers as a useful instrument for integrating into the professional world even young architects. The only negative aspect, pointed out by an architect of *einszueins architektur*, is the nearly exclusive participation of local Viennese companies, precluding an international perspective to the architectural proposals.

3.2 The exportability of the model

A second point explored through the interviews is the possibility of exporting the system of part of its components in other European cities. Some elements that were mentioned as fundamental characters of the Viennese system were also indicated as implementable in other contexts. Furthermore, some issues emerged, and some interviewees drew comparisons among Vienna and other cities with different systems in force.

“I think that the system of Baurägerwettbewerbe could be exported because it is the only way to maintain high-quality projects and at the same time affordable rents” p. 148

S. N., *Schwarzatal* (no-profit sector).

What was mainly indicated as easily exportable in other cities, is the competitions system based on the four-pillar model: in fact, many stakeholders from the *Internationale Bauausstellung (IBA Wien)* (municipal sector), from *einszueins architektur* company (private architecture studio), and from *Wien Universität*, stated that the most effective way for obtaining a remarkable project's quality and at the same time affordable rents, is the institution of these competitions. This instrument allows in fact the selection of the best project among the presented ones maintaining at the same time low construction costs since the land is provided by the city. This method also ensures a wide architectural variety of

the resulting complexes: an aspect which is underlined by a co-worker of *Wiener Wohnen*, comparing the Viennese situation to the one in Hamburg. In the German city, social housing is constituted by the repetition of the same building system, that once developed is used in all the different city areas. In Vienna instead, thanks to the intervention of teams of experts with different ideas and thanks to the assignation of land plots inside a unique complex to different groups, a diversification of architectural identity is pursued.

“One point is to establish gemeinnütziger companies not allowed to make profits and sell the flats [...]. If you as a government have control over what is built over the land, you can define your rules.” p. 178

P. R., *HausWirtschaft e.Gen.* (cooperative for joints projects)

Together with the establishment of the competitions, also the institution of no-profit cooperatives is seen as a fundamental aspect. In fact, since they are not allowed to make any profit, they favour, together with the provision of land by the city of Vienna, to maintain the affordability of flat rents.

This sector is regulated by the Limited-Profit Housing Act of 1979, which impose strict directives and does not allow the companies to sell the buildings they manage, as it happened instead in other countries: in this way the social housing complexes remain in the ownership of the no-profit sector or of the city, and the government has the possibility to control more effectively the prices of the rental market.

Apart from the mentioned features that are considered the elements making the system so efficient in the quality-affordability ratio, some difficulties regarding the possibility of exporting the Viennese model arose.

“It [exporting the model] is extremely complicated: the main point is that every city has specific traditions in dealing with the question of affordable housing”. p.143

C. R., *Wien Universität*

“The model is exportable, but the precondition for the

economic aspect is political” * p. 160

L. M., *einszueins architektur* (private sector - architecture studio).

In both these sentences, the main complication in exporting a model that is part of a local tradition is underlined as a political and cultural issue. In Vienna, the advantage is that the possession of land by the municipality is something that has never been interrupted since the 1920s, apart from the period of Austro-Fascism.

Several interviewees, for example from *AllesWirdGut Architektur* (architecture studio), from GBV and from *Wiener Wohnen* compared the Austrian situation to the German one: in fact, nowadays cities like Berlin, are facing the problem of shortage of affordable housing and are trying to gain the land back. In the 1990s in Germany, the social housing stock was almost entirely sold to private developers and the city governments lost control over the rental stock.

The comparison with Germany was the most common; the representative of GBV, compared the system of Austria to the one of England. In fact, whereas the former cost-rental system, the latter follows an income-based approach. In the income-based approach, the dwellings are provided according to income, addressing the service to people in economic difficulties. In Austria, as well as in Denmark, the organizations cannot charge more than what they need for construction and maintenance of the buildings and cannot charge less, because they need capital to re-invest for being financially viable.

In synthesis, the possibility to export a system such as the Austrian one in other European cities appears to be quite complicated, since it is an intricate apparatus, rooted in historical traditions. It can, though, be a model to imitate in some of its components. For what concerns the architectural features, the exportability depends on the implementation of competitions that ensure high-quality projects, a diversification of the housing complexes and professional advancement for the local architecture companies. From an administrative and

* Translated by the author

bureaucratic point of view, the premises are political and based on the management of the land costs and the institution of no-profit companies, that, since they do not produce any economic surplus, can provide affordable houses. Furthermore, a point of strength of Vienna housing policy is the maintenance of ownership by the city government, which allows control over the entire rental market.

3.3 Successful social housing projects and architectural solutions

The answers of the interviewees to the request of naming some successful social housing projects in the city of Vienna can be subdivided into different typologies: they mentioned specific projects from the Red Vienna period, projects part of the participatory design programs, general features that characterize the Viennese contemporary architecture -either considered positive or something to be modified- or projects focusing on specific thematic and with specific users' target.

The projects mentioned, singular buildings or broader urban developments, are in total 24 and are illustrated later in this paragraph.

“The old big projects are famous already because they are architecturally attractive: they started to build flats with toilets inside, with a heating system, which was much better than the older buildings”

A. M., *Gebietsbetreuung* (municipal office).

The projects of the Red Vienna period are considered successful both for their time and for today: they are characterized by a mixture of functions and services at the ground floor, with several common spaces and open-air areas usually developed in courtyards, thus protected from the street although still public and open. The Red Vienna constructions are described by the *Wiener Wohnen* interviewee as a social revolution: they were addressed to workers that ended up living in better conditions than the richer people in their villas. In fact, for the first time, baths and toilets were located inside the buildings and the heating system was efficient. These complexes are appreciated even today,

especially for the disposition of open areas, that is much more functional for community gatherings than those of the 1970s complexes, as mentioned by the project manager of the *Gebietsbetreuung*, where the common open-air facilities are positioned in between buildings with linear shapes and do not enclose the space as the courtyards of the 1920s *Höfe*.

Although the efficiency and advancement of the design of these architectures are recognized by all the interviewees, those of the municipal offices and organizations, mentioned them with the most detailed descriptions, probably because they are part of the best complexes part of the *Gemeindebauten*.

“[in]Nordbahnhof, Seestadt Aspern, Sonnwendviertel some special parts are called Baugruppen, housing projects built by normal people, groups of people that want to leave together and they build and develop projects together.” p. 178

P.R., *HausWirtschaft e.Gen.* (cooperative for joints projects)

A typology of projects that was illustrated as quite successful are the so-called *Baugruppen* projects, which foresee the involvement of the future inhabitants in all the design phases, with a twofold purpose: exploring and satisfying the necessity of inhabitants and creating a strong sense of community that can be maintained once the construction has ended.

Those who identify participation as an effective approach in the social housing development are in particular two interviewees: one is a founder of *HausWirtschaft e.Gen.* and the other one is a moderator of settlement process even though presenting two different points of view. The former, who is not themselves an architect or urban planner, is part of a cooperative that fosters the implementation of those *Baugruppen* projects, and they experienced it personally. They define the participatory projects as the best possible results since they respond exactly to what their dwellers demand and want the most, not only in terms of private spaces and apartments but also for what concerns the communal areas and facilities. The latter, who works for supporting people

in the design phase and afterwards, is aware of the limitations that this system can present. In fact, they argue that the engagement of those having more social power and thus usually also a higher socioeconomic status is stronger than for those who, instead, being in the lowest social strata, are not used to introduce their needs and opposing to others' opinions. Furthermore, those in difficult social situations, such as, for instance, divorced parents, might not have the time and energy to take part in a participatory project, that may last two years and require constant efforts.

Among the *Baugruppen* projects, several mentioned were built in the 2010s, but also precedent experiment with this kind of the design, as *Sargfabrik*, that remains still today a popular complex.

“On one end there is a very wide diversification of architectural elements, and at the same time a very heterogeneous urban “islands” which is not related to city buildings.” p. 144

C. R., *Wien Universität*

A topic which is an object of discussion remarked by different interviewees and that concerns the answer to different questions, is how the new developments become sort of urban islands, totally disconnected from the rest of the old city fabric. Those settlements, which have all the features for satisfying the necessities of the population, remain confined to a certain area, with no positive influence in the surrounding. The result, as the sociologist from Vienna University underlines,



Figure 14: *Sandleiten-Hof*, view on *Nietzsche Platz*, 1928

is that the heterogeneity given by the diversification, present inside these new developments, considered a positive contribution for the evolution of the city, does not involve in any way the existing structure. The diversification inside the new settlement is given by a combination of different architects' projects, using several architectural languages and different financial schemes, which also ensure a social mixture. The principle of the bigger settlements afterwards described, as *Sonnwendviertel*, *Seestadt Aspern*, is to create new districts with all the possible services, including also, but not only, social housing solutions.

Another element often recurring in the answers of the interviewees, are projects developed with a focus on specific themes and groups of people. Only by the municipal office *Magistratsabteilung 50* these design programs were mentioned explicitly, arguing, though, that they are addressed to very specific categories of people. Although not specifically presented as thematic projects, many of the illustrated examples are part of these initiatives, as *Frau Werk Stadt I*, with the aim of both empowering women in the professional world, and creating a protected environment for the inhabitants; *Biotope city*, that attempts at fulfilling a more environmentally sustainable idea of urbanity; *Generation: wohnen am Mühlgrund*, concentrating on the flexibility of architectural space, for adapting at the necessities of different generations.

In the following pages, a list of all the named projects has been created by the author. They are ordered chronologically, in order to illustrate the evolution of architectural language and building typologies, from the origin of social housing program until today. The ones belonging to the Red Vienna period, could all be defined as "cities within the city", since they provide a wide variety of activities for the inhabitants, and always comprehend broad settlements. The ones from the 1970s-1980s, have different architectural structures, since they usually do not present any courtyards and are often considered of lower quality.

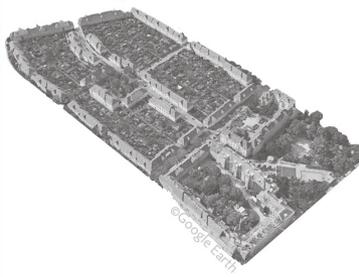
Most of the recent projects are either *Baugruppen* or theme-oriented, with high quality and high success

among the Viennese population. The architectural language is sometimes plain and simple, but the strength is in the type of communal spaces and services offered to the inhabitants, that foster lively community life.

Table 2 shows a categorization of the mentioned projects, for a further architectural and social analysis of what are the features and character of each design. The architectural features, urban features and special functions aim at identifying architectural categories. Resident typology, governance subject, management model and vision of the project and reached objectives aim, instead, at defining the social characteristics and groups at which the project are addressed.

→ Figure 15: (next four pages) social housing project considered among the most successful by the interviewees

1919
–
1924

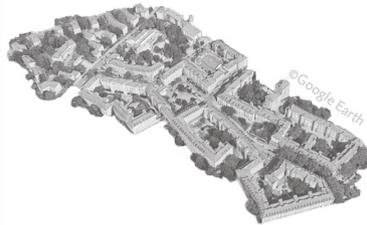


Auf der Schmelz - 15th district

The complex is one of the first erected with the Red Vienna program, and it was built in different phases. The first area (1919-1920) is called *Mareschbau*, built around *Mareschplatz*, in the southern part of the complex. It is based on the concept of row-houses settlements. *Mareschplatz* comprehends the garden, that used to be for self-sufficiency and the one-stock buildings, some of which still made of hollow concrete blocks or substitutive material. The second area phase is called *Planschbeckenbau* (named after a kids pool, previously located in a wide courtyard) and comprehends two- or three-stocks buildings, with an architecture language close to the one of the later 1920s social housing. The third phase (ending in 1924), is clearly distinguishable from the others, comprehending a building with a horseshoe structure. (Wohnsiedlung Schmelz, n.d.)

Architect: *Hugo Mayer*

1924
–
1928



Sandeleiten-Hof - 16th district

The peculiarity of this settlement is that although conceived in the 1920s and thus recalling the structure of the Viennese *Höfe*, presents an open structure, with plazas and continuous green spaces. It is the largest complex of Red Vienna program built after the First World War, with a total area of 68581 m² and hosting up to 5000 residents. It has been defined “the city within the city”, since it includes a wide variety of services and infrastructure, as typical of Red Vienna constructions. It also includes, as a novelty, a Montessori kindergarten, in addition to restaurants, retail stores, workshops, a swimming pool, a cinema, a post office and fireman and police departments. *Sandeleiten-Hof* was refurbished between 1995 and 2003. (Förster and Menking, 2018)

Architects: *Josef Tölk | Emil Hoppe | Franz Matuschek | Siegfried Theiß | Hans Jaksch | Otto Schönthal | Franz Krauß*

1925
–
1926



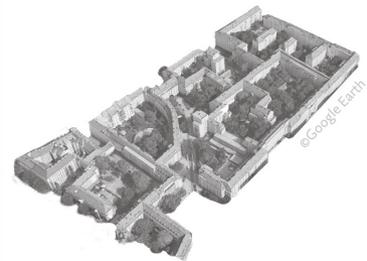
©Peter Gugereil

Lassalle-Hof - 2nd district

The position of the complex was, at the time of the construction, strategic, since it was conceived as a sort of bridgehead on the Danube and as a northern entrance of the city. The building culminates in a tower-like structure, with bow-widows at the corner of *Vorgartenstraße* and *Lassallestraße*, which, thanks to the open colonnade and the glass pavilion at the top reminds of a lighthouse. At the centre of the main façade, two narrow avant-corps, elevated by the attics and crowned by triangular gables. Next to the two avant-corps, we find again two bow-windows stripes. The ground floor of the complex, which hosts shops and retails, is subdivided by arcades and it comes out from the main façade. At the centre of the elevation, a monumental two-storey portal frames the entrance, with a pergola supported by pillars. (Lassalle Hof, n.d.)

Architects: *Hubert Gessner | Fritz Waage | Hans Paar*

1925
–
1929

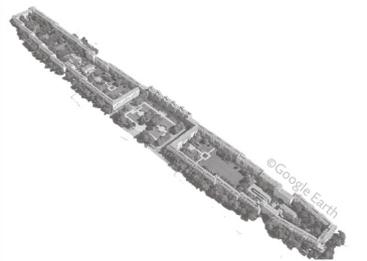


Rabenhof - 3rd district

The complex does not present monumental features. Its uniqueness derives from what was concern as a problem: the site is not completely flat. Thus, different buildings were constructed in different phases, presenting different heights and façade typologies: these characters give it the aspect of a fortified castle. Each of the courtyards formed by the different developments, is connected through passages and staircases. In 1987 four architects were commissioned to positioning elevators for the whole complex. Each designed elevator is unique and different from the others thanks to the use of cured shapes, glass components, floating cubes and colourful elements. This additions created a new relation between the volumes and between the new and old materials and shapes. (Rabenhof, n.d.)

Architects: *Heinrich Schmid | Hermann Aichinger*

1927
–
1930

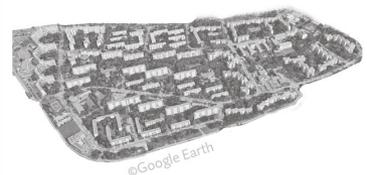


Karl Marx-Hof - 19th district

This project has become a symbol of Red Vienna program for municipal housing. It hosts 1000 apartments, together with several communal services, that even included a permanent exhibition for inexpensive furniture, thought for the apartments of the settlement. Nowadays, in the former laundry room, there is a museum illustrating the history of the Red Vienna. The complex is impressive especially for its size: it occupies a one kilometre long site. The central area is enclosed by two lateral wings and by the main central façade, characterised by wide arcades, creating a sort of central plaza, open on one side. The lateral bodies of the complex are formed by a court-like structure: two wide courtyards form the main public open spaces, rich of vegetation, provided for the inhabitants. (Förster and Menking, 2016.)

Architect: *Karl Ehn*

1947
–
1951

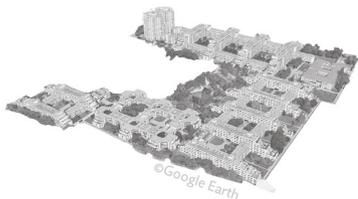


Per Albin Hansson Siedlung - 10th district

The complex, completed only in the 1960s, was started in the postwar period, as part of a support program from Sweden (the settlement is in fact named after the Swedish prime minister of the time), which provided to Vienna some machine, for converting debris from the War into usable construction material. Inside the complex it is possible to find several municipal institutions, as an event hall, a community college, a kindergarten, assisted living for seniors and schools. Despite now being in a more central position, thanks to the line U1 metro station, it maintained its low-density character and vast vegetation surface. The settlement, as a part of *IBA Wien 2022*, is undergoing social and technical improvement cooperating with residents as part of a Europe-wide pilot project on new approaches to post-war developments. (Förster and Menking, 2018)

Architects: *Franz Schuster | Eugen Wörle | Stephan Simony | Friedrich Pangratz*

1974
-
1981



Am Schöpfwerk - 12th district

It constitutes a proper district, where cars are not allowed: for them a car park with 1200 parking spots is available. The settlement includes different typology of homes, as, for instance, two-floors apartments, flats for disable people, and in the newest part the 62-floors towers. The dwellings surface vary from 30 m² to 140 m². The development offer a wide variety of services for its inhabitants, including schools, kindergarten, and shops, but also a medical studio and other type of neighbourhood supports. Even if it includes a multiplicity of functions in addition to the residential one, the plan is structured subdividing the activities in different areas, with a mono-functional perspective, which create a sort of "dormitory town". Furthermore the population is quite heterogeneous in term of socioeconomic status and age. (Am Schöpfwerk, n.d.)

Architects: Franz Schuster | Viktor Hufnagl

1976
-
1985

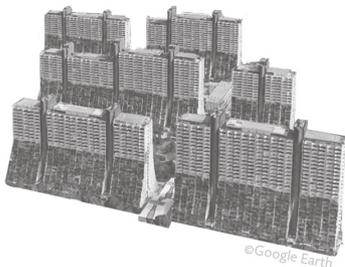


Handelskai 214 - 2nd district

The complex, which has not a specific name and is identified through its address, is positioned along *Handelskai* street. The building facing *Handelskai* are shielded by a park deck, and the ground floor is used for shared and communal activities. The back of the building, facing *Engerthstraße*, is developed with additional elements, perpendicular to the main body, with a stepped shape, that create several green courtyards. The complex is made of prefabricated units that allow a high flexibility levels. A. M. from the *Gebietsbetreuung* pointed out that the quality of social housing from the 1980s is not as high as the ones from the Red Vienna, taking as an example *Handelskai 214*. P. R. from *HausWirtschaft e.Gen.*, criticizes the fact that a broad part of street level has been conceived for car parks, "killing" the street life. (Handelskai 214, n.d.)

Architects: Anton Holtermann | Engelbert Eder | Hugo Potyka

1977
-
1980



Alt Erlaa - 23rd district

It is one of the most popular social housing complex, design by Harry Glück during the 1970s. Its inhabitants are still today among the most satisfied with their accommodation in Vienna. This is mainly due to the fact that the high-rise buildings provide several communal areas and services that make them comparable to a luxury hotel at a really cheap price. Among the services there are a rooftop swimming pool, a church, a sauna, a solarium. The project has been criticized several times because of the massive structures, which are, though, softened by the richness of vegetation on the balconies. And the balconies themselves are considered by J. S. from *AllesWirdGut Architektur* one of the strong point of the project: the provision of open-air area fosters the well-being of the inhabitants (Förster and Menking, 2018).

Architects: Harry Glück | Requat & Reinthaller & Partners | Kurt Hlaweniczka

1994
-
1996

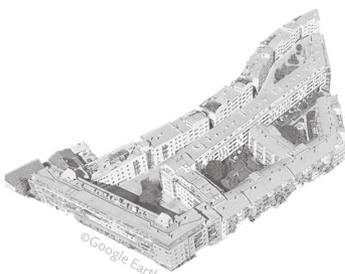


Sargfabrik - 14th district

The project, apart from presenting several additional infrastructures and services, as typical of most social housing complexes, comprehends 75 housing units, 45 m² maisonette that can form larger apartments, joining up to 6 units thanks to a prefabricated system. *Sargfabrik* is the product of a participatory project lasted 10 years, that has still nowadays a great success, so much that other buildings with the same concept has been built, one in 2000 called *Miss Sargfabrik* and more recently one also in *Seestadt Aspern*, called *LISA*. The concept at the base is the one of *Baugruppen*, as the interviewee from *HausWirtschaft e.Gen.* mentioned, consisting on projects designed with the participation of the future inhabitants. (Förster and Menking, 2016)

Architect: BKK-2 Architektur ZT GmbH

1995
-
1997

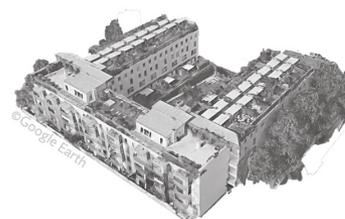


Frauen Werk Stadt I - 21st district

The project was innovative for its feminist approach and it is still today the largest urban settlement focusing on the gender equality issue. The project followed a competition launched in 1992, that was though exclusively for women, including the jury components. The idea was to create a safe environment for the inhabitants, also fostering social contacts and simplifying housework and family life. Furthermore, there was the intent to empower professional and expert women, in the world of architecture and urban planning. The masterplan considered the most convincing, was the one by Franziska Ullmann, that included a wide variety of flats typologies, the free spaces and a central square. The living units are 357, nowadays occupied by 1000 inhabitants. (Frauen-Werk-Stadt I, n.d.)

Architects: Franziska Ullmann | Gisela Podreka | Elsa Prochazka | Liselotte Peretti

1998
-
2000



Inter-ethnische Nachbarschaft - 23rd district

The project has become an example of migrants integration inside the city of Vienna and inside the social housing system. It comprehends 141 subsidised flats and communal spaces of different dimensions. Each of the staircase leads to the garden roof, either a shared one, or a private one, also equipped with a small private cabin. The laundry room, as underlined by A. S. from IBA, is located at the ground floor (and not as usual in the basement), facing the children area, so that parents can take care of their children and of domestic works simultaneously. The peculiarity of the complex is that around half of the inhabitants has an immigration background, originally coming from 17 different countries. It has been a sort of social experiment, even because it is located in a district which is not traditionally inhabited by immigrants. (Biffi, 2010)

Architect: Sozialbau AG

2007
-
2011



Generationen : wohnen am Mühlgrund - 22nd district

The whole project includes three lots, where three different buildings were designed, with a common focus. The settlement, in fact, deals with the topic of demographic change from the point of view of architecture, pursuing an idea of social housing the evolves according to the needs of its inhabitants. The structure designed by Hermann Czech presents a height of 7.50m purposely for fitting the *Bauklasse I*, and allows to flexibly organize the interior with mezzanines which can be used for different purposes, according to the need of the occupants: an extra bedroom, a study room, a playroom for kids. The smaller flats in the staggered floor, can be connected to the upper apartments, so to enlarge it. The flats can also be organize so that they do not present any staircase, or mezzanine, for disable or elderly. (Eder and Rumpfhuber, 2021)
Architects: *Hermann Czech*

2010
-
2013



Wohnprojekt Wien - 2nd district

The project is part of the *Baugruppen* projects and although not the first one, is considered a turning point in the collaboration between citizens initiatives and the public administration. The project presents different communal spaces for a variety of activities including for example urban gardening. The peculiarity of the project is that the location in an area that lack of public life (despite the wide park and the educational campus), transformed it in a proper community reference point. Thanks to the process of participatory design, the participants had the chance to bond deeply with each other, creating long-lasting social relationships. This guarantees a lively social life into the building, that hosts also a small café and a party room that can be rented, a playroom for kids and an office for architects. (Gruber, 2021)
Architects: *einszueins architektur*

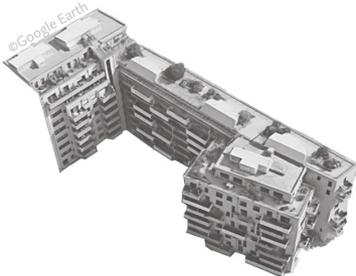
2011
-
2013



PaN - 2nd district

The particular feature of the project is the fact that is the result of a collaboration of three architecture studio, two of which not from Vienna, which is quite unusual in the social housing context. Each studio designed a building, sharing a common architectural language. The ground floor of the buildings is made of concrete, to give an impression of robustness, the façades do not present any cantilevering element, including balconies, with a reference to Adolf Loos's architecture, and the colours chosen are similar, to maintain a visual balance. The buildings present an entrance loggia and a roof-terrace. Even though it is not part of the *Baugruppen* projects, the inhabitants had the chance to meet each other before moving into the buildings, to create a sense of community. (Frühwirth, 2014)
Architects: *Werner Neuwirth | von Ballmoos Krucker | Sergison Bates architects*

2012
-
2013



Sovie.so - 10th district

This project is a *Baugruppe* project, in *Sonnwendviertel*, that has as main goal the creation of an active community, integrating also kids and young people in its development. The name means *Sonnwendviertel Solidariesche* and the overall initiative was led by the logic of designing accounting also for other people necessities. The building presents two bodies that intersect, equipped both with private balconies and loggias, that become a space of encounter. Furthermore, the roof is accessible as a community area, in addition to the garden in front of the main entrance which is public, apart from a portion, in front of the building, that constitutes another sort of terrace for the inhabitants. The building, that present a quite simple structure, is enriched by the wide balconies with finishing of different shades of green. (sovie.so - das Gebaude, n.d.)
Architects: *S & S Architekten | Cornelia Schindler | Rudolf Szedenik*

2013
*



Sonnwendviertel - 10th district

This settlement is located in proximity of the main railway station. It is developed around the elongated *Helmut-Zilk-Park* and comprehends a wider variety of building forms, including different *Baugruppe* projects. The first masterplan that was drawn for this city portion by Albert Wimmer ZT GmbH, Ernst Hoffmann and Theo Hotz Partner Architekten was not fully successful: it foresaw to dedicate the area close to the station to hotels and offices, while the residential buildings with their courtyards were located around the park. Some buildings though have up to ten floors, which shade most of the open-air spaces. Thus, for the development of the western part, the masterplan was modified, opening some passages in the massive blocks, reducing the height and creating a car-free promenade along the park. (Krammer, 2021)
Architects: *Albert Wimmer ZT GmbH | Ernst Hoffmann | Theo Hotz Partner Architekten*

2013
*



Seestadt Aspern - 22nd district

Seestadt Aspern is not a unique project, but a urban settlement of 2.4 km², the biggest in the European Union. The development, of which only one quarter has been completed so far, will constitute a proper new town, even though still inside the boarder of Vienna municipal territory, hosting 20000 residents and all the necessary services. It has been located in a peripheral area of Vienna and can be reached with the metro line U2. The peculiarity of the settlement is the fact that it sort of denies the ideal city plan, since it is centred around an artificial lake and buildings for leisure activities, and not around institutional buildings or parade grounds. Even if it hosts several social housing projects, another feature of *Seestadt Aspern* is the mixing of different financial models and architectural styles. (Krammer, 2021)
Architects (masterplan): *Trovatt Architects*

2014
*



Nordbahnhof - 2nd district

The settlement in place of the former north railway station has begun in the 1990s and it is still unfinished. The first development regarded a strip of buildings for offices along *Lassallestraße*, which then expanded towards the station during the 2000s. It foresaw a high-quality urban project with a differentiated structure around *Rudolf Bednar Park*, which was designed in that years. This first expansion included 4500 flats and the educational campus *Gertrude Fröhlich-Sadner*. The masterplan for the remaining area was designed by the Viennese architecture studio Bernd Vlay, and it is still in use today. Furthermore, the local residents were involved in the design process, concluded in 2014. The name of this last phase of the project is *Freie Mitte-Vielseitiger Rand* (Free Centre - Versatile Edge). (Vom Bahnhof zur Freien Mitte, n.d.)

Architects (masterplan): *Wien municipal council | StudioVlayStreeruwitz*

2015
-
2017



©Lukas Schaller

In der Wiesen Süd - 23rd district

The complex comprehends five different buildings, three tower-like structures on the northern section, developed by Dietrich|Untertrifaller, and another articulated building in the southern area, realized by ARTEC. In the northern part, the two six-storeys building have the shaped of a narrow hexagon, developed around a central core; the balconies allow a variety of possible views of the area. The flats, that range from 46 m² to 130 m², are suitable for several familiar sizes (In der Wiesen Süd, 2021). The southern part has the peculiarity of evolving along the *Carlbergerstraße*, presents the ground floor area as a public space, that is conceived as a permeable space, allowing the access to the open-air area inside the complex, designed by Auböck+Kárász Landscape Architects, with its hilly modelled terrain. (Förster and Menking, 2018)

Architects: *ARTEC | Dietrich|Untertrifaller | Auböck+Kárász Landscape Architects*

2015
-
2019



©einszueins architektur

Gleis21 - 10th district

The project is the result of a participatory work. The peculiarity of the building is given by the quantity of public and common spaces, which fosters the social relationships to continue even after the design experience as a participatory group has ended. A portico situated in the northern part is in contrast with the private balconies on the southern facade, and they allow a diffusion of the common areas in the overall structure, without limiting it at the ground floor. The use of prefabricated wooden elements and the structure of the building allow a high flexibility degree, evident also in the façades composition: each inhabitants was free to choose the windows and doors they preferred, giving a variegated and irregular elevations. The ground floor, presenting free passages and glass façades, functions as a connection area. (Herold and Felber, 2021)

Architects: *einszueins architektur*

2017
-
2019



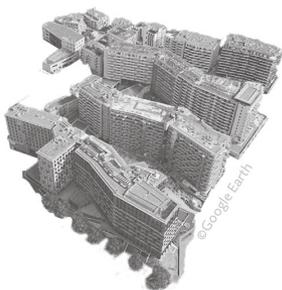
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Kapellenhof - 22nd district

The building is situated in the 22nd district, that presents in general a very heterogeneous structure. The focal point of the project is the huge courtyard, which functions as a public park and becomes private in the portions just in front of the construction. The structure is subdivided into four portions, since a unique building would have been too massive. The ground floor is underlined by a bright orange colour and presents a portico that runs all along the courtyard. The building presents in general a high-quality standard, even though some design choices had to be modified due to the reduced budget that sometimes social housing projects present. The project presents several different communal areas, which, together with the large open-air spaces, are considered by J. S. from AllesWirdGut the strong point of the design. (Novotny, 2021)

Architects: *AllesWirdGut Architektur | feld72*

2017
-
2021



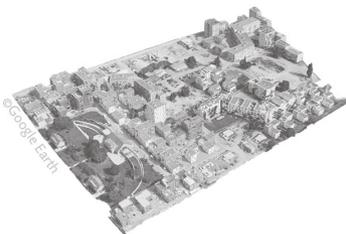
©Google Earth

Biotope City - 10th district

Started by Harry Glück with a interdisciplinary team, the project aims at providing large green surfaces, not only for the well-being of inhabitants, as it was the case of the popular project *Alt Erlaa*, but mainly for keeping a clean air, improving biodiversity and cooling. The idea is to propose a solution for global warming and climate change, exploiting architectural design. The complex provides 1000 apartments and other services, such as schools, kindergarten, retail stores, common areas and private urban gardens. The project was conceived with the collaboration of the university of Natural Resources and Life Sciences (BOKU), to propose a reliable solution from the environmental sustainability viewpoint. (Förster and Menking, 2018)

Architects: *Harry Glück | BKK-3 | Architecture ZT GmbH | BC FOUNDATION BIOTOPE CITY Helga Fassbinder | Bernhard Scharf | wohnbund : consult*

2017
*



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Wildgarten - 12th district

This settlement, which is positioned in the southern area of the city, is almost complete. Its peculiarity is a almost complete abandonment of urbanization principles: the main theme that dominates the project is the use of shared gardens. The buildings have a limited height and a large part of the settlement is planned for social housing: the social mix is ensured through the implementation of self-financed raw houses and *Baugruppe* projects. The development will cover 1.1 km² and will host 2300 people, joining diverse architecture forms and financial schemes. The principle on which it is based is not only the creation of a strong community, but also to foster an ecological lifestyle, encouraging a pedestrian mobility, promoting respect for nature and the use of recycled materials. (Krammer, 2021)

Architects (masterplan): *arenas basabe palacios*

perspectives: the project construction and the socioeconomic ones.

“They kept building up, maybe with some delay, because of the slower delivery of some materials, but the sites were closed for a very short time.” p. 139

A. M., *Gebietsbetreuung* (municipal office)

“The city just does not allow them [the no-profit associations] to raise the price over 7 €/m², the companies thus have problems in paying the construction companies that maybe raise the prices of the materials.” p. 179

P. R., *HausWirtschaft e.Gen.* (cooperative for joints projects)

On one hand, the construction sites only stopped for 2 or 3 weeks at the very beginning of the pandemic, and then restarted their activity, as many interviewees argued. Nevertheless, a problem concerning the construction, pointed out by the interviewee from *HausWirtschaft e.Gen.*, emerged. In fact, there has been a cost increase for some materials, which then caused a general raise in projects costs. Since no-profit associations have certain limitations in the rent price they can request, they ended up several times without the possibility of completely covering the construction costs through the rents, and had thus, to abandon some of the projects.

“Lots of people were not able to pay rent properly anymore. We did not evict them so far, but we still see the rents have not been paid and when corona will be over and all these “excuses” and prolongations of non-eviction will be over, we’ll have a huge housing problem.” p. 128

J. G., *Wiener Wohnen* (municipal sector)

The economic problems that, instead, regarded social housing at a community and societal level, can be seen in a general increase of poverty level, which in some cases produced an inability to properly pay for the basic necessities. Thus, some measures were adopted to contain the consequences of such a situation.

The municipal associations, as specified by *Wiener Wohnen*, momentarily stopped the evictions. At the same time, the government itself has contributed with emergency subsidies, not only directly to people in need, but also to those associations, like Caritas and *Neunerimmo*, that deal with them. Nevertheless, even if the problem is partly solved in the short term, some of the interviewees, including who works for *Neunerimmo* -managing in particular the homeless situation in the city- have concerns about the repercussion on the future.

The pandemic, in general, has also increased the socioeconomic gap between wealthy people and poor ones. Certainly, those who for instance live in the SMART program houses, which present lower rent costs, but are slightly smaller than the ordinary social housing, also had issues during the various lockdowns because of the reduced available space.

“The other thing is that we realised that we need more flexibility inside the apartments: it is not about how I can get another room, it is more about how I can make more single rooms out of an existing apartment so that you have the possibility to close yourself in a space” p. 123

A. S., *IBA Wien* (municipal sector)

“The Existenzminimum concept is not functional for families. Lots of new projects show the possibility, for example, of using some areas for home-office” p. 161

F. B., *einszueins architektur* (private sector – architecture studio)

Another topic that arose is the necessity to rethink some aspects of the architectural design of apartments, especially in small ones and in the context of a communal way of living as in social housing.

The issue that was mostly highlighted is the absence of a private space in familiar contexts. This emerged in relation to the necessity of a close space for home-office in flats shared with other people. The interviewee from the housing research department of the municipal office, argues instead that architects should not design

* Translated by the author

with the perspective of an emergency situation as a normalized future reality. Surely, many people will return to work in person and live as we used before, but at the same time the pandemic situation has triggered some changes that may be irreversible from some points of view, and some working sector might convert permanently to home-office for other reasons than social distancing. Thus, even if it is not necessary to design according to a permanent emergency, the organization of the space inside a flat probably has to account for new aspects, not considered before.

Another comment that was advanced by those who also work at direct contact with people occupying the social housing complexes (Caritas), is the question of common rooms. Social housing also means a more communal way of living, and some shared spaces are usually available for inhabitants. During the pandemic, some controversies arose about whether they should be used so to provide further space for people with small flats or closed in order to avoid social gatherings. This new debate could lead to a rethinking of also common spaces, so to grant the possibility of isolation, for example for remote working, but in a space other than the apartment itself.

3.5 System accessibility

The interviews allowed to delineate how the accessibility to the system is regulated. Several criteria exist and they concern age, economic status, citizenship and other constraints. Some of the interviewees criticized the complexity of the system and some of its limitations, but what emerged is a generally well-working system.

“There is a certain threshold you have to overcome to be eligible for social housing.” p. 171

E. G., *wohnbund:consult* (private developer company)

“Because it is a social project there are limits on how much you’re supposed to earn if you want to enter the social housing, and this is applied to both public and subsidised housing. These limits are really high.” p. 123
A. S., *IBA Wien* (municipal sector)

The very first issue that was discussed concerning the system accessibility was generally the income threshold: social housing is considered a social service addressed to people with a stable economic status, not exceeding a certain income limit, but also with stability. In fact, the no-profit associations, even though not producing any profit for the company itself, need capital to reinvest in new housing projects or refurbishment, and hence require certain economic security from the tenants. This security is given both by the regular payment of the monthly rent and by the deposit of the *Finanzierungsbeitrag* (financial contribution), which is an upfront payment that varies from 20 €/m² up to 300-400 €/m², used by the companies for the maintenance of the buildings and for financing new constructions, that is returned to the tenants when they move out. This payment, which is mentioned only by a few interviewees, namely from *HausWirtschaft e.Gen.*, from GBV, from Caritas and the moderator of settlement processes, represents an economic barrier in some cases since, despite the competitive rent price, it constitutes a significant amount of money to deposit. In the case of municipal housing, this payment is not necessary, and the access is direct, but the waiting list does not allow uncomplicated access.

“If you are an Austrian citizen EU citizen or have a residence in Austria, basically you cannot be discriminated. For municipal housing, there is a clause saying you have to have lived in Vienna for at least two years.” p. 153

G. K., *Österreichischer Verband Gemeinnütziger Bauvereinigungen* (no-profit sector).

“There is still a substandard stock, where lots of immigrants come in, and maybe there are also subcontracts, not totally legal.” p. 186

K. K. Caritas (NGO)

Another sometimes criticized requirement to access the social housing system is citizenship: those who have the priority are people with Austrian citizenship and specifically from Vienna. People from other parts of Austria, and since 2006 from European Union (EU)

and European Economic Area (EEA), can access the system only after two years they live in Vienna at the same address. The same rule is applied to people with a valid residence permit or asylum status. This limitation can constitute another type of difficulty in entering the system, since, as the co-worker from Caritas argued, there is a still diffuse sub-market in the private stock, sometimes illegal, that represents a temporary solution –especially for people who just arrived in Vienna– but that at the same time cannot constitute a permanent and stable condition. In fact, either for illegal contracts or unbearable living conditions is hardly possible to attain two years of residence in the same apartment. The situation in the private stock of newcomers, especially migrants from countries outside the EU and EEA, object also of the study by Anita Aigner (2019), is mentioned by Caritas interviewees, who deals with people in hardship as refugees and immigrants.

“There is also the “housing first” program: we look for private stock apartments to rent to people. The concept is that before solving all the other problems people need a home.” p. 182

J. M., *Neunerimmo* (NGO)

A special program that attempts to face all the issues before mentioned, by dealing with homeless or people at risk of homelessness, is called “housing first”. Several interviewees did mention this kind of support, that works in parallel to the social housing provision. Who gave a more detailed and precise description was the co-worker of *Neunerimmo*. This association, differently from Caritas, which offers support to all the social categories in need, specifically deals with homeless people with a special housing program. Housing first is based on the concept of providing a house to the economically weakest strata of the population as a starting point for being integrated into the society. Thus, either in private stock, for overcoming the 2-years-stay, or in specific social housing flats, dedicated to this program, homeless people and families can find a house, relying on the associations (as *Neunerimmo*)

* In this case, the interview was not recorded, thus the citation is not literal.

funds.

3.6 The issue of immigrants

The debate about the reduced possibility for refugees and immigrants to enter the system of social housing is strictly connected with the before mentioned access limitation, the topic of the preceding paragraph. It is important to keep in mind that, despite the obstacle of the two years of stay in Vienna, which affect even those coming from other regions of Austria, those who suffer the most from the limitation imposed are immigrants from outside the EU or EEA and refugees.

We can say that in general the interviewees’ opinion on the topic is divided into two main positions: either defending the system as it is or expecting some changes for facing the growing issue of immigration that affected Europe in the last decade.

“I do not think that the social housing system is the right instrument to serve people in hardship. The social housing system is to serve people with stable long-term and affordable housing contracts.” p. 136

D. G., *Magistratsabteilung 50* (municipal office)

“There are other social departments of the city of Vienna that can help them with first living projects and flats, but that is not in our responsibility.” p. 133

C. S., *Wiener Wohnen* (municipal sector)

The opinion that social housing has not the purpose of solving the issue of housing immigrants is mostly common among the interviewees from the municipal sector. In fact, there is the tendency to address the problem towards other types of associations and initiatives, like Caritas, *Hilfswerk*, *Neunerimmo*. Social housing is seen as an instrument to improve the housing situation of those already integrated into the society, allowing a mix of people with diverse social and economic status, but included in a range of stability. Apart from the associations already mentioned, there also is some municipal programs, such as the *Smart Wohnbauprogramme*, mentioned by a project manager of IBA. As a reaction to the 2015 refugee’s crisis, the city government was able to construct new temporary

(meaning, though, they were available for 10 years) flats, in those areas that were by law not zoned for housing.

“Our idea would be to set the housing stock in general as more inclusive, and this would be better for migrants and Austrians as well.” p 187

K. K., Caritas (NGO)

“Firstly, I think there should be more rights for people without an Austrian passport but still living and working here: this would already change a lot.” p. 176
S. G., moderator of settlement processes (freelance)

The main obstacle, apart from the economic one, is the possibility for immigrants and refugees to obtain an apartment for 2 years which would allow them to enter social housing waiting lists. The accommodations available for newcomers are generally temporary, which does not allow them a stay of two years.

Some interviewees, especially those who work closely with people in need, agreed on the necessity of concentrating not really on the housing problem, but more on an extension of social wellness and inclusion in other fields, such as the working sector. The economic barrier for accessing the system could be solved only with an increase in salaries and improvement of working conditions. The increase of societal rights for people without an Austrian passport would certainly allow a change also in other sectors, and consequently on housing conditions.

3.7 Relational problems inside social housing complexes

The seventh question of the interview was explicitly about whether there were any major relational problems linked to different cultural backgrounds inside social housing complexes. All the interviewees agree on the fact that the main relational problems are caused not mainly or exclusively by cultural divergences. The conflicts arise in fact because of other issues.

“The problems that arise are very much connected to a

variety of needs that we have because of our lives not because of our cultures: this is very much connected to our age and forms of families or how we live.” p. 125

A. S., IBA Wien (municipal sector)

What the IBA co-worker points out, is a shared opinion among almost all the interviewees: the arguments and disagreement between people depends not on cultural background but are mainly generational problems or linked with the lifestyle.

The issue of people with different age is mentioned as something not typical from social housing solely, but common in any residential social context. And the divergences are very much linked with the usage of common spaces. In fact, typically, different ages also mean different necessities, which are reflected at the social level on how the public areas are used: because of a lack of intergenerational confrontation, an agreement on everyday life issues is hardly reached, fostering instead conflicts. The issue may be more evident in social housing complexes where the communal areas are numerous and the social mix created by the system gather people from different socioeconomic strata, with different education and habits.

Thus, in general the cultural background it is not considered as a factor that can influence the relationship among social housing inhabitants in a negative way. On the contrary, some argue that the social housing system, as it is conceived in Vienna, helps at overcoming differences and discrimination, since people get to know each other and have to learn how to live together.

“Since the 1980s and in the 1990s there was a change, also due to huge immigration, and the tension produced was not only produced by immigrants but also by the fact that Vienna had been for a lot of time in decline.”

p. 145

C. R., Wien Universität

One specific aspect that has been discussed solely by the sociologist is the diversity of the reaction to potential changes in the social housing structure due to immigration according to the historical context.

He claimed that although nowadays the Viennese population is used to a strong cultural mix due to recent immigrations, and thus the issue of living together to other cultural realities is not critical, in the 1980s-1990s the situation was different. Austria was in fact in a declining situation and did not overcome the developments we could observe in other European countries. Furthermore, it is only 60 km from eastern Europe. Thus, until the migration waves did not start to interest the city of Vienna too, the situation was stable and stationary: people were living and growing old together in the same housing complex, without any newcomers. Hence, the tensions produced by the first migration waves were mainly due to an immutable social situation, that suddenly overcame deep changes. Today the situation in Vienna is surely different since the city population has almost 50% an immigrational background: the possible relational problems that can emerge are thus due to a multiplicity of factors and are the inhabitants of social housings need to be good neighbours not necessarily friends as stated by the moderator of settlement processes.

“The difficulty with homeless people is that they have other problems, they are not interested in communal areas, they need to stabilize their existence.” p. 183

J. M., *Neunerimmo* (NGO)

In some complexes of social housing, some apartments are made available to the “housing first” program, focus of *Neunerimmo*, that deal with the social integration of homeless people, starting with providing them with a house. The flats for this program are given in anonymous form, meaning that nobody knows that a certain apartment is inhabited by a homeless person. Those receiving assistance from associations as *Neunerimmo*, had to face non-ordinary issues, and problems that may arise from the use of communal space, are secondary for them, which face the exclusion (voluntary or not) from the society.

“The city of Vienna, [...] attempts at solving the problem

* In this case, the interview was not recorded, thus the citation is not literal.

avoiding the creation of ghetto districts, together with an attention to urban quality: these two elements already demonstrated to be successful. A third element is the Betreuung: in parallel to the subsidy of the projects, these Gebietsbetreuung are established in the districts and in the design phase they intervene and try to understand who enters in the buildings”[†]p. 162

L. M., *einszueins architektur* (private sector – architecture studio)

“This can be supported especially with new housing projects if you started participation very early. We can learn a lot from for example the Baugruppen [...] if people know each other at an early stage or earlier, this can help a lot for future disagreements.” p. 125

A. S., IBA Wien (municipal sector)

The solutions to the potential emerging issue among inhabitants are identified among the instruments already used by Vienna social housing system. The first one is a local administration of the social housing communities, through the territorial municipal offices, which nowadays comprehend more than one district, but still are considered as a capillary organizational apparatus. Apart from the city administration, other forms of local management of the new projects are available. S. G. themselves works as a moderator of the settlement process, meaning that follows the community from the initial phase when still the project is at the design stage, but the future inhabitants are known, until the organization of events or workshops that can bring people close together in a second moment.

The interviewee from IBA is not the only one praising the *Baugruppen* projects. Also, P.R., who was part of one of those group projects and exposes his first-hand experience. Participation also in the design phase of the future inhabitants is considered one of the best ways to create a sense of community among them and to limit the possible emerging tension, even before people live together.

[†] Translated by the author

3.8 Relation of the city with the Danube right riverbank

The city structure of districts 2 and 20 is considered by almost all the interviewees as badly connected with the right riverbank of the Danube. Only the founder of *HausWirtschaft e.Gen.* considers it easily accessible, at least for those living in the areas and knowing the pedestrian passages that lead to the water. The reasons for the non-functional connection with the river, is linked to different factors, all due to the historically dangerous nature of the river, that used to flood the city.

“Vienna had a flooding problem of the Danube for a lot of time. [...] until they made this big regulation and built up the Donauinsel and the New Danube on the other side, eliminating the problem.” p. 140

A. M., *Gebietsbetreuung* (municipal office)

What is pointed out in the quote is also mentioned by other interviewees from all the sectors and is thus a fundamental aspect to consider in the analysis of the site: it is quite “young” as a potential development area. One of the major factors that influenced the urban planning along the river in the past was the fact that was not regulated; hence, the regular floods did not allow to extend the city until the riverbank. Many of the interviewees, especially those who have been in Vienna for a longer time, agree on the fact that this historical condition is evident also in the way the city has developed in the proximity to the river.

All the buildings were designed facing the centre of the city and not the *Donau*, and the area along it has been occupied with infrastructures once in the 1980s the *Donauinsel* was built, ending the floods problem. The presence of infrastructures makes the area even less pleasurable, still excluding a different orientation of the



Figure 16: Millennium city and Millennium Tower

constructions.

“All the infrastructures, as the railway, are still there and it is not so easy to replace them, so there is also this physical barrier.” p. 137

D. G., *Magistratsabteilung 50* (municipal office)

“There are not a lot of crossing, only people living in the districts know where they are.” p. 176

S. G., moderator of settlement processes (freelance)

Apart from the urban fabric development that has for historical reasons ignored the existence of the river, its exclusion from a city planning project is also due to the physical barrier constituted by the infrastructures running along the river. *Handelskai*, the street, is a big artery for private traffic and has not been designed to be “pedestrian-friendly”. It is hard, for a walker or biker, to find a crossing for reaching the other side of the street and thus the riverbank. A further obstacle is the presence of the railway *Donauuferbahn*: few walkable bridges have been implemented to pass through it. Apart from the difficulty to physically access the riverbank, these arteries also constitute an obstacle to urban development and an impediment to the view of the river even from the already-in-place buildings.

“In Vienna, the tradition to cherish the water has a very short history. Only 10 years ago we started to use the canal, with the beach parts.” p. 130

J. G., *Wiener Wohnen* (municipal sector)

“In the Donauinsel there are leisure and cultural activities, but none of these activities is on the side of the city.” p. 165

C. M., *Superblock* (private sector – architecture studio)

Interestingly, many interviewees compared the perception of the right *Donau* riverbank, to the one of the *Donauinsel* and the *Donaukanal*. In general, what emerged is that the use of areas in proximity to the water for leisure functions is something quite recent. Even the *Donaukanal*, which flows next to the historical

city centre and that had never been dangerous for floods, has been used for free time activities only for about ten years. Also, the canal is not easily accessible, because of the street artery that runs next to it, but differently from the Danube right side, there is no railway, which constitutes a much harder obstacle to cross. Furthermore, the area on the water is more liveable and partially occupied by bars and restaurants that take advantage of the pedestrian area at the water level.

Other interviewees remarked, instead, the differences with the *Donauinsel*, a tight strip of land surrounded by the river. This area, constructed in the 1980s to regulate the Danube, is almost totally covered by vegetation and parks for public use. The area acquired great success, especially during the Covid pandemic when the imposed restrictions did not allow the citizens to move far away from home and staying in outdoor spaces was recommended. The island provides also leisure infrastructures, and it is even possible to swim on the river. In other words, it constitutes a completely different environment with respect to the *Donau* right riverside.

“There are a few projects already in process, but they just started. It will take another century to bring the city more to the Danube.” p. 133

C.S., *Wiener Wohnen* (municipal sector)

“There are, in my perception, some popular spots like Millennium City and others that are more in the shadow and difficult to reach.” p. 187

K. K., *Caritas* (NGO)

Since the regulation of the river first, and the extension of line 2 of the subway then, the area along the river has started to be more and more developed. Most of the projects rising there are luxury or business towers and are hardly ever located on the water or constitute an urban connection with the rest of the city.

One project which is named not only by the *Caritas* co-worker, but also by D. G. from *Magistratsabteilung 50* municipal office and S. G., is the *Millennium City*, with the *Millennium Tower*. This project is considered

one of the most successful and popular developments on this riverbank. Millennium City is a 1999 complex that covers 50000 m² and includes a shopping centre, offices, and some residential units. The Millennium Tower is the second tallest skyscraper in Vienna.

3.9 Relevance of *Handelskai* and *Donauuferbahn*

The street (*Handelskai*) and the railway (*Donauuferbahn*) constitute the main physical barrier at including the riverside into the city fabric. It is thus important to understand which role they have for the city inhabitants.

“I think it is important for commuters that built the houses outside the city and then commute in Vienna because they work in Vienna.” p. 130

J. G., *Wiener Wohnen* (municipal office)

“Parallel to *Handelskai*, on the other side of the river, there is the motorway A23 so, I do not think it is so important, it has potential to be something else than only a traffic area.” p. 149

S. N., *Schwarzatal* (no-profit sector)

The interviewees did not give a unitary answer for what concerns the relevance of the street. It is said to be important for people commuting from outside areas of Vienna, but some interviewees also confirm local importance. It works as a connection for the highway, that runs along the opposite riverside: the street leads, in fact, on the *Brigitteauerbrücke* that crosses the river and directly connects to the motorway.

Although the different perceptions of the importance of the road, a common opinion is that the space devoted to cars could be reduced in favour of bikes and pedestrians: nowadays the street apart from being difficult to cross also constitutes a source of acoustic pollution, and for instance, D. G. from municipal office, also imagine a future development of e-mobility that could change the aspect of such a congested street and maybe transform it into a pleasurable boulevard. Surely the transportation modalities could in the future undergo deep changes, and private mobility might diminish its importance: hence a street like *Handelskai* could be not as necessary as it is today and evolve into

something new.

“The railway is only partially used for transporting people. There is a railway line called s45 and it is going until the station called *Handelskai* after that is only the storage for a railway company.” p. 180

P. R., *HausWirtschaft e.Gen.* (cooperative for joints projects)

“Every now and then, there is the proposal from the ÖBB of removing the railway, because it only is for cargoes. It is more of an obstacle than something really used: it shared a segment with the S-Bahn, but it is a really small part” p. 162

F. B., *einszueins architektur* (private sector – Architecture studio)

For what concerns the railway, even though many interviewees declared of not knowing much about its relevance, it was mainly mentioned the fact that it is not used for the public transport system, apart from a short stretch, shared with the *S-Bahn 45* (also comprehending a stop called *Handelskai*). Some interviewees argue that is mainly used for connecting the city from the north-west to the south-east, along the Danube River, creating a logistic connection important for the haven, at the south-eastern edge of the second district. P. R., from *HausWirtschaft e.Gen.*, instead, explains that the railway is nowadays used only as storage from the ÖBB (*Österreichische Bundesbahnen*), the national railway system, and thus has currently no transportation function. There are also some debates about the possibility of extending the s45 line further on the existing rails, but because of some administrative hurdles, concerning the ownerships of the rails and the trains, it has not been done yet.

Another debate, mentioned instead by the project manager of the *Gebietsbetreuung*, again concerning the railway, arose during the recent construction of the Marina Tower, which foresaw the partial enclosure of the railway onto a tunnel: this is not possible for security reasons since in case a train has some kind of logistic problems, it must be easily reachable by other

* Translated by the author

vehicles.

3.10 Pros and cons of development along Danube right riverbank

One of the purposes of the third section of the interview was to identify which are the potentialities of the area along the right riverbank and to understand how new development could evolve and be accepted by the citizens. Different aspects were underlined, mainly the importance of the access to the river, the prominence that the area has, being in a central location, and the attention to a sensitive development, avoiding luxury and business buildings.

In general, a new urban and architectural project in the area on the *Donau* was considered an improvement for the city. The interviewee from the architecture studio *Superblock* argued instead that it is not a fundamental area for Vienna, which is the reason why it has never been effectively considered for substantial changes in the urban planning program and also presents some critical aspects for its development.

“A project has to be well connected to the city [...] it has to be really attractive for all the districts because it is strategically really expensive, thus it has to become a real attraction despite the distance from other areas of the city.” p. 150

S. N., *Schwarzatal* (no-profit sector)

One aspect that has been mentioned by several interviewees, not only talking about new developments but also in other contexts, is the necessity of creating a unified urban structure. The new developments may become a sort of urban island, which is detached from the rest of the city. In the case of development along the Danube, this would probably create a further barrier for the access to the river, creating a space used by only a portion of the population. Also considering the economic aspect, as S. N. from the no profit company *Schwarzatal* stressed, an investment for a new project should become accessible and attractive for the whole city, to be worthwhile and successful.

An important element to consider, which is strictly associated with the accessibility issue, is

the transformation of the traffic towards a more pedestrian-friendly and ecological environment. This would rise the potentiality of the area and would also improve the connection with the river.

“I think it is very interesting because it is a development inside the city. I think every development we can achieve inside the city is much more ecological.” p. 125

A. S., *IBA Wien* (municipal sector)

A topic that was remarked in particular by the interviewees from *IBA*, *Wiener Wohnen* and the University of Vienna is the importance of the area because of its centrality. The most recent projects planned at an urban level have usually a location outside the central structure of the city, apart from some exceptions, such as *Nordbahnhof* and *Nordwestbahnhof*, under construction at the border of *Brigittenau* and *Leopoldstadt*. The advantage of persisting on developing inside the city brings advantages both from an ecological and social point of view. In fact, in cities that promote an urban structure that includes several functions in a reduced area, people tend to use more public transports or bicycles, they do not need to move outside from their neighbourhood using private cars, and this fosters not only a more ecological but also a healthier lifestyle, which influence people's physical and psychological well-being. Furthermore, the possibility of encouraging developments in the central districts of the city solves several logistic and economic problems since there is no need for expanding the basic services and infrastructures that might be already in place.

An interesting aspect stressed by the sociologist C. R. is the fact that in Vienna, differently from other cities, there are still numerous areas, that were maybe former industrial sites or railways, inside the city structure, which have a potential to be developed. This is an unusual situation since new urban planning projects are generally located outside the city centre as the existing districts are already quite dense, not allowing any further internal expansion. Despite this unique characteristic, in Vienna, several new urban settlements are dislocated outside the central districts, which cause situations of unexploited portions of land

as the area along the Danube riverbank.

“The first planning principle should be to maximize open space, green space [...] services for children and elderly.” p. 137

D. G., *Magistratsabteilung 50* (municipal office)

A shared opinion among the interviewees is to avoid the luxury development along the river, which would transform it into an area serving only a small portion of citizens with a higher economic status, excluding the rest of the population. The interviewees stressed this point accounting for different viewpoints: some suggested a strengthening of services addressed to those usually excluded from the urban planning programs, such as elderly and kids (as stated by D. G. from the municipal office for housing research); others instead, emphasized the importance of occupying the ground floor with services and public functions, with recreational or cultural purposes, so to attract people from all the districts and not “killing” the public life on streets, which would happen by exploiting the street level with only private functions.

Another important aspect which was the topic of discussion also in the question about the public spaces to implement on the two neighbourhoods is the maintenance of an open landscape, publicly accessible on the river, including green areas. The *Donauinsel* was taken as a successful example of exploitation of an environment in proximity of the river, with free access, dominated by nature space.

3.11 Leopoldstadt and Brigittenau: structure and services

In general, these two districts are considered, although neighbouring, quite different for their history and urban structure. Both are quite dense, even though presenting some potentiality for new developments. The second district underwent a massive development in the area close to the city centre, as the architect from *Superblock* suggested “We are not a poly-centric city but really a mono-central one: *Stephansplatz* is still the main area of the first district and the main area in Vienna. Thus, the second district is attractive also for its proximity to the

first district.” (p. 166). *Leopoldstadt* is thus considered in a more advantaged position than *Brigittenau*, above all because of its recent developments that did not though include the area along the riverbank.

The focal point of the two districts is the development of the areas of *Nordbahnhof* and *Nordwestbahnhof*, situated at the border of the two districts and the variety of green spaces.

“The new developments, the second districts with the Nordbahnviertel and in the future also the Nordwestbahnviertel, are peculiar for their centrality: usually, there are more developments in the outskirts.”
p. 151

G. K., *Österreichischer Verband Gemeinnütziger Bauvereinigungen* (no-profit sector)

As G. K. from the umbrella association GBV mentioned, these two new developments in the dismissed railways are peculiar for their centrality because they concern the urban regeneration of two brownfield situated in a central area. This is due to the fact that the two districts used to be part of the suburb, until new developments started to flourish on the other side of the Danube, creating a “new” periphery and establishing a new role for the 2nd and 20th districts. The two urban projects are mentioned by several interviewees as an important evolution for the structure of the district and are considered also as a turning point for the structure of the 20th district especially. An interviewee from *einszueins architektur*, compared the development of *Nordwestbahnhof* to the one of *Sonnwendviertel*, in district 10 (*Favoriten*), that, thanks to an implementation of several social housing complexes, part of the same renewal projects, they managed to avoid the ghettoization (also spontaneous) of groups of immigrants, being *Favoriten* the first district for the number of the immigrant population. Thus, the prediction is that *Brigittenau*, which is the second district for the number of immigrants, can avoid isolating those groups thanks to a new urban development that include also social housing.

“There are the Augarten, the Prater, the Doanuisel:

they are high-quality public spaces in the area.” p. 166
C. M., Superblock (private sector-architecture studio)

“They are also well equipped with good green space, compared to the rest of the city.” p. 169
J. S., AllesWirdGut Architektur (private sector - architecture studio)

“There are lots of parks, but I think you can always have more parks [...] it is always better to have more green space.” p. 181
P. R., HausWirtschaft e.Gen. (cooperative for joints projects)

These three quotes represent the most common opinion among the interviewees. The two districts are considered well equipped with green areas, also in comparison with other neighbourhoods in Vienna. Especially in the second district, there are the *Prater*, which also has a historical value, and the *Augarten*, which contains the oldest baroque park in the city. Despite that, it is also considered as a good option the opportunity of expanding the green surface of Vienna. Some interviewees, such as from Caritas, from non-profit association *Schwarzatal* and also the sociologist from *Wien Universität* argue that the key for the development of the two districts is the riverbank itself, even for what concerns an enhancement of the natural areas.

According to Charles Montgomery (2015), cities does not only need a big park but also smaller natural sites and community gardens, at a walking distance from every residential building. He analyses how several studies demonstrated the improvement of citizens' lives when living close to even a small portion of greenery. This is a fundamental aspect to consider when developing a new urban area. In the specific case of this research, also the proximity to the water has to be considered as a further positive element, from which citizens could benefit even at the psychological level.

“There is for instance the Wallensteinplatz which was recently redeveloped and is now a place where people can meet and chat with each other” p. 134

C. S., *Wiener Wohnen* (municipal sector)

“In the 20th and 2nd districts, there are a few squares that are nice, but not nice streets.” p. 169
J. S., AllesWirdGut Architektur (private sector - architecture studio)

Concerning, instead of public spaces other than parks, the problem that arises is the management of traffic, as mentioned by *Wiener Wohnen* interviewee. If on one hand we have squares as *Wallensteinplatz* (figure 17) and the market *Karmelitermarkt*, considered by some interviewees not only an attraction point for tourists, but a proper gathering space for inhabitants, on the other hand, the streets are almost entirely dominated by cars and they become a merely transitional space, with no opportunity for social life. As the representative of GBV commented, “public space could be used a lot better than being occupied by cars”. This is especially visible in *Handelskai*, which, despite being in a favourable position for pedestrians, is hard to cross and strengthen the subdivision between the urban structure and the river itself.

“I do not think in general Vienna needs something, but the only issue is to connect the various areas.” p. 150
S. N., *Schwarzatal* (no-profit sector)

“The city has to work on the integration of these “islands” with the surrounding city” p. 177
S. G., moderator of settlement processes (freelance).

An issue that emerged from the interviews, already mentioned in other contexts is the fragmentation of the urban fabric. The new projects and housing complexes, also those that are not part of the social housing program, tends to rehabilitate restricted areas, enclosing high-quality architectural spaces, but disconnecting them from the existing urban area. Thus, a crucial challenge when developing a new urban project, especially in these densely-build districts, is to foster a renovation also of other parts of the city, integrating the new architecture into the old, not to create a clear separation also from a social and



Figure 17: Wallensteinplatz, Brigittenau

demographic perspective. In addition to that, more importance should be given to refurbishment, not only of buildings but also of public open spaces.

“What I think it is missing more is indoor collective spaces, [...] but it is not really common in the older stock.” p. 188

K. K., Caritas (NGO)

“I think the various type of social infrastructures, [...], where people can connect and get in touch with

each other, with non-commercial spaces are really important in every city.” p. 155

G. K., Österreichischer Verband Gemeinnütziger Bauvereinigungen (no-profit sector)

When talking about public spaces, it is also important to consider the indoor environment, which is a typical advantage of social housing complexes, where common areas for various activities are provided for inhabitants. Two main issues transpired from the interviews when dealing with free-access indoor public spaces: they

are not present in the old stock and are only present as housing facilities, not at an urban scale. These issues are actually frequent in all the districts. Having common areas, with free access, would certainly mean an attraction for the whole city, not just for the immediate surrounding.

Other mentioned missing spaces in the context of *Leopoldstadt* and *Brigittenau* are cultural places, such as theatres or libraries, and a swimming hall, as observed by both by A. M. from the *Gebietsbetreuung*, who administrates the support office for the area, and P. R. from the cooperative for joints projects *HausWirtschaft e.Gen.*

PROPOSAL FOR A DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

1 the perspective of stakeholders

2 strategies for a better mobility

3 architectural features of social housing

The last chapter of the research study aims at conceiving a series of guidelines which aim at sustainable development of the area along the right riverbank of the *Donau* River. The strategy develops in three separated phases, aiming at the delineation of a design response to the raised issues.

The proposal includes the application of certain principles of the STEP 2025 (Rosenberger, 2014) model in a limited territory, integrating the instructions of this document with suggestions pointed out by the interviewees, contextualizing the general urban development plan for Vienna in a specific area with certain features.

The strategy proposed mainly concerns mobility and public infrastructures: the ultimate goal is the implementation of a sustainable development. The inclusion of social housing units is intended to both include a mixture of social strata, so to avoid the prioritization of luxury developments along the riverbank, and to exploit the variety of functions included in social housing projects, to foster the idea of a more socially and environmentally sustainable city. The strategy is subdivided into three different steps, developed in as many paragraphs: first of all, a further analysis of the interview material, from an urban and architectural point of view, is developed. In this way, a complete picture of the area as seen by local experts is produced. The second step regards a study of vehicular mobility, to improve the condition of pedestrians and suggested possible evolutions toward more ecological mobility. The last phase is a closer study of the architectural features that social housing should include. The paragraph includes an analysis of the activities to be implemented, both in the outside and inside environment and the comparison of two projects among the ones suggested during the interviews, in order to give a complete picture of which architectural features could be included in a social housing project. The final result would become a synthetic guideline manual for the potential development of the strip of land along the Danube, as an area integrated into the city structure and including the basic principle for a sustainable urban settlement. The work is not suggested as an ultimate solution for the city, but as

a starting point for the inclusion of an underused area, accounting for possible future scenarios and population needs.

1 THE PERSPECTIVE OF STAKEHOLDERS

The first step of the strategy consists of the collection of information about the structure and the features of the two districts from the answers given in the third section of the interview, illustrated as “the project site” in paragraph 2.3. This phase has the purpose of individuating the attraction points and successful areas of *Leopoldstadt* and *Brigittenau* as well as formulating the principles for developing the right river of the Danube. Through direct quotes from the transcripts of the interviews, the following images illustrate first of all those places that constitute an attraction point for the population and that could be potentiated the neighbourhoods’ attractiveness and the issues pointed out by the stakeholders, to be solved to create a successful development in this area.

In figure 18 the map has the aim of localizing the areas and buildings with a certain type of relevance for the life inside the districts. Hereafter a deepened analysis of the illustration is advanced.

First of all, many interviewees pointed out the importance of the ongoing development in the former railway station areas, which will foster a stronger connection between the two districts and will represent an attraction point also from other areas of the city. The temporary use of the *Nordbahn-Halle*, a vacant structure inside the under-development area, is indicated as a good example of exploitation of a common indoor space, at the service of the community, as a shared, non-commercial space.

Another highly stressed feature is the presence of broad green areas, although mainly localized in the second district, and not in *Brigittenau*, which presents, instead, a higher building density. Nevertheless, the necessity of more spread-out parks and green zones, is a basic principle for the psychological wellness of city inhabitants, as already analysed in paragraph 3.11, and although Vienna presents a high percentage of greenery, in the case of the 2nd and 20th districts they are

concentrated in specific zones only. The development of the right riverbank of the river can represent an occasion for promoting a linear evolution of the green areas, improving its accessibility from several parts of the two districts. The *Donauinsel* is mentioned as a powerful and unique area, attracting citizens from all Viennese districts. This is due to the fact that this island represents an area totally separated from the rest of the city, not only for its localization but also because is not urbanized and it functions as an alternative space where people are taken away from the city life.

Always dealing with nature proximity, one of the interviewees mentioned the increasing success of community gardens, where people can grow plants in a common space. This represents another way of fostering people aggregation in non-commercial space. Few spots for community gardening exist in the two districts and could surely be further expanded and potentiated.

Squares and markets, which are the gathering spaces par excellence, are scattered in the densest areas of the neighbourhoods. In those areas, the function of plazas and markets could be transferred to streets, if designed with a pedestrian-oriented strategy, which would allow gaining broader, safer and carfree space to address people's encounters.

A highly attractive infrastructure is Millennium City, one of the few popular spots along the riverbank. It is an indoor shopping centre. Although the commercialization of the riverside area is highly discouraged by all the interviewees and would foster luxury and exclusive developments, the successfulness of such a place represents the necessity for indoor spaces where people can gather and practice sociable activities. As pointed out by many stakeholders what is missing, is, in fact, public non-commercial indoor space, for people to meet. The principle of the common rooms existing inside social housing structures could be extended to the creation of shared spaces for the whole neighbourhood, instead of solely for those living in a specific building complex.

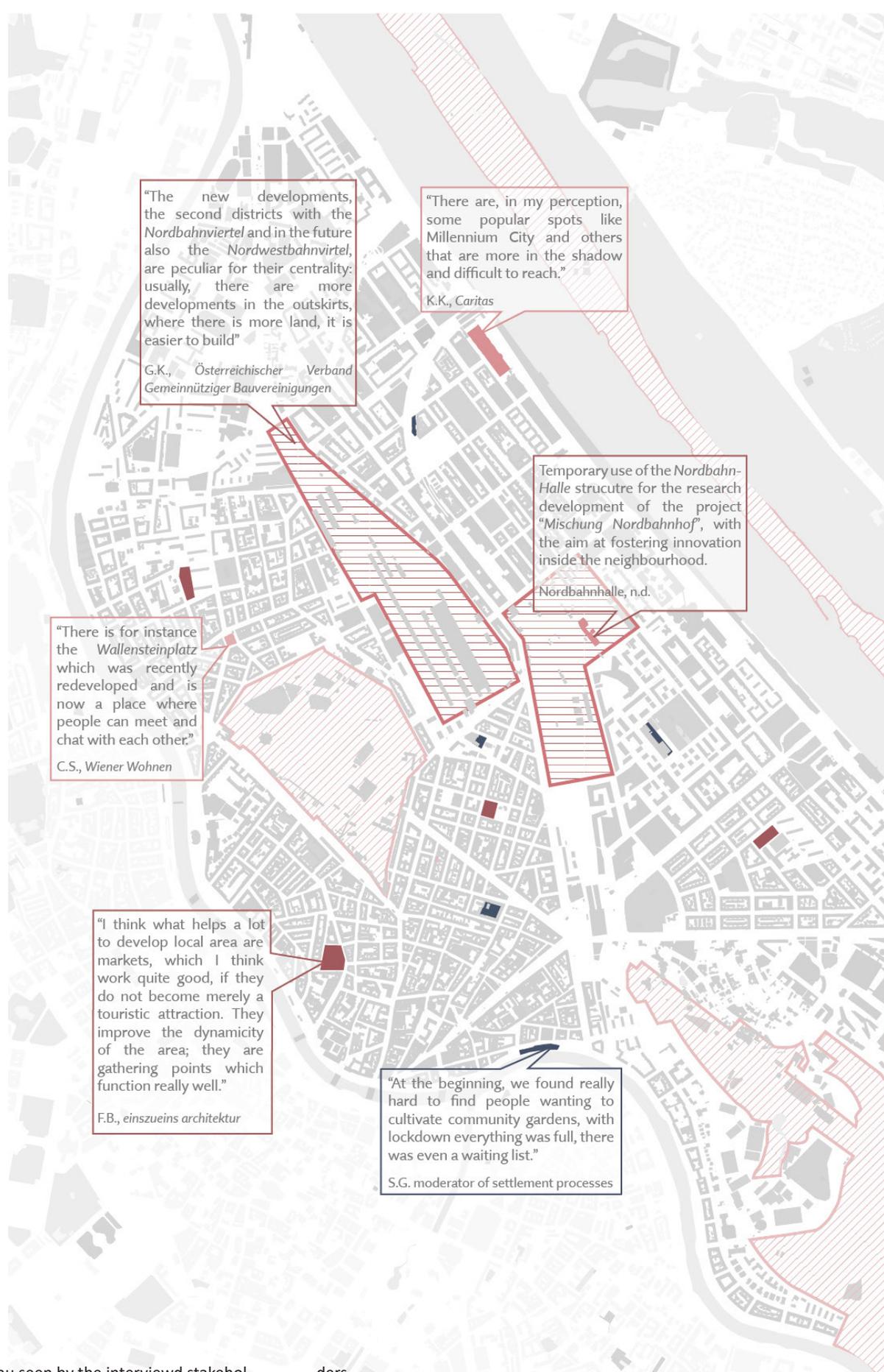


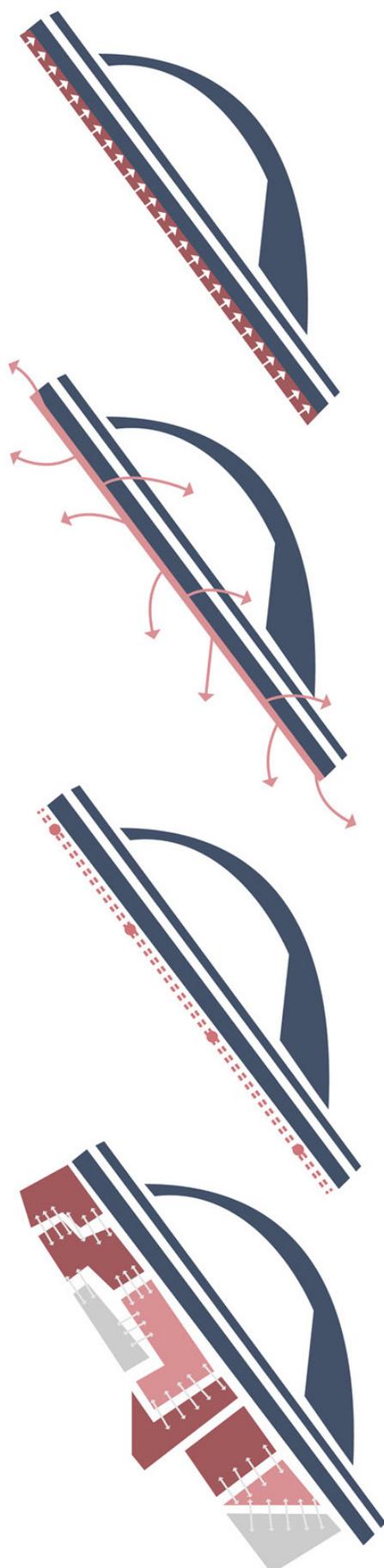
Figure 18: Leopoldstadt and Brigittenau seen by the interview stakeholders

ders

- Markets
- Attraction Points
- Relevant Green Areas
- New Developments
- Community Gardens

"The area that works well as a public area is the *Donauinsel*: I think that those who live in the two districts usually cross the river."
L.M., *einszueins architektur*

"I think the two districts, in terms of supply of open space, are not the worse: there are the *Prater* and *Augarten* in the 2nd district, very attractive public areas."
D.G., *Magistratsabteilung 50*



“I would organize the whole riverside with free, accessible, public spaces, not necessarily all organized with many features, it is enough to make the river accessible. This riverside should not be constructed and commercialized”

C.R., *Wien Universität*

“The point is that it has to be really attractive for all the districts because it is strategically really expensive, thus it has to become a real attraction despite the distance from other areas of the city.”

S.K., *Schwarzatal*

“There is not a connection along the Danube from north to south, maybe because it was not necessary. Nowadays the development is really active, with the projects Querkraft, Marina Tower; thus, a new transport line would be necessary.”

F.B., *einszueins architektur*

“What I see in the field of social sustainability is that in those urban communities you have sort of islands with lots of possibilities: you have nice community spaces, moderation for settlement processes and so on but old houses do not have community rooms and the problem is that community rooms in newly built houses are not for everybody. The city has to work on the integration of these “islands” with the surrounding city.”

S.G. moderator of settlement processes

Figure 19: development strategies

Figure 19 has the purpose of representing the main strategical actions towards which a potential urban development should be oriented. From the answers of the interviewees, it was possible to delineate which are the issues that must be solved to implement a successful design.

The first suggestion, which is also the most obvious, is the improvement of the riverside accessibility. This does not mean solely to create the conditions that make it physically accessible, but also to improve the quality of the space so that could become a real attraction point, not an exclusive one, avoiding, thus, luxury or commercial spaces.

The second piece of advice is strongly connected to the first one. Increasing the attraction and accessibility of the area also means attracting people from all the other parts of the city. Since the riverbank has a high potential from an urban point of view, the investment for its improvement should be addressed as an improvement for the city as a whole: the position of the two districts is becoming more and more central, due to the city's expansion on the other side of the river, and the renovation of the districts life would mean also renovation of city life.

A more specific suggestion is the improvement of the connection of the two districts, with the creation of a public transport line along the river from north to south. This could be implemented in several ways, also for example exploiting the existing rails track of the *Donauuferbahn*. Of course, the creation of a public transport infrastructure should not interfere with pedestrian access to the river, thus included in a mixed-use street structure, as will be further discussed in the following paragraphs.

Lastly, an issue which is proper of the city structure in general, as Professor C.R. from *Wien Universität* mentioned, is the fragmentation of the urban fabric: especially in new mixed-use developments, there is the tendency to create sorts of islands which, though, remain disconnected from each other, and thus are not integrated into the existing city structure. Thus, another aspect to pursue is the creation of a major homogeneity and improved connection among the different areas and between the city and the potential

new development along the riverbank.

The following paragraph will illustrate the strategies that could be adopted in order to consider all the topics discussed, with a particular focus on the mobility of *Leopoldstadt* and *Brigittenau*.

2 STRATEGIES FOR A BETTER MOBILITY

In this section, a second step of the strategy is examined. After highlighting the potentiality of the districts in the previous paragraph, a focus on how the mobility transformation could radically change city life and the accessibility to the districts is necessary.

The starting point (besides the first-hand information collected) is the so-called STEP2025, an urban development plan published by the city of Vienna, which is foreseen to be implemented within 2025. It regards several topics, among which is the evolution of urban mobility towards a more sustainable idea of the city.

Paragraph 2.2 will attempt at applying at a practical level the principles and instructions illustrated in STEP2025 and the suggestions by the interviewees. Thus, what has been theoretically discussed and indicated as a general strategy for the city in a general way, is applied in a specific context accounting for the peculiarity of the latter.

Paragraph 2.3 suggests some alternative street designs which would foster improved accessibility to the riverbank and a major focus on pedestrians and bicyclers as protagonists of more sustainable city life.

2.1 STEP 2025: a plan for sustainable urban development

STEP2025, meaning *Stadtentwicklungsplan* (city development plan) for 2025, is the result of a continuous exchange among “politicians and administrators, scientists and business circles, citizens and interest groups” (Rosenberger, 2014, p. 3). The document does not aim at developing specific projects or giving concrete instructions, but it more generally delineates guidelines that encourage a renovation of the city towards the satisfaction of nowadays necessities. The city is, in fact, conceived as an organism which evolves

with the historic and social context.

The section that deals with city mobility focuses on how to decrease the ecological footprint of transport. The growing population of Vienna surely has an impact on the environment but implementing the correct infrastructure to encourage the use of eco-friendly means of transport and everyday multi-modality is the key to a major environmental but also social sustainability. An efficient design of public transport means also enabling those who cannot afford to move by car to experience comfortable and fast commute. An example of how the urban transportation service can promote fairer and more equal social conditions is given by Charles Montgomery (2015). He describes how the bus line named *TransMilenio* of Bogotá changed the lives of those people who cannot afford a private car and thus commute every day by walking, cycling or public transport. *TransMilenio* was designed as the protagonist of the streetscape: the best space of the road is addressed to the bus and not to private mobility -as it usually happens- to “boost the status of public transit riders” (Montgomery, 2015).

The term “eco-friendly means of transport” indicates those “means of transport whose pollutant noise emissions and land consumption do not damage the environment and to the networking of these transport modes: walking, cycling (including public bike rental such as the City Bike system), public transport (suburban trains, metros, trams, buses) and, in the wider sense, taxis, car-sharing or carpools” (Rosenberger, 2014, p. 136). The expression of multi-modality refers to the use of a combination of different means of transport, both for people and goods (Rosenberger, 2014). This way of moving inside the city can be seen as a compromise between an exclusive use of private cars and the total reliance on public transport, biking and walking modes. Thus, even though it can include the use of cars, it still represents a more preferable and ecological habit.

Another highlighted issue is the necessary transformation of the cityscape design: in fact, to foster the use of ecological means of transport, it is also necessary to adapt the city design to host the required infrastructures. *Handelskai* is a highly representative example of how the design of a street can discourage

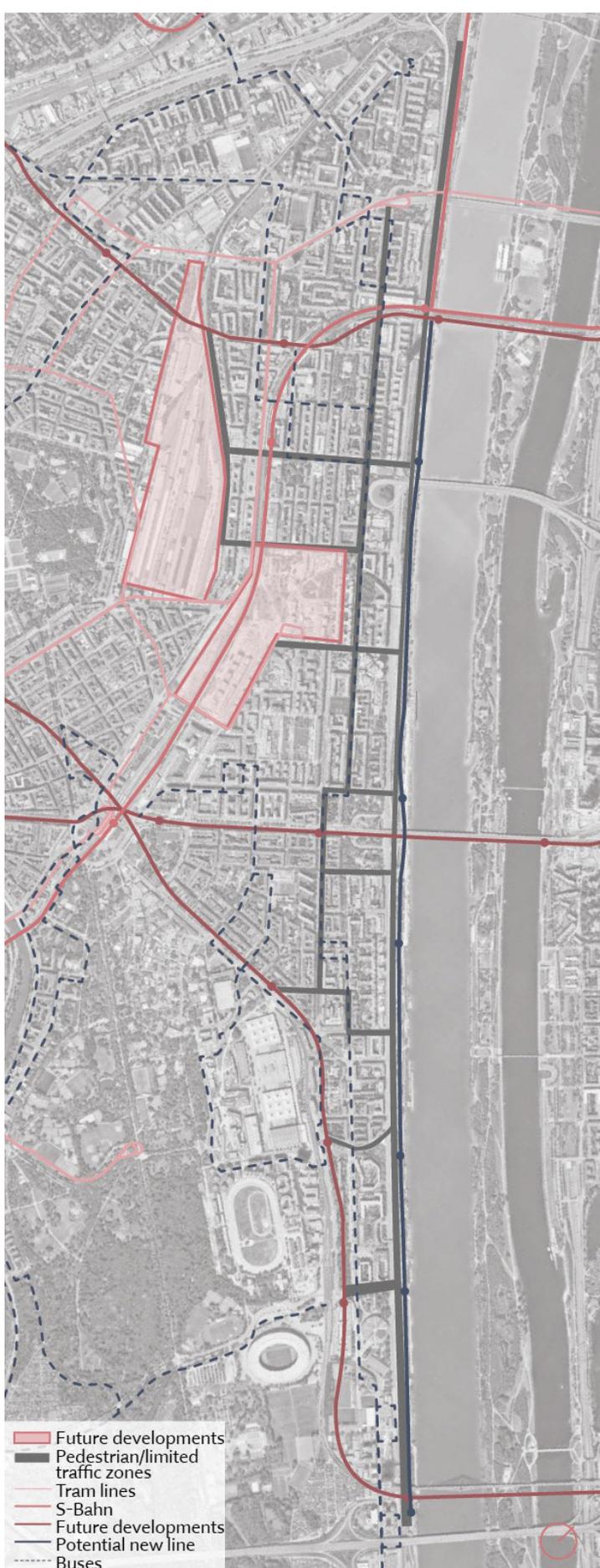
people to walk or bike in case it is mostly addressed solely to cars, parking and road transport. At the same time, conceiving streets as an actual urban space where people can stay and spend time, and not only transit, would improve the life quality of citizens and could replace the role of squares and plazas when the dense urban structure does not allow to implement open and broad gathering spaces.

One of the focal points of STEP2025 in the improvement of the urban public transport system is an upgrade of the *S-Bahn* system, to “gradually [...] come to reflect the traits of the Underground system” (Rosenberger, 2014, p. 107), meaning, for example, faster travel and shorter intervals between one ride and another. Thus, the *S-Bahn* system could gradually become an integration of the subway system, even if travelling at the city level.

2.2 Sustainable city principles: a practical application

This paragraph aims at showing how the previously remarked issues could possibly be addressed with urban design, dealing with the objectives of STEP2025 simultaneously.

The following figure (20) represents a draft of how mobility in proximity to the Danube River could be developed to meet the evolving necessity of empowering more ecological transport means. The intention of the representation is not to show an accurate new mobility plan, but a possible new design for certain streets and street connections, that could improve the accessibility and perception of the area along the river. Obviously, for a real-life implementation, a schematic draft would not be sufficient, as well as a uniquely urbanistic approach. An evolution of the city mobility is possible only with the intervention also at an administrative level (for instance, with good advertisement campaigns or financial incentives), to encourage the use of public and ecological transport (including car-sharing and car-pooling) rather than private cars, so to drastically reduce the number of needed vehicles and thus the space occupied by them. The map in figure 10 is traced on a Google Earth orthophoto, as it represents the result of brainstorming on the current real-life situation of the area.



Ideally, the scheme aims at developing a renovated street and mobility design. First of all, a new configuration of *Handelskai* is thought, and it will be further analysed in the following paragraph. Secondly, some of the secondary streets should be developed as totally pedestrian or, as an alternative, as Limited Traffic Zones: this would create a network of pedestrian-addressed mobility, which would foster a more interconnected and lively design of the city, avoiding the already mentioned urban “islands”. The streets which are supposed to be turned into carfree areas are those that connect the two future urban developments on the former railway stations to the river and those that lead from the existing *U-Bahn* and *S-Bahn* stops to *Handelskai* street. In this way, in the perspective of developing and improving the right riverbank of the Danube, the area could have relevance for the city as a whole, if accurately connected with important mobility nodes.

A possible new public transport connection is suggested along the river in place of the *Donauuferbahn* railway. Of course, this hypothesis would be realizable solely by tracing a new path for the railway, or by moving it underground.

The presence of a tram line right along the riverbank could be seen as a failure in the possibility of improving its accessibility. Actually, it would improve multi-modality mobility, if located in a mixed-use street, which also includes broad areas for pedestrians and the possibility of easily crossing the tram rails. The stops of this potential new mobility line are thought to be placed at a walkable distance from lines 1 and 2 of the subway, in order to increment, once again, the use of public transport and multi-modality.

2.3 Mobility along the Danube

In this section, some alternatives to the current traffic situation in *Handelskai* street are presented. The street itself has been pointed out several times as one of the main obstacles to easy access to the riverbank. This is mainly due to its almost complete domination by cars, either transiting or parked. This is surely a common situation in a lot of streets not only in Vienna but in general in cities of developed and developing

Figure 20: urban traffic potential development

countries, where the urban space is planned around car users' necessities. The schemes presented in the following image (figure 21) has the purpose of showing an alternative design of the street, where car lanes are either reduced or confined to a less central position in the general street scheme. This means, as already highlighted in a previous section, that urban planning cannot be enough: there must be participation from the citizens in reducing the use of private vehicles in favour of more sustainable mobility. However, what urban planning can trigger, if cleverly employed, is the awareness, from the side of city inhabitants, of

how life can be easier and more pleasurable avoiding the everyday car commuting as firmly argued by Charles Montgomery in several passages from his book "Happy city: Transforming our lives through urban design"(Montgomery, 2015). Reducing or giving less importance to the space cars occupy in a street can be the first step in this direction: people would start to enjoy other means of transport (that have to be efficient and, thus, financed) and would begin to perceive the use of a private vehicle as unnecessary. The same approach could be for sure applied in other cities and situations; however, the representations are

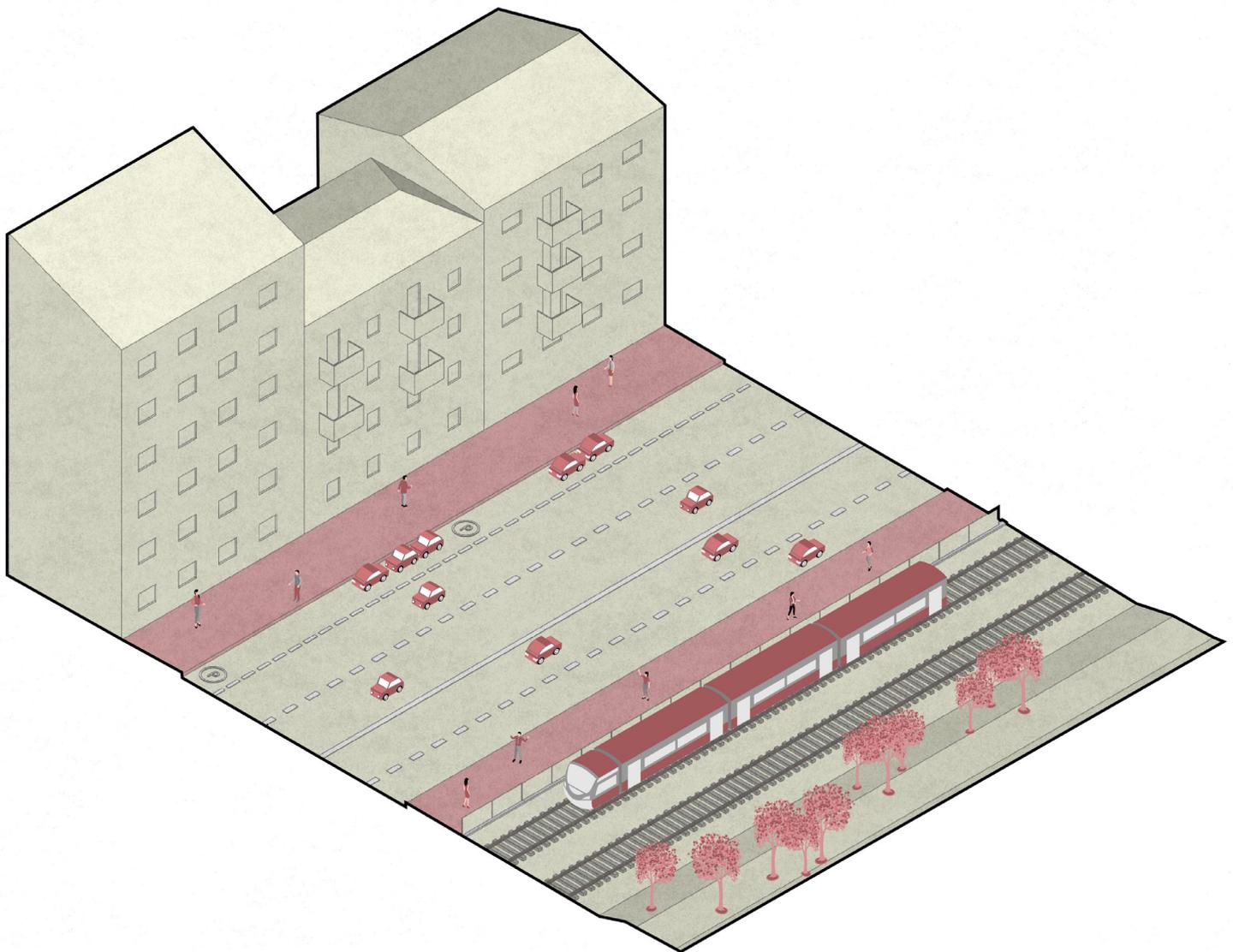


Figure 21: Handelskai street current configuration

based on the conformation of *Handeskai* in Vienna. Figure 22 represents the current situation on *Handelskai* street. The distribution of the pedestrian areas (represented in pink colour), train rails and cars area is actually not continuously regular along the whole riverbank. What is important and common to all the street length, though, is the fact that it consists of five or six car lanes, with a parking area at the side, which occupies a consistent space. The pedestrian floors are from 4 to 10 metres circa, but even in the case of the wider version, their position is unfavourable. The pedestrian floors in fact are either along the building

blocks, thus delimited by the building's walls and the street itself, only encouraging the pedestrian to transit and not to encounter and gather. Furthermore, as it is visible in the representation, the railway cannot be crossed, apart from a few spots provided with overhead passages, and it is, obviously, fenced, forcing once again the pedestrian floor between the street and a vertical barrier. Thus, the riverbank, which is located on the side of the railway, after a broad area with natural or undefined function, is reachable only in very specific spots, provided with bridges.

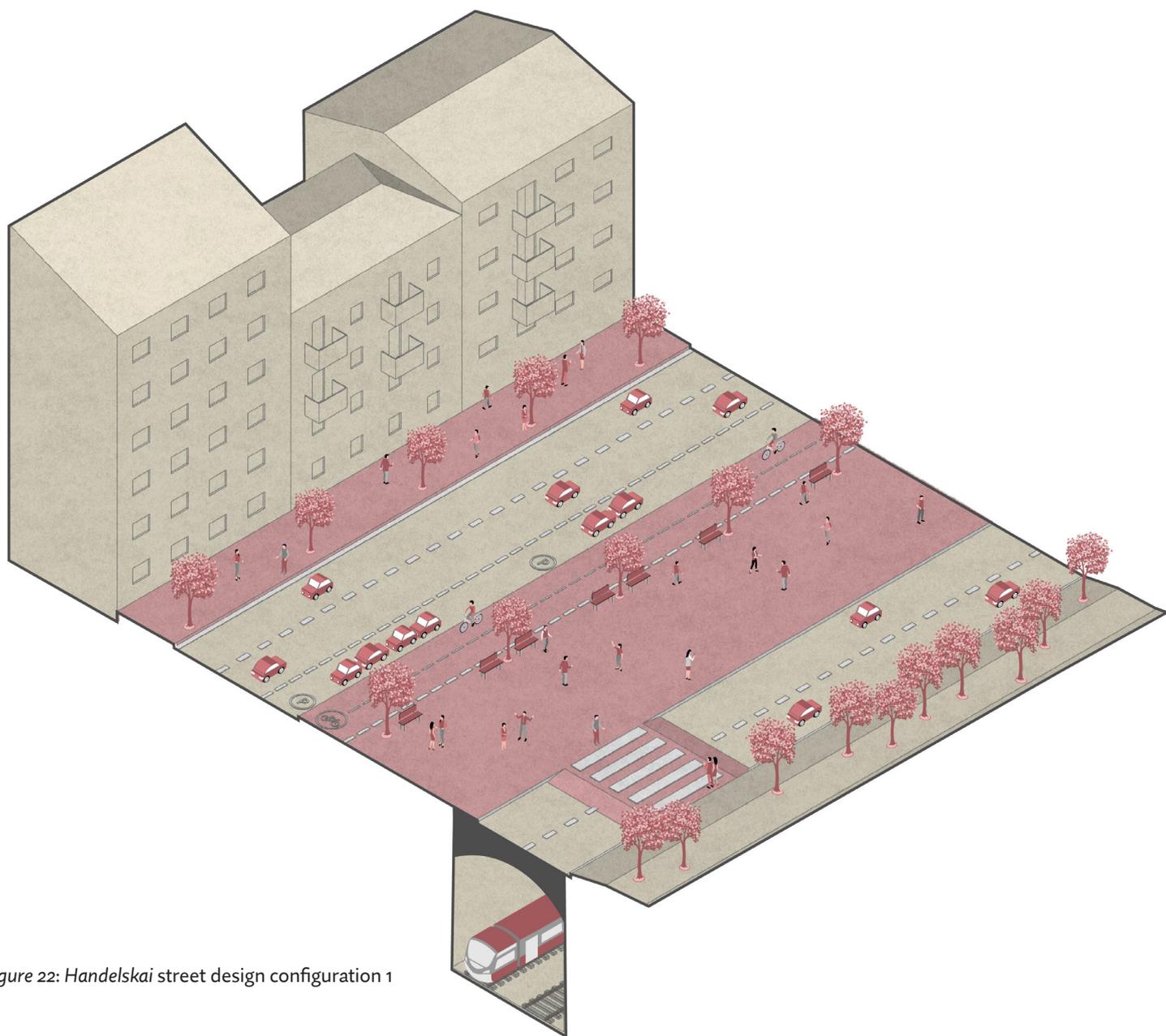


Figure 22: *Handelskai* street design configuration 1

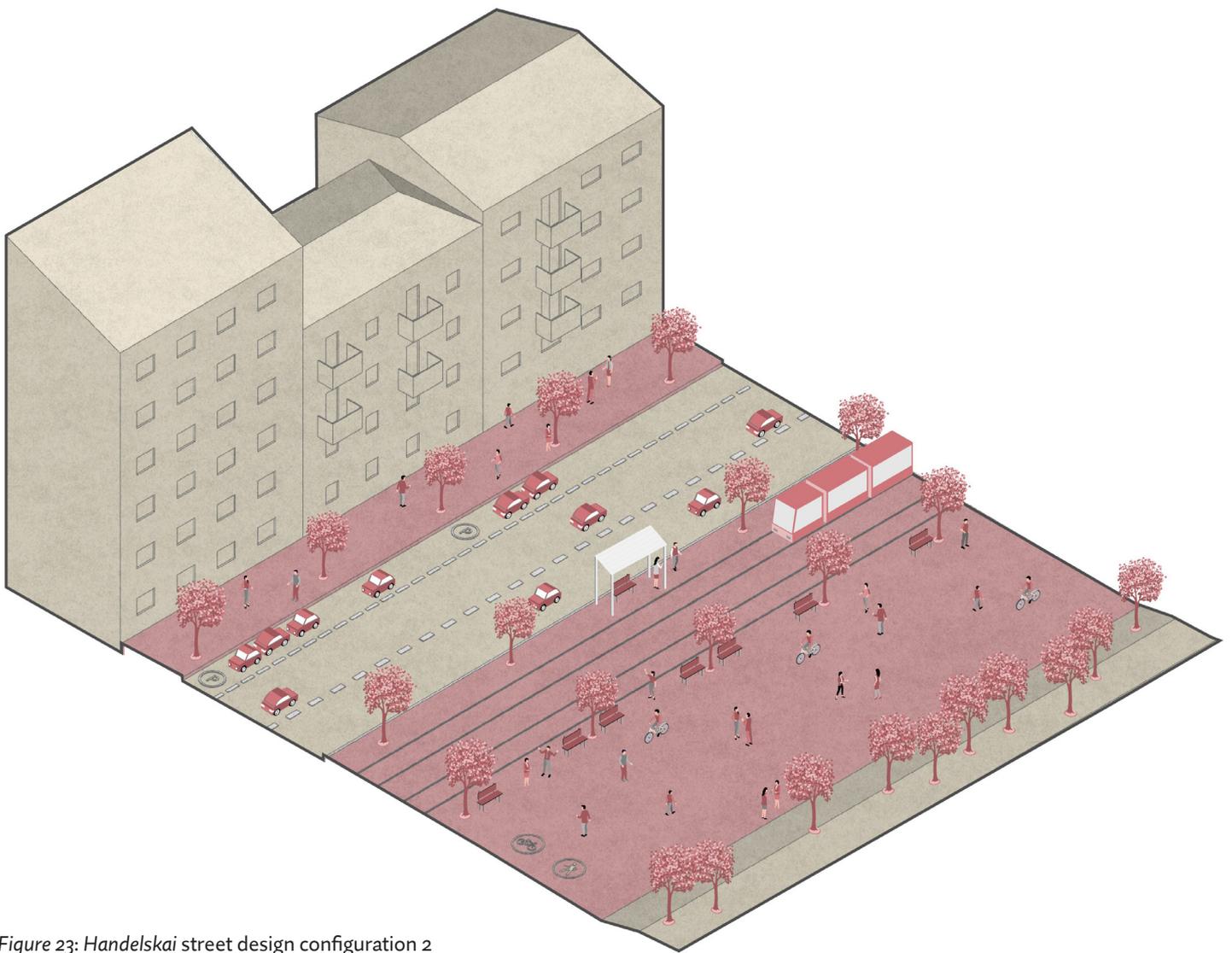


Figure 23: Handelskai street design configuration 2

The previous images show two possible solutions for the same section of the street, considering different elements and hypothetical situations. Certainly, there are several other combinations of the different features considered, such as the position of the railway and the street, or the presence of a new tram line.

The first solution is based on the premise that the railway could run underground. This possibility has been pointed out by some of the interviewees, although there have also been who highlighted the difficulty of such a solution, in case of an occurring emergency. Thus, the same street design would be possible only in the case of an underground railway or by moving it to other areas: being a service for transportation of goods and not people, it could still work efficiently in more peripheral zones.

The car lanes are reduced to four, and, with the parking

area, they still occupy a relevant portion of the surface. What completely changes the perception of the street from the point of view of the pedestrian, is that the walkable area is moved to the centre, between the car lanes, becoming the protagonist of the urban space. And thus, the street becomes also a square, a place where people can stop and meet. Furthermore, the zebra crossings are designed as slightly elevated from the road level, creating artificial bumps which force cars to slow down, making the environment safer for pedestrians and bikers. The bike lanes are positioned between the road itself and the space reserved for walkers, but elevated with respect to car lanes, so to ensure a major safety for bikers as well. The greenery is employed not only as an aesthetic element, nor solely to pursue a more ecological city, but it becomes an element of the visual separation of the different

functions of the street sections, preventing car drivers to run too fast.

Figure 23 shows a different interpretation of the concepts beforehand discussed. Again, the pedestrian area becomes the focus of the design, and in this case, it is even wider thanks to a further reduction of the car lanes. Of course, such a solution could become efficient in reality only if the number of private car users would be drastically reduced and this is possible only through an intensification of mobility alternatives (such as public transport or shared mobility) and strong administrative action.

This second hypothesis includes also the possible implementation of a new tram line, situated in a mixed-use street context, which thus allows the free movement of bikers and pedestrians in a shared area. The usage of vegetation is based on the already illustrated principles.

The two situations have the common aim of improving pedestrian conditions in the specific street fostering the use of alternative means of transport. At the same time, the elements presented in the two images could be integrated to form other possible interpretation of the space.

3 ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES OF SOCIAL HOUSING

The attempt of this paragraph is to direct all the topics previously discussed to delineate the character that a social housing project should have in order to fit in the studied context.

The paragraph will specifically deepen the architectural and urban features, even though it is fundamental to keep in mind the definition of social housing, which deals much more with its social and political role than with the architectural features. The main aim of social housing is to provide low rent apartments to the majority of Vienna citizens. As a secondary function, it also offers common spaces and other facilities for a variety of activities that could be shared with the public (thus, opening some spaces to all the citizens) or reserved for residents. This second aspect is what makes

possible the creation of those that were previously defined as urban “islands”, lively, small portions of the city with all the activities needed that foster a sense of community and boost social contact. Despite having as a first goal the financial one (maintaining the flats affordable), the effect that can result depending on the architectural design can contribute to psychological and social wellness.

What is inspected in the following sections are the activities that would fit the analysed context and the architectural features that could shape a functional riverside, attempting at solving the issues raised.

3.1 Social housing activities

From the interviews with the stakeholders, different necessities in terms of public facilities emerged. In this case though, to understand the interaction between project and sociological space, the best research approach would be the direct observation of a sample. The type of research conducted in this study does not represent the ideal form of investigation.

Despite that this first section is oriented to define the possible usage of outdoor and indoor common spaces. The analysis starts by considering two generic shared spaces an outdoor square and a common room. These two representations of the space could be considered the most generic form called “potential space” (Chiesi, 2016) which could become “effective space” once inhabited by its users. In order to address this generic form of space towards the potential needs of the population of the districts 2 and 20, as it emerges from the interviews, some categories of possible uses are selected, and some possibilities of which shape could a space take are suggested (figures 24 and 25). The act of designing inside these generic and empty spaces contributes to addressing the project to satisfy those necessities so that the potential space can become an effective space. The intersection between the potential and the effective space is useful for evaluating whether the project has become effective in the way the designers thought it would be. When the two spaces almost coincide, it means that the inhabitants expectedly interpret the potential space, when the two spaces do not overlap at all, the actual use of the space

corresponds to a sort of a “self-design”, and thus the project’s use does not correspond to the designers’ prediction (Chiesi, 2016).

To obtain the first scenario, a deep analysis including the observation of the social behaviour in a given space would be necessary: the design could more easily reflect the social habits. In case the direct observation or other research methods that allow foreseeing how a given space is interpreted are not possible, it would be appropriate not to “overdesign” a space, thus leaving it partially affected by the interpretation of inhabitants.

The following images illustrates three different categories that have been more or less explicitly mentioned by the interviewers to be implemented in the studied area. Three different examples of how the indoor and outdoor space could be designed and interpreted are given for three different thematic areas: culture, gathering and kids. With culture is intended all the possible cultural events that could take place and permanent infrastructure that could host events or function with a cultural purpose; gathering indicates those spaces that foster people’s encounter, in opposition to transit spaces which instead encourage a direct passage influencing the environment of the district; the third category aims at addressing part of the design to kids preferences, which would mean to favour also their families, supplying them with suitable spaces.

The indoor spaces could easily be part of a social housing complex, with the suggestion of opening them to all the citizens and not solely to those who inhabit the structure. The outdoor spaces are thought to be part of the general urban design that does not include only those spaces directly associated with the planned housing complex, but a more general requalification of the area. These two expedients have a common purpose to create a lively environment that could attract -during the day especially- people from the rest of the city.

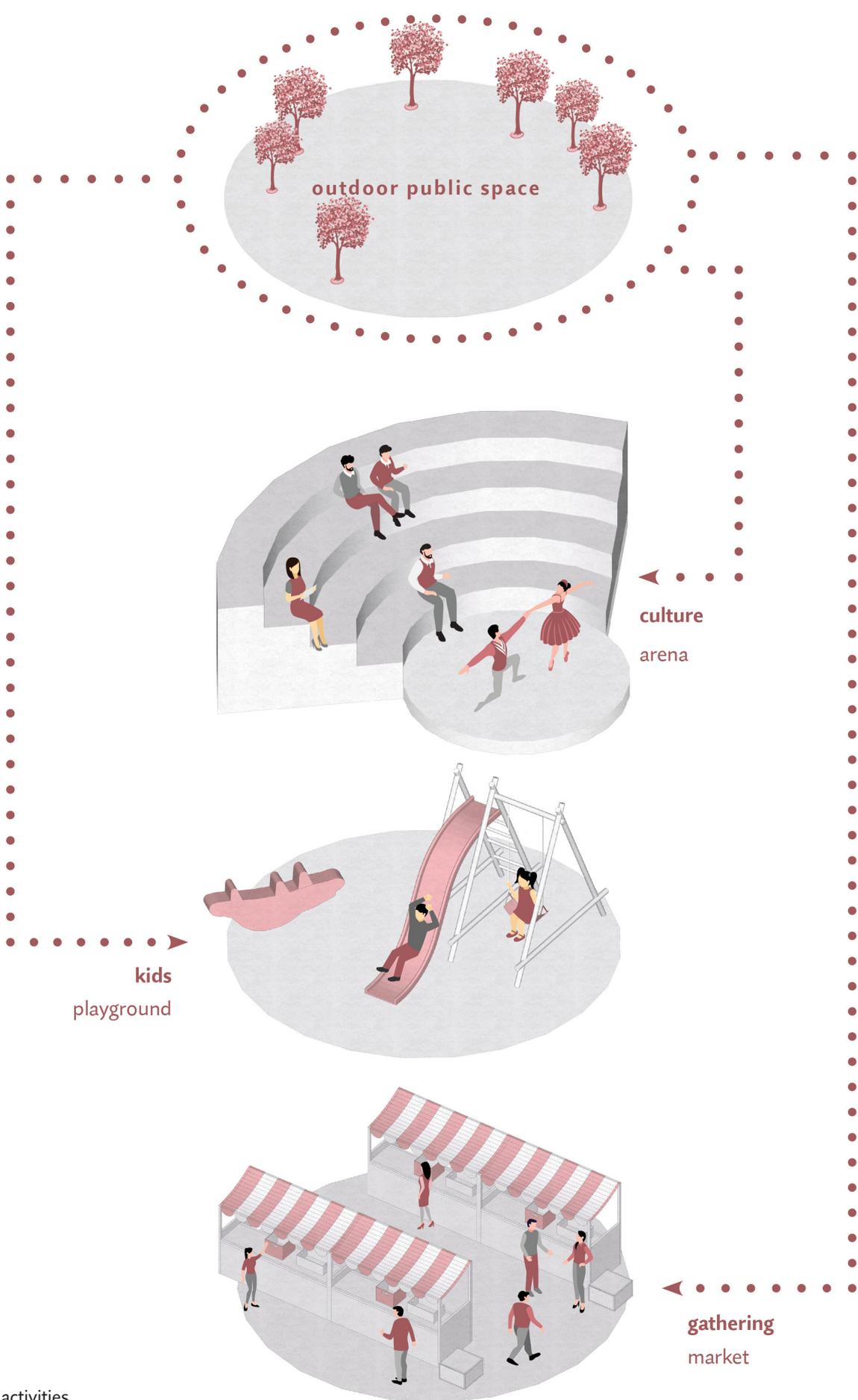


Figure 24: outdoor activities

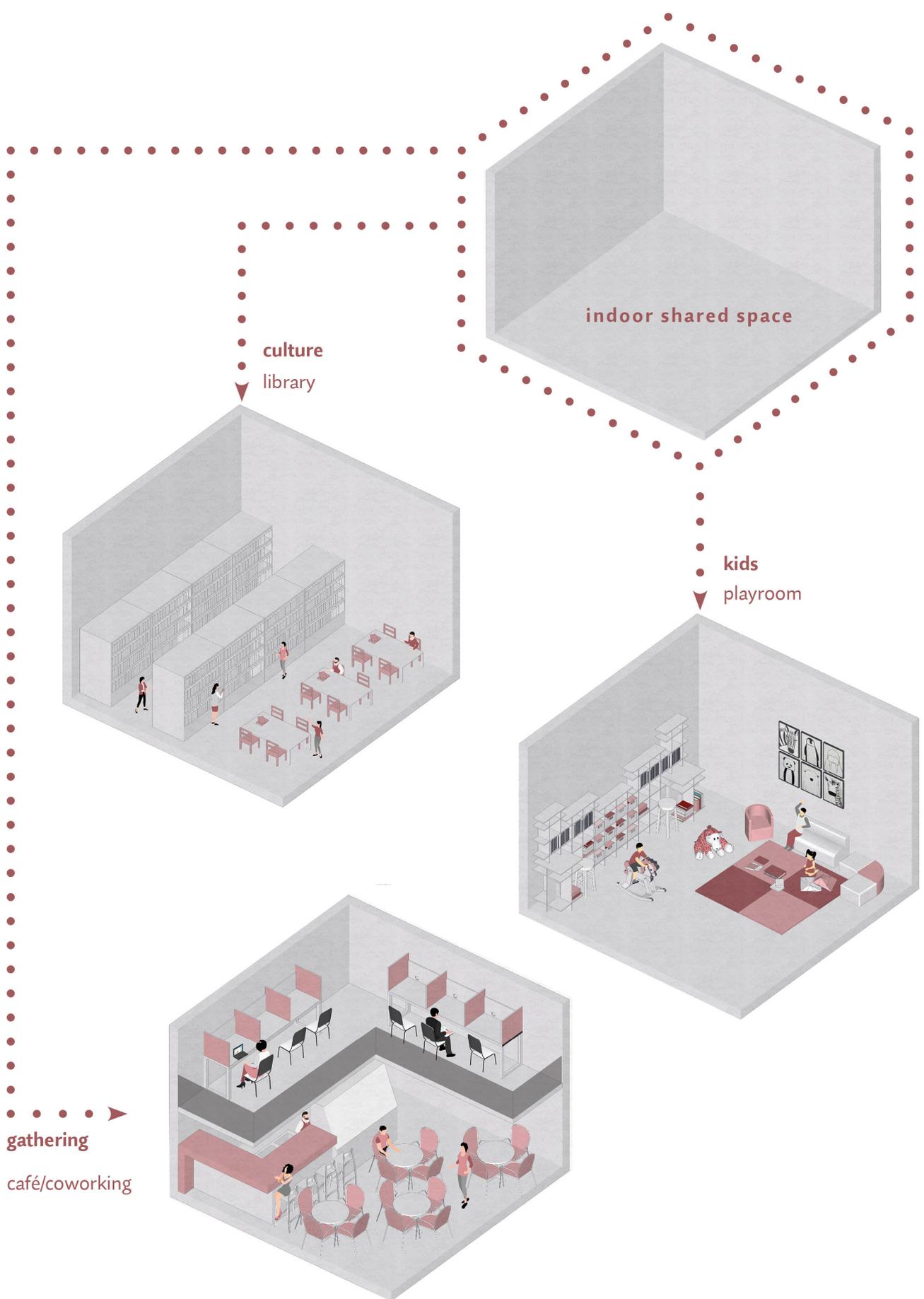


Figure 25: indoor activities

3.2 Studying existing projects: a comparison of two models

The analysis introduced in the chapter of the interview material analysis dealing with the successful social housing project in Vienna is in this paragraph further developed. Two projects have been selected to draw a comparison of the different features that contribute to the variety of social housing complexes. The term social housing, as it is clear from the previous chapters, indicates a form of municipal or no-profit service for certain categories of citizens and not a specific architectural form. Hence, there is not a specific architectural model that can be followed and applied in different contexts, but social housing projects can become reality in a variety of modalities. For this reason, the two compared buildings have been selected because they present very different design concepts. The first one, *Kapellenhof*, designed in 2017 by the architecture studio *AllesWirdGut Architektur* and *feld72*, is a reinterpretation of the structure of the *Höfe*, typical of the Red Vienna period. The second one, *generationen: wohnen am Mühlgrund* (2007), recalls instead the structure of the row houses even if condensed in a unique building. Thus, the two projects start from dissimilar concepts not only from an architectural point of view but also from a sociological perspective. Whereas the Social Democrat *Höfe* were addressed to the working class, with the idea of improving their living condition and social status, the row houses are conceived as a mono- or bi-familial type of settlement, proper for wealthy families.

The two projects were entirely redrawn with modelling software: in this way, it was possible to analyse the spatial relationships between the indoor and outdoor spaces and the main architectural features that characterize the two buildings. Through the realization of accurate drawings, it was possible to give an interpretation of their main features and compare them. The following illustrations display the outcome of this interpretation, emphasizing the differences in terms of shape, relations with the outdoor environment and accessibility. The choice to highlight these three characters is due to the fact that they represent the main issues to face in the potential design of a social

housing complex along the Danube right riverbank. The shape would be an important element as it conditions the relationship among the various spaces, the inside and outside, the private and public. Thus, it would be important to develop an efficient relationship with the rest of the city, with the river itself and the nature around. Secondly, the relation between outdoor and indoor has the function to define how the outdoor areas are perceived by the users. The accessibility study has the aim of understanding which spaces have to be accessible by everyone, becoming thus the focus to integrate the project in an urban perspective, and which, instead, are at exclusive service of those living in the complex.

The characteristics of the first project that would best suit a location such as the analysed one are the fact that the ground floor is accessible by everyone (in certain spots) and that despite its enclosing space, it can be considered a permeable structure. In fact, as already underlined, to increase the relevance of pedestrians and the liveability of the street, it is important to assign specific public functions to the ground floor, possibly avoiding uniquely commercial uses. The permeability of the space encourages the passage through the “urban forest”, which becomes a place of encounter. The possible disadvantages of such a structure are surely its dimensions, which are too massive and would constitute a further barrier to the access to the riverbank, and the fact that, although not completely closed, the courtyard structure tends to create a space where people stop and do not invite a connection with the river itself.

The second project has no common or shared spaces, it is thought of as a group of units, with similar structure and dimensions, not only for what concerns the inner space organization but also in the outdoor space distribution. The advantages of such a structure lie in its reduced dimensions: it could be easily integrated into a natural environment and thus it would foster the riverbank’s potential to become a space with similar features and functions to the ones of the *Donauinsel*.

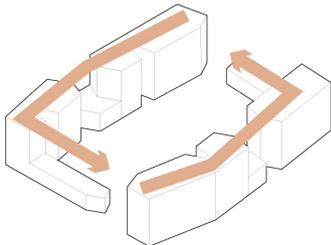
→ Figure 26: *Kapellehof* analysis

→ Figure 27: *Generationen: wohnen am Mühlgrund* analysis

Kapellenhof

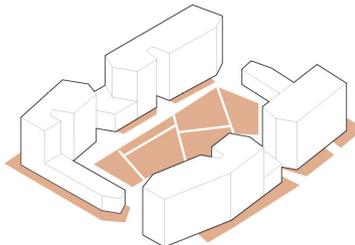


Shape



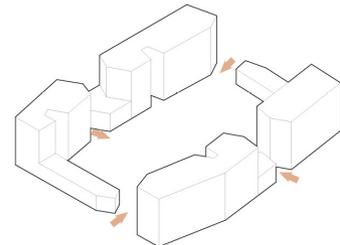
The building shape recalls the structure of the *Höfe* of the Red Vienna period. Although the project is developed around a central common space, there is not a hierarchy of the façades, which present a similar structure independently from their orientation.

Outdoor area



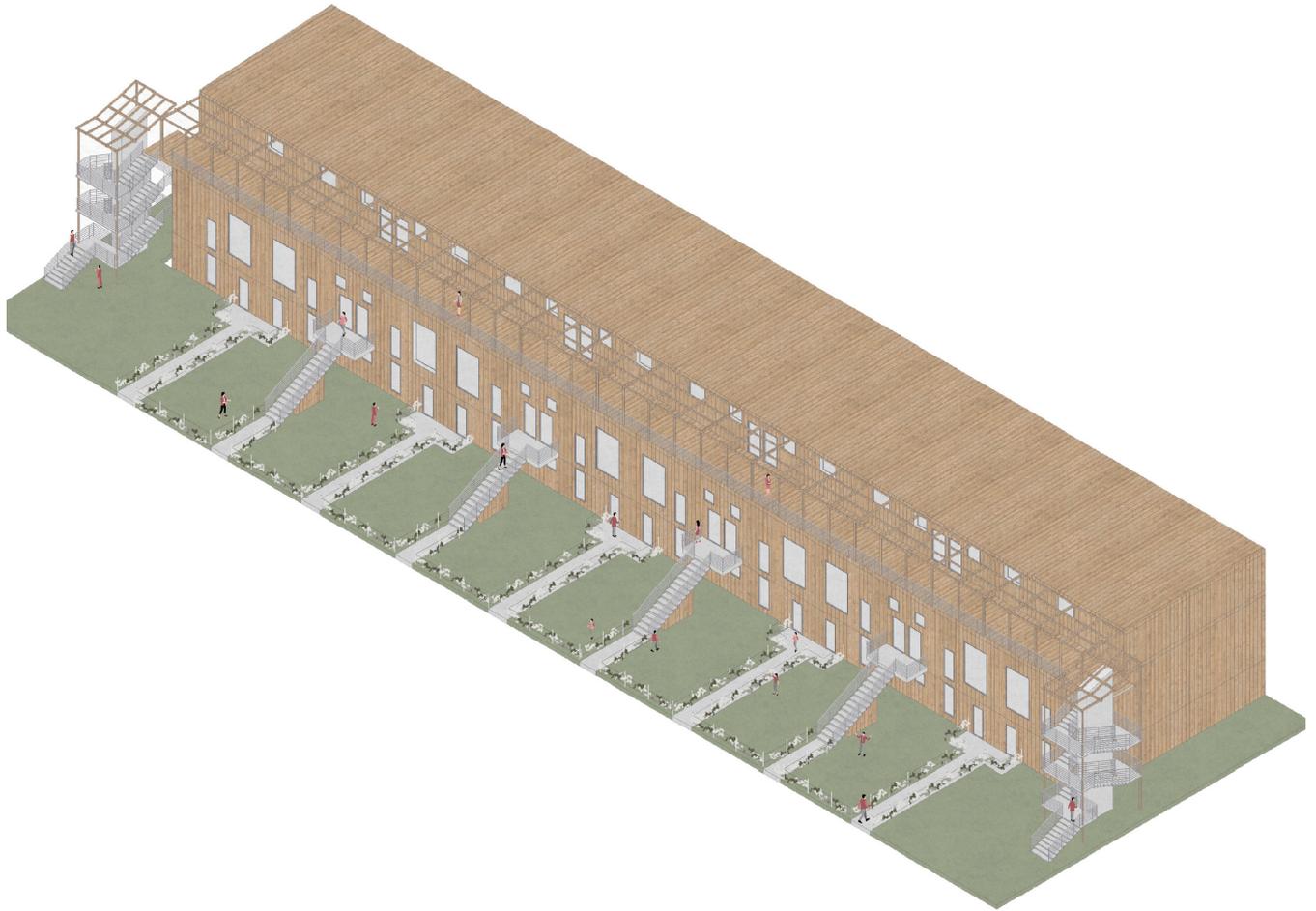
The outdoor project area is constituted by different type of green spaces. The central one is a sort of urban forest, publicly accessible, cut by paved pathway and provided with resting areas and playground for children. The gardens located along the buildings perimeter have instead a private functions, although maintaining a visible contact with the surrounding.

Accessibility

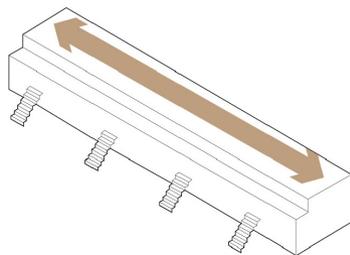


The accessibility to the urban park is regulated through passages locate in between the buildings, which make the design permeable even if not totally open. Some portions of the ground floor are accessible through arcades entrances to underline the public target, and are thus accessible by everyone: repair workshop, café, common rooms.

Generations: wohnen am Mühlgrund

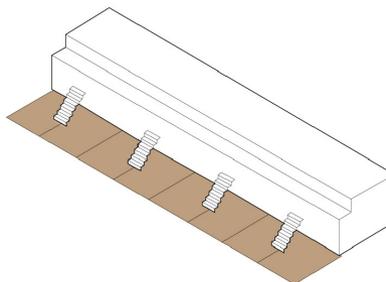


Shape



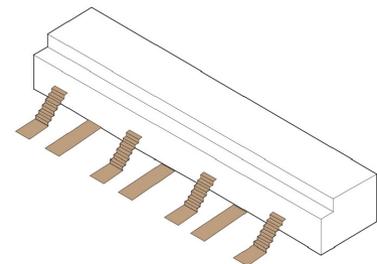
The building, part of a wider complex which comprehends other two different design proposals, has a rectangular plan, and is developed on three floors. The project is oriented towards a unique direction, thus only the principal façade has a developed design.

Outdoor area



The outdoor areas associated to the building are portions of small gardens in front of the main elevation. The space is regularly subdivided among all the units, and there are no public or common zones accessible to outsiders. The general regularity of the space subdivision recalls a reinterpretation of row houses structures.

Accessibility



Each unit is accessible towards an external staircase or path that lead from the street directly to the dwelling. The top floor is accessible through common stairs that lead to a terrace, since the apartment are flexible and can be subdivided, making the top floor as an independent unit.

As discussed in paragraph 3.3 of chapter 4, the first project presents an architectural concept closer to the original idea of social housing: it includes various activities that serve the complex residents. This means that it works as an attraction point because it is not a so-called dormitory complex, only for residential purposes and thus reducing the daily activity possibilities. *Wohnen am Mühlgrund* instead works solely as a residential building: it does not host any shared space for public activities. Even if both of the projects have no specific residents target, the second one presents flexible apartments and it was designed for adapting to the evolution of citizens' life as they face life's conventional steps -living as a couple, having kids, growing old.

CONCLUSION

- 1 analysis of the research questions
- 2 limitations of the study
- 3 further possible development

1 ANALYSIS OF THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research questions opening the introduction of this research address different topics and the answers are outlined through the various chapters representing the main assumptions on which the obtained design strategy, is based.

The first question regards in a general way the weakest side of the Viennese social housing system. At this point of the study, thanks to both the secondary data and the answers collected from the interviews, it is possible to distinguish two different levels of arising issues. The first level is administrative and financial, illustrated in chapter 2, paragraph 4. First of all, the existence of a social housing system does not directly regulate the private market, which still represents the only alternative for some parts of the society, due to a housing shortage. Secondly, the issue of increasing asylum seekers and immigrants from non-EU or EEA countries exacerbates the contradictions of a system that is not made to include those in urgent need, despite some initiatives of collaboration with charitable organizations. Thus, to recall the words of the interviewed sociology professor, the fact that housing is a human right sounds more like a slogan than an applied principle.

The second level of issues raised, more directly connected with the presented strategy, deals with an urban and architectural perspective. The new social housing complexes, in fact, although functional and enriching the city, create isolated urban portions that do not connect with the rest of the urban fabric. Thus, extremely potential land is addressed to a small part of the population -the inhabitants of the complex- and its influence is not directed towards the older parts of the city. In this way, the general conformation of the urban fabric appears to be quite fragmented.

The first issues presented are not further analysed in the research. For what concerns the last group of pointed out problems, the strategy developed attempts at applying expedients to solve them. These are for example the study for a permeable building volume that can be accessed by anyone and lead towards the public riverside and the fostering of communal

rooms and public areas, with non-commercial (or non-exclusively commercial) functions to attract inhabitants from the other districts.

The second research question regards instead the peculiarities of the two analysed districts, namely *Leopoldstadt* and *Brigittenau*. These two districts present a partly diverse urban structure: *Brigittenau* is denser, with less open green areas and attraction points, whereas *Leopoldstadt*, although more dispersive, offer a more varied structure which includes markets and parks. In general, their main feature is that they are developing districts, quite central because of the current city expansion, but still with some aspects of marginality. This is visible mainly in the analysed area on the right riverbank of the Danube, which results to be underused, not addressed to pedestrians and with almost no attraction points. The suggestions of chapter 5 -particularly in paragraph 2- attempt to integrate the characters of the two neighbourhoods in a potential design and to strengthen those features for a more pedestrian-friendly and lively area.

2 LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

Some limitations of the research emerged during its advancements. These limitations were mainly due to a restricted amount of time and resources, as well as to the level of expertise of the researcher (referred in particular to the sociological aspects of the study).

During the interviews, three questions revealed not to address any specific issue that could be implemented in the suggested strategy. The first question is the one concerning the features possibly exportable in other European countries: the outcome indicates the feasibility of the administrative and financial system that could be implemented in other countries only with the political preconditions, being the Viennese system rooted in its historical tradition. Thus, no interesting implications from the urban and architectural point of view were detected.

In the same way, the questions regarding the cultural differences between the inhabitants of social housing and the one regarding implications due to the Coronavirus outbreak did not lead to any significant

observation from a sociological point of view and thus could not be reflected in the proposed strategy.

A part of the research that could be extended is the comparison of the suggested social housing buildings in the last chapter. Only two structures with significantly different characteristics were chosen since there was a necessity to develop other topics. More extended observation of the various features of the projects indicated as successful would have been interesting and useful, especially in view of a more detailed project.

3 FURTHER POSSIBLE DEVELOPMENT

The thesis outcome presents a generic set of guidelines and indications for a possible development, which though not is further detailed. A possible prosecution of the research could include the actual design of a district along the right riverbank of the Danube, from an urban and architectural point of view. In this way, all the considerations made in the study could be applied in a real-life situation and it would be possible to realize whether there is evidence of the applicability of the discussed results. The work in fact does not claim to be exhaustive and solve the underlined issues in the studied area, but it can constitute the frame to an overall district design, offering a solid theoretical background through the analysis of the existing literature, the opinion of field experts through the involvement of stakeholders and a draft urban and context analysis.

Another point that could be further developed is the sociological analysis. In fact, as Chiesi (2016) claims in his book “Il doppio spazio dell’architettura”, the most accurate and suitable type of research when dealing with the sociology of space would be the direct observation of the actors: in this way it would be possible to detect how people deal with the space they live in and which relationship they establish with the various type of opportunities that a designed space can offer. In this case, differently from the interviews with experts, there would not be a filtered opinion expressed by words, but the possibility to witness real-life situations and then evaluate the best design solutions. Surely such a type of research method could be applied to further deepen the study and address it

to more precise results.

In conclusion, the approach to the study has resulted in a work that offers theoretical basis and project guidelines, with the possibility of further future expansions. The research questions have received an answer from an architectural perspective, but also from a socio-political point of view, even though the former has been further developed, being the focus of the work.

APPENDIX - TRANSCRIPTS

INTERVIEW 1

Interviewee: A. S., project manager

Association: IBA Wien (municipal)

What are the main features of the Viennese social housing system?

The social housing system is huge and complex so it's not that easy to answer, because of the long history of social housing in this city that was never really interrupted and this is really something very special; but if I put it all together one of the main features of social housing is that is not made only for the poorest of the poor so the social housing is societal, for everyone, for the whole society and it is also given through the Viennese mixture meaning that people from middle class also live in social housing and the social housing is not only public housing, there is also subsidized housing which is also part of social housing. So, I would say these are the main features that are specific for social housing in Vienna. The whole model is very complex, but these are the main features.

What are the features that could be exported to other European cities? Why?

Well, it's connected to the first thing that many European cities and worldwide cities are partly providing social housing for people in need, that cannot afford anything on the private market: social housing is not seen as a social project, and I do think that this is something that could be also changed. In other cities in Switzerland and in some cities in Germany, they do have some similar pictures regarding this, but usually, the social housing is only provided for those who can't afford anything else. But some cities are trying to implement this in the development of new projects, but it's not an easy thing. Another aspect that I think other cities could take over is the four pillars in the developers' competitions. The four pillars of quality or quality control are architecture, economy, ecology and the social sustainability. I do think this is something that could be also tried out in other cities. There is

a project in Vancouver where they are trying out the model of the Four Pillars on the new social housing projects that they are developing, called the Viennese house in Vancouver. So, this is something that could very easily be taken over. probably also some other things but it depends on the structure of the city and on how the social housing subject is anchored in their system: is it a city issue? is it a state issue? and how you can implement all the other features? so it's not that easy, but with the four pillars and the mixture, the whole idea of social housing could be changed.

What are the architectural projects for social housing that had greater success in Vienna? And why?

This is a very subjective question, it depends on how we qualify architecture and social housing, but I will name some. I would say all the projects of Red Vienna that were implemented 100 years ago and comprehended many huge settlements. They were built between two World Wars: some of them are very famous like *Karl Marx Hof* and others, but I would for example name *Sandleiten Hof*. This is a very specific and different public housing project in *Ottakring* which was also architecturally a bit different from the other Red Vienna projects. Among more recent developments, I would name two projects still successful, from which we learned a lot for the future implementations that were tried out there for the first time: *Frauenwerkstadt 1*, "the women workshop", developed in the late '90s coming out from the agenda of Mainstream Planning by Eva Kail, exhibition public space for women. A competition for *Frauenwerkstadt* focused on the need for women in housing, was held by the city of Vienna: the jury members and architects were all females, and they built a very interesting settlement with lots of aspects that were innovative for future projects. It is in the 21st district, it was not well published in "glossy" architecture magazines, because is not about aesthetics, but more about how to work with the space so to enable everyday life and freedom for everyone who's living there, according to the need of women since we know that women take a bigger part in care work. The other project I would like to

mention, which I also criticised a lot during my own research, but which is also successful is the *inter-ethnische Nachbarschaft*, the first project in this subject, built in 2000 in the *Wiesen*, the developer is *Sozialbau*, it is in the 23rd district, and that's where they wanted to take the subject of migration in planning and thus they developed this housing project as the architects thought at that time: half of the tenants should have some kind of migration experience. New architectural concepts were developed: for example, the laundry room was always part of the street floor 100 years ago, but then there was the tendency to place it hidden in the cellar. In this project they positioned it at the ground floor connected with other community spaces, for example, kids' rooms, to take care of them more easily. Beforehand developers were not okay with putting this kind of service on the ground floor but now is instead completely standard to have the laundry at the floor of connection, where there are all the communal areas. A very special concept of neighbourhood gardening on the roof. It was 20 years ago and at the time it was very progressive. Now we have at the IBA Vienna some projects that are important for the discussion in architecture and is not about how the architecture looks like but how it can work out and what is our responsibility: I would name Biotope city because this is about how we do climate adaptation, how we plan and build a city adapted to climate change.

What was the impact of the Corona crisis on the social housing system in Vienna?

Well, I would say that we learned a lot during the Corona crisis. One of the impacts was that the community rooms were closed and we still don't have a solution for that because the house owners even if they are non-profit and they are here to provide the housing because of the regulations did just close the community rooms, which is really a pity because even if you finish to work from home then you could go to this community room even as a single household, maybe with kids. The other thing is that we realised that we need more flexibility inside the apartments: it is not about how I can get another room, it is more

about how I can make more single rooms out of an existing apartment so that you have the possibility to close yourself in a space. It doesn't have to be done through doors, it could be done with some elements, like furniture. Having this possibility of flexibility is very important. The third thing is that turns out with Corona is about developing the neighbourhoods and not developing single houses: for example, the small-scale communities with small shops were something that also worked during Corona because they have this small-scale reality, and they can react according to the situation. So, they closed but they could write in front of the doors "you can call us, and we can deliver stuff" and if you go around your area and walk then you can find information. They really need to quickly react in a flexible way to the situation, so you don't have to travel by tram somewhere else to get things: this was really very supportive. Thus, we really need great infrastructure in the public space because the public space got huge importance. Public space is very important anyway, but in the pandemic, it became even more important (and the quality of public space too) so that many different users can spend time there. So, we also learnt the importance of the openness and flexibility of these public spaces.

Viennese social housing system derives from the assumption that housing is a human right: how many people are still excluded by the system and why?

I don't know how many people; I don't have the numbers. Until 2006 people without Austrian citizenship were not allowed to enter the public housing, owned by the city of Vienna. It was changed because of the European Union Law, and they changed it so that you could apply for a public housing apartment if you already lived for 5 years in Vienna -but for example, as a student, you couldn't do that, it is for those with 5 years permit visa. They changed the system like that because of the anti-discrimination laws of the European Union. The other thing is that because it is a social project there are limits on how much you're supposed to earn if you want to enter the social housing, and this is applied to both public and subsidised housing. These limits are really

high, in a way that a high-middle class is also part of it, so it is much higher than the average. There is also a down limit so if you earn less than this limit, then you can't get a public housing apartment because they (the associations e.d.) are obliged to make their financing so that the money comes again in: this is something that belongs to all of us, and they can't make a "minus". So, the people who don't have a regular income or earn less money than this limit are not automatically included and can't get an apartment in a standard procedure. But there are systems supported by the city of Vienna and for free like Caritas, and all the other institutions that are working together with Vienna, and there are many projects so that the institution gets the apartments in the public housing and then provides them to their clients who cannot enter with a standard procedure. The goal is that these people get a contract for an apartment later on. There is another thing that we are trying to cope with or to fight in the city and that is the regulation that you need to live at least 2 years in Vienna, in one place, not in different places in order to get public housing or subsidized housing and to get a "housing ticket". The idea was that people who live longer in Vienna can get an apartment quicker than the others. It's not about nationality, it happens also if you come from Lower Austria or from Salzburg, it doesn't matter; the longer you live in Vienna the faster you get on the top of the list. This is also excluding a lot of people because some of them have limited renting contracts: if you lived only one and half years in an apartment and then you have to leave, you can't get the housing ticket.

How to deal with people who recently immigrated and thus do still not possess Austrian or European citizenship (apart from providing temporary accommodation)?

The City of Vienna started *Smart Wohnbauprogramme*, an immediate housing program in 2015 as a reaction to the refugee movement. The idea was to build housing for ten years in an ecological way in the areas that are not zoned yet for housing. There are only two projects that became reality and are called temporary living,

but "temporary" meaning for ten years. One of the projects is with prefabricated structures and it can be remodelled and rebuilt again somewhere else. The other project is in an area zoned for office buildings and is made of slim building structures made of concrete; after ten years when they don't need the apartments anymore and if the areas are not re-zoned into housing zone, then they can be rebuilt into office spaces or into garages because they have higher ceilings for example.

I think these people should be part of the social housing in Vienna and we are still trying to find ways to include them into the system. One of the projects that are well working because is not temporary are those with the "housing first" concept. It was developed especially for homeless people and the concept comes from the United States and it is about the fact that you need housing first and then you can solve all the other problems that you have. Usually, also in the Viennese system, you have to have a job in order to apply for an apartment, or you have to get rid of all of your debts and social problems and also medical issues in order to get the job and then to get the apartments. So, the "housing first" concept says: first people need a safe place to stay and then the different social organisations and institutions can support them to solve all the other problems in their lives. The "housing first" is part of subsidized housing, it's a very interesting concept because you're not allowed to put two apartments next to each other: it is very much about not to be seen: nobody knows where the housing first housing units are, because people in need doesn't have anybody else to know that they're in need. Thus, they are invisible, which is part of the concept, they are supposed to be invisible as a part of the whole project. At some points in the organisation started using "housing first" apartments for the refugees who got the asylum status and had to leave the old apartment, but they couldn't find an apartment on the free market. This is how it works, and we have some ideas on developing this "housing first" concept in the existing parts of the city: if you are renovating your house and you get subsidies from the city, you can also help to do this "housing first", but it is not well developed, it is just an idea.

What are the problems that may arise because of a mix of cultures in a social housing community?

I don't think that there are problems that can arise. I have a different view about different cultures living next to each other. I see people with different cultures living in a house as enrichment for those who lives in this housing, so I don't see problems arising. The problems that arise are very much connected to a variety of needs that we have because of our lives not because of our cultures: this is very much connected to our age and forms of families or how we live. So, somebody who is 75 and living alone has totally different needs than a family with 4 children living in a small apartment in the same house. Or the teenagers, or couples without children. So, this is where the so-called "problems" can arise: that we can't find the same language regarding the usage of the space that we need, and we disturb each other. So, it is very much about the different needs of very different people coming together in a housing complex. And I think that this can be supported especially with new housing projects if you started participation very early. We can learn a lot from for example the *Baugruppen*: they get together to build a house together, even in the city, and if people know each other at an early stage or earlier, this can help a lot for future disagreements. It is always much easier in a new build house than in a house where some people already lived, and then new people are coming: there is the need to communicate much more because there is the "right" of those who are first there. I think that it is very much connected to the different needs of the people.

What are the reasons, from an urban planning point of view, for the lack of connection between the districts Leopoldstadt and Brigittenau and the right riverbank of the Danube River?

I have never been much in this area so I can only guess. First of all, this part of the Danube where we have huge ships, we have two Danube because there is an island in between. So, this is not much a recreational area, that needs a connection to the city part. The other thing is that it is completely detached because we have

the planning made according to cars and mobility, so you have the street next to the river and then the city begins. This is something that still needs to be rethought in this city: to stop planning according to cars and trucks and start planning the city according to every user. So, the reason is just historical I would say. In The STEP, *Stadtenwicklungsplan*, which is developed every 6-8 years, maybe they talk about this area, and you can find more reason for that.

How much important are Handelskai and the railway Donauuferbahn for the city?

I think it is locally important but I'm just talking now as a user or non-user. It is important for the 20th district and it's important also for people living in *Floridsdorf*, the 21st district, on the other side of the river. The connection is given by the metro (*U-Bahn*) and by the *Schnellbahn*, but I think that lots of people living in *Floridsdorf* are also using *Handelskai*, it is part of their everyday routine.

In 2003 there was a proposal from Christoph Chorherr (Grüne Partei), for a 24th district along the Danube Riverbank to "exploit the potentiality of Handelskai": what do you think about this possibility?

I don't know about this proposal because at that time I was finishing my studies, it is a lot of time ago. But I think it is very interesting because it is a development inside the city. I think every development we can achieve inside the city is much more ecological for all of us and for the earth than developing outside of the city, I mean in the outskirts where you still have a lot of space. But yes, it's good developing inside the cities because you have this topic of centrality and because of the infrastructures, so I think it's an interesting idea. I would call it an interesting idea. Maybe it would have happened also, but the city of Vienna decided to develop the former train stations and railway areas: there was a huge potential in it, and they are still developing it. Maybe without these areas or that much space, they would have done that too.

What services should be implemented to improve the attractiveness of districts 2 and 20?

Well, they are very different, and they have very different areas and I think they both are attractive. It also depends on how you define attractiveness. So, I cannot answer this question for both the district, it would not be that professional. I think this question needs some more specific locality, like this place or that place so what you can do to make it more attractive but attractive to who?

What public spaces should be implemented to improve the attractiveness of districts 2 and 20?

I would say there is a lot of potential and public space in the 20th district I think there are a lot of things that are already done in the second but in the 20th district you can still do a lot to public spaces. The quality of public spaces and also empty from cars and stuff like.

In this map municipal housing and subsidized housing are marked: do you think it can be considered complete or should other structures be added?

I can tell you if it's completed or not. I do think that municipal housing can be found on the map of Vienna. For the Non-profit maybe you can try to contact the marketing offices of the no-profit and maybe they can send you a list of their houses in 20th and in 2nd District so you can complete it. maybe some of them will support your work. You could have also walked through the streets, some houses have some kind of signs, but not all of them, especially for the older construction. It is a huge work, but you could contact the developers.

INTERVIEW 2

Interviewee: J. G., leader department of social affairs and services

Association: Wiener Wohnen (municipal association)

What are the main features of the Viennese social housing system?

Most significant in Vienna is the size and definition of social housing. Vienna is remarkable in many ways, one aspect is that, compared to other cities, is a rental market, we only have 25% of homeowners and 75% are renting. In other cities, there is usually a higher percentage of owners. Of the rental market 60% are part of the so-called social housing: subsidized housing or municipally owned. I work for the association that owns the flats, *Wiener Wohnen*, in our possession there are 220000 apartments and roughly half a million people live on our premises, and then the same number and amount is true for the subsidized housing. That's remarkable. The way we built the houses is changed because the oldest *Gemeindebau*, *Wiener Wohnen* properties have around 100 years now, so a completely different condition was applied for building social housing. It started as a social revolution, the *Gemeindebau*, the workers lived under better conditions than those richer in villas, because they had the bath and toilet inside the apartment, and this was a real revolution that was something that fought against how workers could live in better conditions than richer people? Now of course it has changed dramatically.

What is also remarkable is the system of tenders, where there is always a social dimension to be considered as well: all newly built houses from the last 10-15 years must have social infrastructure as well. Not only building cheap houses which is an important aim but also to consider how social interaction can take place and usually we have some common space like *Gemeinschaftsraum*, a socializing room.

What are the features that could be exported to other European cities? Why?

I talked to a colleague in Hamburg, who said to me "in Hamburg they also have a large social housing, but they all look the same": they have one building department inside the company and they developed one system some years ago to build cheaply and energy efficiently, and then they just change the colour of the building. So, all the housing blocks look the same, and I think it is very dangerous because they keep standing for hundreds of years, so it really pays off to take some more time for planning and give individual identities to the single houses and neighbourhood. I think it is saving money on the wrong side, to save on the planning phase. The tendering is a really good concept to get individual and different styles for the neighbourhoods, so I could really recommend to other cities to organize tenders also giving more chances to architects' offices. Doing tendering means not just looking for the cheapest project, but also looking at the social effects of building, plus what happens to the infrastructure part, what the building gives to the neighbourhood and what happens on the ground floor; are there shops? Or health infrastructure? Or schools? Thinking more at the surrounding area when developing a new project. Also for refurbishment: that's the part I am always angry about. Usually, a lot of energy and ideas go into building new houses. They did not spend much energy and time in rethinking the existing building stock; so that's my new mission: try and get new ideas for adapting the existing building stock to the challenges that we have: climate change, demographic change, digitalization. There are so many challenges and how can the existing social housing building stock face those challenges?

What are the architectural projects for social housing that had greater success in Vienna? And why?

I will remain in *Wiener Wohnen* because that's where I work for the *Gemeindebau*. From our concept of smart housing speaking about circular building and circular economy, there is *Per-Albin-Hansson-Siedlung*, where they are managing the IBA project. The building was built in the after-war period, after the Second World War, and it is named after the prime minister of the time. Vienna was so desperately poor; bombs had

destroyed houses and the minister gave Vienna the machine to make construction material out of broken houses and rebuild in a way social housing. I like the conception of the beginning idea and we are working now to analyse these buildings from after the Second World War why they are still in use, how they behave. And they work quite well. We started with supplying little houses where people grow vegetables and fruits and that's urban gardening, what we promote heavily now again. It was already there in after-war years: the planner thought it was good if people could grow their own vegetables and fruit. And we are very happy to have that kind of property, because for some years they were not that popular but now there is a big run: the metro had been extended out there so it is really interesting to go there and have a look around. There is also a lot of green and free spaces around the houses: although old, it still gives a good answer for example to climate change, with large trees, lot of opportunities for people to meet, there is not that much we have to do there. What we have to look at is actually the demographic changes because it affects us. Especially the baby boomers are retiring soon, so there are a lot of people in their sixties/seventies and all live there because they're happy: they stayed there and aged there. We have a large population that is coming to an age of seventy/eighty when they need to reach their apartment barrier-free, and we do not have them in those kinds of buildings. Even if we added elevators they would enter from outside, meaning that there would always be a couple of stairs to enter the apartment or to enter the elevator. So, we are working on that very heavily now: to make the apartment stair-free.

The *Rabenhof* also is beautiful, I think it was built between the wars. We see a lot of people wanting to live there. There is a theatre, the *Rabenhof* theatre, it is well known, and it is named after *Rabenhof*. It is in the third district and beautifully shows how social housing can be a trademark for bourgeoisie, arty lifestyle also. It shows a very peaceful coexistence of different social classes, that all move around these buildings.

What was the impact of the Corona crisis on the social housing system in Vienna?

It was very heavy. One of the topics we had before corona already was loneliness because half of the householders are single householders in Vienna. Loneliness does not make people good: even before Corona, we had these frequent callers, usually among elderly people, who called us three times a day and that increased dramatically. Also, the tensions have increased with many people staying at home: we have lots of large families, with many kids, we have many different cultural backgrounds, with a different conception of how to behave, of how to use greenery and common spaces or of not use them. Even when most of them were working, and going to school, we had troubles, but now with Corona, those tensions increased. And also, liquidity: lots of people were not able to pay rent properly anymore. We did not evict them so far, but we still see the rents have not been paid and when corona will be over and all these "excuses" and prolongations of non-eviction will be over, we'll have a huge housing problem. We do everything we can to help people pay off the debts that they have already collected in time, but we see it is not enough, and I am afraid that when corona is over, we'll need a lot of compensation to help people pay off their rental debts.

Viennese social housing system derives from the assumption that housing is a human right: how many people are still excluded by the system and why?

We work closely together with organizations that care for the homeless, for example, *Neunerhaus* for example rented apartments from us. At *Wiener Wohnen* we have very strict criteria on who enters the *Gemeindebauten*, we are currently working on changing those rules, but that is a very long process. 80% of apartments are given to people that have a stable income, Austrian citizenship or equivalent, meaning European citizenship or acknowledge asylum status, and that have additional problems for example overcrowding. We give the other 20% of apartments to people with special needs situations, that is also homeless people that come

from organizations that prepare them for individual housing and for paying regular rent. Given the size of our organization, we do have some case managers to help when people are in trouble with paying rent. In general, we have to provide cheap houses. So, we still have as main focus to provide secure and safe houses and we work with social organizations that have in their mission to do the social housing. So why people are still excluded? Good point: we said that up to 15% of the apartment can be given to people that come from immediate crisis, for example coming from women shelters, homeless shelters or from the street. Many of these people are still in their need: so, if there are too many people coming from needs situations -in our experience- those complexes of houses are too much for the neighbourhood. So, for answering what keeps people away from receiving regular housing I have to report the information to those organizations that deal with them individually. One answer is of course limited access to housing stock, but we have built so many apartments: it is not the lack of actual houses but the lack of adequate income. We see people working full time or 30 hours a week but earning so little money and then when they have also other expenses, they have trouble paying regular rent. And in some cases, it is also a psychological problem or an addiction problem that keeps them from regular housing. But all this is only true for Vienna because in other cities there is a complete lack of affordable housing. In Vienna, I do not see that as a matter of a lack of housing, but of too heavy regulation and low incomes. We are in the lower margin of being cost-effective, we do not have any "plus", any earning, we cannot lower the rent anymore. So, to still be able to provide safe housing, we need to refurbish. We cannot offer cheaper housing, it would not be possible, then the solution would be to raise the incomes because it is not a speculated rent the one, we create but we just cover the minimum costs. Also, the emotional and psychological help should be increased especially with corona: there are a lot of studies showing how kids, but also grown-up, have decreased their mental health, and that keeps them away from a regular job or drives them into addiction. Those are limiting factors in being able to live on your own.

How to deal with people who recently immigrated and thus do still not possess Austrian or European citizenship (apart from providing temporary accommodation)?

As soon as they have been granted asylum, they can move in, it is equivalent to Austrian citizenship, but it must be a granted asylum state, it is very important for us too. We have a lot of Syrian tenants now because they have been here for more than 5 years, that's the regulation we have to stick to: they need to have Austrian citizenship or equivalent. I think there is a lot more in innovative projects, there is a lot of potential in using and refurbishing existing building stock and then having the people work on their housing as well, on the refurbishment, and then let them stay. That is very important obviously. But one of the formal ways is that, as soon as they have been granted asylum, they can apply. A lot more can be done on an experimental basis: to use substandard houses that they refurbished and give for very cheap renting. I think there is still potential for that.

What are the problems that may arise because of a mix of cultures in a social housing community?

Well, not necessarily any. But in fact, we see from experience, it depends on which nationalities come together: if they're from opposite conflict zones, then those tensions continue here, for example with former Yugoslav nations, as Serbians and Croatian or also Arabians and Turkish communities they can be competing against each other. So, it is very different: when I look at nationality, I am able to predict whether we will have conflict or not. It also depends on whether people have the same age or not, whether there are a lot of kids from different cultural backgrounds, whether they have parents with high educational backgrounds or not. There are really more dimensions of conflict than just background and nationality. Different ideas on how to live tendentially lead to conflicts but that can happen also among Austrians. It is not really the nationality; it is more the educational background and how good people are in negotiating rules with their neighbourhood.

What are the reasons, from an urban planning point of view, for the lack of connection between the districts Leopoldstadt and Brigittenau and the right riverbank of the Danube River?

The history is quite different. *Leopoldstadt* is a very old district with a market, then *Augarten* has a very different identity, completely different kinds of people, it is really bourgeoisie. Very different identity than the area of *Handelskai*, where there is a lot of high buildings, cheaply built. These are really different areas with different social identities and social history also. and of course, the railway on the Danube does not make it easy to connect but there is not a lot of common features that I would give to these two areas.

How much important are Handelskai and the railway Donauuferbahn for the city?

It depends on who you ask. I think it is important for commuters that built the houses outside the city and then commute in Vienna because they work in Vienna. I have a lot of colleagues that built the house in Lower Austria or Northern Vienna that always have to use *Handelskai* and or stay in very crowded *Schnellbahn* in the morning. But for Viennese people that stay in Vienna, nobody cares about *Handelskai* honestly.

In 2003 there was a proposal from Christoph Chorherr (Grüne Partei), for a 24th district along the Danube Riverbank to “exploit the potentiality of Handelskai”: what do you think about this possibility?

I think in Vienna for some reason the Danube was perceived as a threat, as in many countries near the sea or a river. It used to flood the city every ten years before we built the *Donauinsel*, so if you look at how the buildings are oriented, and also the *Gemeindebau*, are oriented away from the water into the centre, and no architect can really understand how you could build a huge housing block directly next to the Danube and have none of the windows and loggia facing the water. Also because of the road, we have the perception that traffic noise is very bad, so all the windows have to be oriented away from it: the perception of the road

was stronger than the perception that there is water to look at. But that was a different time and in Vienna the tradition to cherish the water has a very short history. Only 10 years ago we started to use the canal, with the beach parts: they are very new. There was complete ignorance of the water that we have. This notion that we should cherish the spaces near water continued to *Handelskai*. I am not familiar with the proposal of Christoph Chorherr, but I think we need to rediscover the qualities of inner-city living and there would probably be a lot of space. First, we have to handle the logistic and traffic differently there because it is a real nightmare, but sure there are beautiful spaces near the water.

What services should be implemented to improve the attractiveness of districts 2 and 20?

It is very hard to say in general because the two districts are quite different. The traffic of *Handelskai* have to be completely rearranged: maybe if you build bridges there, if you put it underground tunnels, then it can be a completely different area. And then maybe could be useful to make it more mixed infrastructure. In *Leopoldstadt*, *Karmelitermarkt* is very mixed, we have a lot of galleries, markets, houses offices; what I remember instead from the *Handelskai* area is that is really monofunctional: huge housing blocks very far from each other, you wait for a bus forever to get there. A lot of things happened in the area between the *Prater* and the Danube so you could probably stretch that kind of development towards the Danube. I would say the main problem is the traffic situation because you could transform it into a recreational area where you do not need a hundred subway stops, and you would need to do something about the bike lanes and an attraction point going there.

What public spaces should be implemented to improve the attractiveness of districts 2 and 20?

Probably some sort of meeting point, piazza, because they are really dense districts and I think some sort of space that also give identity to the area, with

commercial and non-commercial space, to meet and gather and escape from the heat there is usually in summer. I think the tendency is to make money and to build several storeys apartment buildings, but what people need is actually meeting spaces, for kids and elderly. It is very important, and it is missing. It would be important also to give some peace and quietness to the area because is very loud and more of a commuting space than a recreational area.

In this map municipal housing and subsidized housing are marked: do you think it can be considered complete or should other structures be added?

I think I see all the *Gemeindebau*. For the subsidized is a hard work. A solution could be asking *Gebietsbetreuung*, they should be able to help you. Maybe they also have access to more database.

INTERVIEW 3

Interviewee: C. S., international relations

Association: Wiener Wohnen (municipal association)

What are the main features of the Viennese social housing system?

Mainly we have two different systems: one is the subsidized housing sector which amounts to 220000 apartments until now, and the other one is the municipal housing sector: these apartments are in the ownership of the city of Vienna. The latter was built in 1918 after the First World War we have a traditional over 100 years municipal housing sector and the number of apartments that have been built in this period is 220000. In total municipal housing and subsidized sector are 440000 apartments, about 50 % of the total housing market of Vienna

What are the features that could be exported to other European cities? Why?

I don't think copy-paste would work because we have a tradition which has lasted now for a really long time. But what other cities might learn from Vienna is that we have never sold the housing properties, which many cities for instance in Germany did, and we still invest a lot of money year by year in the housing sector. We preferably invest them into object funding, which means refurbishing the old housing stock and building new homes. Just a small amount of money is spent on people who are quite poor unable to afford the rents. So about 400 million € are going to the object funding and only 100 million € in subject funding.

What are the architectural projects for social housing that had greater success in Vienna? And why?

When we look at the municipal housing sector then the quality of living is very high because normally 1/3 up to 50% of the total area is used for construction. 2/3 or 50% are green areas, playgrounds, recreational areas, the living quality in these housing complexes is really

huge. In the subsidized housing sector, we have the so-called four-pillars model now for many years: it defines 4 criteria of housing -architecture, economy, ecology and sustainability. There is a competition between no-profit and limited-profit to get the contracts with the city of Vienna for building up these projects and an independent jury of experts decides which of the projects brought in has the highest quality and the one with the highest quality is chosen, so we also have very high quality in the subsidized sector.

Could you name one of the projects that you think worked the best in Vienna?

Well, there are thousands of them! We have some completely new quarters and urban areas. The biggest one still in the construction process is *Seestadt Aspern* in the east of Vienna and we have quite centrally located ones in former railway stations which aren't used anymore, and thousands of new homes have been constructed in the recent years. These are the two projects I could highlight.

What was the impact of the Corona crisis on the social housing system in Vienna?

First of all, we stopped the evictions in the municipal housing sector and in the subsidized housing sector. But because many people who had problems because of Corona, received a lot of subsidized and help from the federal civil service sector as well as from the city of Vienna, the number of people who really suffered for paying the rent was really low so it was not a problem and it still is not.

Viennese social housing system derives from the assumption that housing is a human right: how many people are still excluded by the system and why?

First of all, those who are not included earn too much. We have a number of criteria you have to fulfil to get one of the municipal or subsidized apartments. One is that you have to earn less than 340 010 € after tax for a single person, 500080 € for two people households

and 570050 € for a three-person household. The more people are in an apartment the highest is the amount of money you may earn. But these thresholds are really high: 2/3 of the Viennese population have access to this sector. We have other criteria to follow, you have to be an age of 18, to be a citizen of Austria or EU or you need an equivalent status, and you need to have lived in Vienna for at least 2 years, so if you come from abroad or from another federal province then you have to wait for 2 years to obtain the so-called Viennese *Wohnticket*.

How to deal with people who recently immigrated and thus do still not possess Austrian or European citizenship (apart from providing temporary accommodation)?

Refugees have to have a valid permit, to be living in Vienna for at least two years and earn less than the amount mentioned, then have the possibility to receive one of these apartments. If they do not, like anybody else, there are other social departments of the city of Vienna that can help them with first living projects and flats, but that is not in our responsibility, that is in the social department power.

What are the problems that may arise because of a mix of cultures in a social housing community?

As a matter of fact, more than 50% of the Viennese population is coming from abroad, for many years, so Vienna is quite used to living with this fact. The other thing is that more than 50% of the Viennese population lives in either municipal or subsidized apartments and these are spread all over the city, are not concentrated in only one area. So, we have a really good social mix even in the richest part of the centre, even in the villa areas there are lots of municipal housing apartments. There is no concentration of poor or rich in our city, no local area that you might find anywhere else because of the huge number of apartments and the fact that they are spread all over the city the problem is quite low, nevertheless there are problems in some municipal housing complexes but mainly not because of the different ways of living. Mainly is a conflict that

exists everywhere and is between young and old. For problems like these, we have about 150 social workers working for us with the clear job to take care of a peaceful neighbourhood.

What are the reasons, from an urban planning point of view, for the lack of connection between the districts Leopoldstadt and Brigittenau and the right riverbank of the Danube River?

This area developed really great on the other side, where you see the island in between, is now the biggest recreational zone in Vienna, where people walk around and bike et cetera. This is a pure green field. On the *Brigittenau* and *Leopoldstadt* side along the river, we have a railway, that is historically built and makes it quite difficult to develop a city to the river. There are a few projects already in process, but they just started. It will take another century to bring the city more to the Danube.

How much important are Handelskai and the railway Donauuferbahn for the city?

I am not an expert on transport I cannot tell you much about it.

Do you know what does it connect to and if it is a useful public transport mean?

It is a railway that connects the outskirts and the surrounding area of Vienna with the city centre. We also have there the haven, which is quite important for the logistic system of the city of Vienna. The haven is connected to the railway, so I think it is quite important for the transport system. I do not know whether it is possible to find other routes for the railway.

In 2003 there was a proposal from Christoph Chorherr (Grüne Partei), for a 24th district along the Danube Riverbank to “exploit the potentiality of Handelskai”: what do you think about this possibility?

That would be really great because on this side of the

river the access to the river itself is quite poor. You have always to cross the railway line. Is a great idea and as I mentioned there are some projects already in process but it will take time. It was just an idea but still not real.

But besides that, there are other projects that already exist and which I do not see on our map. Unfortunately, there is no website for subsidised buildings. I can try to find something by myself and send it to you.

What services should be implemented to improve the attractiveness of districts 2 and 20?

Both districts are already quite dense, there are not many more possibilities to develop housing in this area. There might be a few buildings which should be renovated or refurbished, there might be some places that could be developed in a better way for living together and using them for meeting points for people or creating playgrounds for children but both districts are really quite dense already and completely developed, so there are not so many possibilities.

What public spaces should be implemented to improve the attractiveness of districts 2 and 20?

There is a new metro line just in the construction process that will bring the second district even closer to the rest of Vienna as it was already done, and there is for instance the *Wallensteinplatz* which was recently redeveloped and is now a place where people can meet and chat with each other. So, there are a lot of small things you may implement but nothing really on the biggest scale because it is just finished as a matter of fact.

In this map municipal housing and subsidized housing are marked: do you think it can be considered complete or should other structures be added?

No, it is not complete are all. When you look at the picture of the city of Vienna, then you have the possibility to point out the municipal housing apartments. there you find much more building complex than shown on the map. For non-profit and limited-profit there are a few areas that I do not see here. *Norwestbahnhof* is an area in the discussion, it will change a lot in the upcoming years there is a lot of buildings and subsidized complexes that are under definition there.

INTERVIEW 4

Interviewees: D. G., Housing research

Association: MA 50 Magistratsabteilung 50 (municipal office)

What are the main features of the Viennese social housing system?

In Vienna, about 1 million housing unit and about 45% of the whole stock are so-called social housing. We have two different kinds of social housing, the municipal housing, housing estate owned by the city and managed by *Wiener Wohnen (Gemeindebau)*, some of them are really famous. In the 1920s the city started the first housing program and since then, Vienna continuously built social housing estates: until now 220000 (22%) flats are owned by Vienna.

The second part of the social housing stock is owned by limited-profit housing associations, called *gemeinnützige Bauträger*, or *Genossenschaften* (which is not a precise term). They also own about 220000 flats. These associations are not only operating in Vienna but in all of Austria, the legal basis is the Limited Profit Housing Act, a federal law that was established in 1948, very good law and important for social and affordable housing production in Vienna. Similar constructions as the Limited Profit Act were very common since after the Second World War in all Europe, maybe also in Italy, I know it was like that in Netherlands, Germany, but in many countries, in the 1990s the housing stock owned by limited-profit associations were sold or privatized. In Vienna they were never sold, so we have still 60-70 active housing associations. These housing associations are very important for the city because they have the know-how, the money, they have the land and resources necessary to build housing estates. Not every social housing unit has been built by the city on its own, but these associations are very important partners. The main feature of them is that the profits are limited: they more or less act like a private for-profit investor, having the same know-how, organizational structure and experts but in the end, the built housing

estate's profit is limited to 3.5%, half profit of for-profit providers. 3.5% in the calculation of housing estate correspond to 7% to for-profit providers: this makes a huge difference in the rent cost. In the limited-profit sector, it is about 5€/m² and in the private it is 10 €/m² or more, depending on the area. I think this is the most important feature of our system because without such a legal basis (the Limited Profit Housing Act), you have no no-profit providers and without these partners, there are two possibilities: build all social housing on your own, which is a huge effort for the city, or the second possibility is to ask for-profit housing providers, that build affordable housing estate, but they are profit-oriented and have to make a profit, thus you have to economically compensate the reduction of the rent price.

What are the features that could be exported to other European cities? Why?

I think it is not so easy, because the systems are very different. In Germany there is now a new coalition and trying to re-establish a new Limited Profit Housing Act, their system is similar to the Austrian one, so it is easier to establish a system of limited-profit housing, in Italy it is different, because the housing market is more privatized, a lot of people live in an owned home, and such system is really difficult to establish. In southern European countries with small rental sectors is more difficult to establish a social housing system.

What are the architectural projects for social housing that had greater success in Vienna? And why?

I think the focus on best practices on a specific project is not the right focus. The housing needs, what people expect, are so different. For example, in Vienna, we have now the *Baugruppen* cooperative housing community (*Gleis21, Wohnprojekt Wien, Bike and Rails*). These projects have high architecture quality, are more or less affordable, have a lot of common facilities, but are addressed to very specific target groups. I could not imagine living in such projects. What is important is the mix of projects and of different subsidized

schemes in only one area and I think you can see this in *Nordbahnhof*, *Sonnenviertel*, in *der Wiesen Süd*: there are different types of buildings, in terms of density, material, but the important thing is how the different building interact, how are situated, how the public space is designed, all the infrastructures present.

What was the impact of the Corona crisis on the social housing system in Vienna?

I think it is too early to talk about it. The corona crisis has so many impacts, and the one in social housing is smaller than the one in the labour market. Of course, the labour market, (the money you earn, and the attractiveness of a job) is also related to the housing sector. Now lots of architects think we need different floor plans, concepts, organizations of spaces: maybe in some housing estate and for some people it is necessary, but in all these discussions I miss the perspective of all people that cannot work from home. All the people that kept the country running during lockdown have no possibilities of home office: 40-50% in Austria work in such sectors. Then there are also a lot of people that still prefer to work in an office, not at home. I think of course it can be discussed but it is the wrong way to design a flat, thinking that in the next 20 years we will be in a lockdown for 2 months a year. I really think and hope it will be not like that.

Viennese social housing system derives from the assumption that housing is a human right: how many people are still excluded by the system and why?

We have sometimes strict regulations. What is important to enter social housing, is that you have to live in Vienna at the same address for 2 years: this is not easy for young people or refugees, that move every six months and have unstable residence situations. After these 2 years, I think the system is very well balanced: a social housing system has to serve the inhabitants, there are so many low-income families in the social housing estate. For students moving to Vienna for working is not accessible from the very beginning, then after 2 years, it is easier, even if not immediate. I think

it is also a question of fairness, not opening the social housing system for everybody from outside, forgetting that also in Vienna there are a lot of people with high housing needs.

How to deal with people who recently immigrated and thus do still not possess Austrian or European citizenship (apart from providing temporary accommodation)?

Of course, there are institutions and possibilities for them to find accommodations, usually temporary: in 2015 (refugees' crisis) Vienna tried to offer everybody adequate accommodations. I do not think that the social housing system is the right instrument to serve people in hardship. I think the social housing system is to serve people with stable long-term and affordable housing contracts, helping them to fulfil housing needs in a stable and affordable way. The idea of social housing is to be an instrument to fulfil the need for stability, but not to serve people in social difficulties with accommodations, because they have very different needs, they need from one day to another an accommodation, they cannot wait for long, thus you need different instruments for them.

What are the problems that may arise because of a mix of cultures in a social housing community?

If people live together door next door, of course, there are problems, I think it happens to everybody, it is not only a question of culture but also of age, of expectation on the others. Housing with no conflicts is not realistic. Of course, I think as long as the conflicts are below a certain threshold, they are normal, also in single-family house settlements. What I think is really important is that especially the idea of social housing is to serve vulnerable people not only economically weak, and of course, if you have many people in difficulties too close together, the problems may increase, because of the different expectations they have. I think it is important to allocate the flats in the social housing system being careful on the concentration of people maybe is not good for example to have too many refugees from very

different cultures close to Viennese old people who have totally different mindsets. The question is always about the quantity: if there is a good mix it works well, but if one group get too large, then problems arise.

What are the reasons, from an urban planning point of view, for the lack of connection between the districts Leopoldstadt and Brigittenau and the right riverbank of the Danube River?

There is a historical reason: the Danube was until the 1980s a very dangerous river, it was not attractive to live there and build housing estate or recreational facilities. Every 5 years circa there were very big floods, and the whole riverbank was flooded. Then in the 1980s, the *Donauinsel* was completed and since then there were no more dangerous floods in Vienna. Since then, this area became also more attractive for development, like the Millennium Tower. Of course, all the infrastructures, as the railway, are still there and it is not so easy to replace them, so there is also this physical barrier.

How much important are Handelskai and the railway Donauuferbahn for the city?

I don't know. I think that the railway perhaps in future will be important: there are plans to use this railway also for people transport, using railway tracks for the *S-Bahn* ring. About the street, it depends on how the individual use of cars will develop in the next years if e-mobility will have an impact also on the noise of traffic and *Handelskai* will become more silent, becoming a boulevard next to the river.

In 2003 there was a proposal from Christoph Chorherr (Grüne Partei), for a 24th district along the Danube Riverbank to "exploit the potentiality of Handelskai": what do you think about this possibility?

I do not know the proposal. I think the development along the river is something possible, the land is highly attractive. A lot of for-profit investors would be interested to buy and develop this land with some skyscrapers and then selling the apartments

for 10000 €/m². If you think about development in such an attractive area it is important that you keep in mind that any image you produce is an inspiration for investors that maybe would like to buy the land for very little money since now it is not attractive, and then with a development make it attractive and can be sold it for lots of money. I think for such an attractive area, so close to the Danube, maybe in the next 20 years will become very important for people from the districts, to have more open space, especially in summer: I think this riverbank as an open space is very important for them. A very sensitive development is important there. The first planning principle should be to maximize open space, green space, and pay attention to the buildings that could be there, services for children and the elderly. The question should be: to whom should we give the possibility to spend their lives in the riverside of the *Donau*?

What services should be implemented to improve the attractiveness of districts 2 and 20?

I think if you want to make the districts more attractive the riverbank is a very important aspect, with solutions to improve accessibility and bringing programs to the riverbank for people of the districts, this can be a good development to serve the neighbourhood, not the for profit developers.

What public spaces should be implemented to improve the attractiveness of districts 2 and 20?

I think the two districts, in terms of supply of open space, are not the worse: there are the *Prater* and *Augarten* in the 2nd district, very attractive public areas, the 20th is actually very densely built up so probably need more open space than the second.

In this map municipal housing and subsidized housing are marked: do you think it can be considered complete or should other structures be added?

For the limited-profit houses, there is no map, each association is like a private association, so it is very

difficult to mark them all. I think in the *Nordbahnhof* there are more subsidized buildings, but I cannot indicate the precise buildings. In Vienna, we have a district and sub-district as administrative and statistical units. Maybe you can find a percentage of municipal and subsidized housing for each unit.

INTERVIEW 5

Interviewee: A. M., project manager

Association: Gebietsbetreuung (municipal district office)

What are the main features of the Viennese social housing system?

It is an old tradition the one in Vienna, started about 100 years ago after the First World War. It is an advantage for Vienna because we have fewer social problems than in other cities. We have a social mixture in many parts of Vienna, so we do not have any segregation or slums, and Vienna has no areas where is too dangerous to go: people from abroad sometimes ask this. And I think this is an outcome of the social housing program, there was a time they stopped building community buildings, there were only social housing designed by associations, the city stopped building itself. But they re-started with this program some years ago. It is a very good program, having a roof over the head for people in difficulties and it helps a lot of them. It was also open to migrants some years ago and this also helped: in the private sector it can be very expensive, although Austria has a good Tenancy Law, which protect the tenants and for example rent are not easy to rise, in some sectors lot of house owner do not act after the legislation. A part of *Gebietsbetreuung* work is to give tenants law advice to people when they have problems with rents or homeowners.

What are the features that could be exported to other European cities? Why?

I think spreading social housing all over the city is a very good approach. Then you have the social mixture and no cluster or segregation of poorer people. It is a strategy started at the beginning of the social housing program and still maintained. For example, also in the 19th district, the “cottage district” we have social housing. We have this category in the housing zoning plan where you can make zones for social housing, and there is a percentage of land that has to be addressed

to social housing. And it also helps the people living in the social housing system, when they are not alone in one place, but middle- or high-class people can soften the problems, and maybe just help them for example.

What are the architectural projects for social housing that had greater success in Vienna? And why?

I think the old big projects are famous already because they are architecturally attractive: they started to build flats with toilets inside, with a heating system, which was much better than the older buildings (for example *Karl Marx-Hof*). We also have smaller projects for example in the 2nd district, *Lassalle-Hof*: they have this style of the beginning of the XX century (1920s-1930s). They have some infrastructures on the ground floors, like kindergarten, shops (sometimes not working now), but I think they are projects that were really working well at the time. About the more modern ones, in the ‘80s we have for example in *Leopoldstadt Handelskai 214*, which is very big, but the quality is not as high as the ones of the 1920s: they made balconies for everybody which is good. Thus, I think in the newer ones you see the architecture is more linear, standing one next to the other with the public space in between that sometimes is just grass or playgrounds for kids, but are not very well used, also for the noise coming from the street. The older instead are more closed to the street, with backyards or courtyard inside: this was a style of architecture, the one of ‘70s and ‘80s, but you see now the disadvantages, there is a lack of privacy and quietness

What was the impact of the Corona crisis on the social housing system in Vienna?

I do not really see an impact on the social housing system. They kept building up, maybe with some delay, because of the slower delivery of some materials, but the sites were closed for a very short time. In general, in the housing market, there is a trend of interest in urban gardening (up to +50% in Vienna), people are more closed, they detect the neighbourhood more than before the crisis. They also started to help each other

more, for example, younger people helping out the elderly with the shopping. On the housing market in general we see that those who can afford it has a higher interest in buying independent homes, maybe outside the city, also for the possibility of having a garden. Also, home-office started more and even stayed until now in some companies, even if it is possible to go to the office. In some big companies especially, there is a trend of taking advantage of home-office, and sometimes some workers are more comfortable staying home. More people stay a lot of time at home, even in social housing: they need more space, maybe for work. I think some aspects of Corona will have some impact in the future as well, maybe about co-working spaces, the single parents may need more supply of children-care in the surrounding. An aspect that we also realized is that people being more at home also had more conflict with the neighbourhood: people are more disturbed by surrounding noise.

Viennese social housing system derives from the assumption that housing is a human right: how many people are still excluded by the system and why?

People who are excluded did not stay in Vienna for a long enough time: I do not know the exact rules, but what I know is that they have to stay in Vienna for 2 years to be allowed in the program. Then there are relatively high-income limits and there are also projects for homeless people, without income so that they have the possibility to have houses through institutions. I think it should be possible that people do not live on the street: some of them maybe are not willing on entering any project and I think sometimes they are migrants from abroad with big social problems.

How to deal with people who recently immigrated and thus do still not possess Austrian or European citizenship (apart from providing temporary accommodation)?

The thing is that it is connected with the possibility to work: they need an income to pay the rent. This is the main turning point: when they can work, then they

can afford a flat. But they cannot work here, so how can they afford housing? If someone does not have an EU or Austrian passport there are *Integrationshaus* for those people. I think in general the main problem is that they do not have a job.

And are there other associations trying to give them accommodations?

Yes, there are some like Caritas, *Hilfswerk*, *Integrationshaus*. I think for sure they have a limit of space sometimes, but they really try to help the most they can. They search for homeless people and then invite people to their organization. I think in other cities there are many more people living on the street.

What are the problems that may arise because of a mix of cultures in a social housing community?

When people live together and know each other, social programs strengthen the neighbourhood. Because of cultural mixture people that move in then through the different social program can talk to each other, know the neighbourhood. Sometimes there are some complaints about the kitchen when people cook unusual food for example, but I think when you bring people together and they have the possibility to talk to each other, there is no problem in multicultural reality. You have some political system and parties that force this kind of enemy attitude against culture, and I think working against it, we can handle it.

What are the reasons, from an urban planning point of view, for the lack of connection between the districts Leopoldstadt and Brigittenau and the right riverbank of the Danube River?

I think it is like that because Vienna had a flooding problem of the Danube for a lot of time. We still have elderly in the 2nd district they can remember when the water of the *Donau* was coming inside the city, until they made this big regulation and built up the *Donauinsel* and the New Danube on the other side, eliminating the problem. There was for a lot of time a

fear of water: only the newer buildings are now closer to the waterfront. The traffic system and the railway are a barrier to access the water. First, in the last years they started to understand it could be an important area, they started to build up new bridges for pedestrians. Now there are projects like Marina Tower, really closed to water and they also made platforms to walk on the water, so I think it was also a matter of fear of water.

How much important are Handelskai and the railway Donauuferbahn for the city?

They are used quite a lot. But on the other side of the neighbourhood, there is a high-speed motorway: *Handelskai* has more local importance now if they want to go to the motorway. I think it is more important from the two districts side. Maybe the traffic could be reduced or more accessible to pedestrians. The railway is a cargo train, but it is important. There is a very big discussion when they built the Marina Tower, there was a bridge over the rail. If the train has problems, there is the need for access from other trains to solve the problems. So, there is no possibility to make a tunnel. If you find a way to overbuild this area, then would be a good thing for the connection of this riverside with the city.

In 2003 there was a proposal from Christoph Chorherr (Grüne Partei), for a 24th district along the Danube Riverbank to “exploit the potentiality of Handelskai”: what do you think about this possibility?

In some ways it has been developed, there have been developments there, but making it a new district would be administratively problematic and would be better to connect it with the built-up area and not like an island of a new district. What we do also in our work is try to connect the built-up area with new developments, not to let sort of islands rise. I think it was not a really thought up to the detailed project. Vienna needs housing but we also have big development in those districts. I think we have enough spaces for new houses already to have a supplier for housing to afford this demand which is increasing. Vienna did not grow that much in

the last 2 years because of the pandemic and for the restrictive migration policy, so maybe it will increase more after the pandemic and after a more openness of the political system, but still, we have enough space for new constructions.

What services should be implemented to improve the attractiveness of districts 2 and 20?

There are lots of services, maybe there could be more cultural services, like an old water tower, we have in *Norrbahnviertel* an old hall used for cultural projects, that lot of people used and found a very good infrastructure. This could be done also in the 20th district. What we often hear is that people wish for some more swimming halls: we have some but when we make participation project indoor swimming is something that always comes up.

What public spaces should be implemented to improve the attractiveness of districts 2 and 20?

We have a lot of free and open space. There will be parks inside the two developments of *Nordbahnhof* and *Nordwestbahnhof*. I think the problem is to have the older quarter with public spaces more attractive, to reduce urban heat island, to get trees in the streets, to have more green spaces in the existing part of the city. We need to make them attractive instead of building new ones. Sometimes building blocks are really big and there is the necessity of crossing them in a more rapid way for pedestrians.

In this map municipal housing and subsidized housing are marked: do you think it can be considered complete or should other structures be added?

I think you should ask at *Wohnfond Wien*, and also to MA 50. They give out the subsidies so maybe they have some information. I do not have this information. We have all the information from *Norrbahnviertel*, you can find the information on our website page.

INTERVIEW 6

Interviewee: C. R., research fellow and professor at Wien Universität

Association: Wien Universität

What are the main features of the Viennese social housing system?

The main point is that we have differentiated and elaborated subsidized schemes which means there is a different form of subsidies for housing construction and in the field of what we call social housing or *Gemeinnützigkeit*, constructors also play the role of social landlords. Then we also have some other elements, Vienna has not only social housing but also municipal housing, which is to a very low degree rebuilt again in a sense of social housing. Besides the subsidise schemes for new constructions, we have a huge stock of municipal housing that need to be organized, managed and maintained: that is why the city of Vienna is defining itself as one of the biggest management housing systems. Then there are other *Widmung Kategorie* which means that if the land is defined for new construction a certain part has to be social housing. So, I would say the main elements are the subsidized system, the huge stock of municipal housing beside the social housing and the very active law of the city in organizing land, the framework for construction and maintenance housing for not so wealthy people.

What features could be exported to other European cities? Why?

It is extremely complicated: the main point is that every city has specific traditions in dealing with the question of affordable housing, especially in western Europe, so it is quite difficult to say “ok, this is a very good feature and we have to transfer it to other cities”. The Viennese system works well because we have these huge stocks of social and municipal housing: we have nearly the 50% of housing are in the scheme of social apartments. This means that the

force of the market is to a certain degree limited. How to transfer this to other cities is very different. What other cities can learn is that Vienna has, for 30 years, an important social stock, with very relevant criteria for defining new constructions, also related to urban renewal. For example, the *Gestaltungsbeirat* and the *Bauträgerswettbewerbe*: these are unique because then we have quality criteria, they are not very restrictive in the sense of defining what should be built but they exist. We have architecture, economics, ecological, social standard. It is not clear what this “sustainability” means, but the fact that there is as a criterion, I think is very important. I would say it is something very unique also in the framework of the competition where the landlords and architects are together and develop with social scientists a project. This is something that could be transferred to other cities. In all cities the question is how to define quality, here you do not only have criteria, but also a mechanism to guarantee that the criteria are fulfilled. But the whole system cannot be transferred.

The other aspect that could and has to be transferred is the urban regeneration program: the city defines criteria and gives subsidies to people, even households, to be involved in the renovation, and this is very successful, we have an important increase of standards without pushing away people living there.

What are the architectural projects for social housing that had greater success in Vienna? And why?

I would say what is interesting in Vienna is that it developed in last 20 years you need some quality criteria, but the architect chooses only one among these, there are certain criteria to fulfil it, but the main idea is that the building itself has to refer to these 4 criteria. This leads to a very interesting development in the sense that architectural quality and diversification of architectural language is quite unique, compared to other cities. For example, if you compare the Vienna subsidized housing in Vienna with the ones of German cities, we have a huge diversity of architectural languages. I think it is difficult to think an only project is unique, the whole is interesting: there are several

buildings and are different among each other. The main problem is that this does not lead to a city built in the sense that it is more a sum of buildings: the city decided to do some *Stadtentwicklung*, quarter developments, and then you have these really strange combinations of a more or less dense neighbourhood, with a diversity of architectural features and languages and a kind of locality, a local identity of the building. This is something I do not know whether is positive. So, on one end there is a very wide diversification of architectural elements, and at the same time very heterogeneous urban “islands” which is not related to city buildings, that try to connect to the neighbourhood. For example, *Sonnwendviertel*, the old and new is absolutely not interconnected and will not be beside the fact that maybe there will be gentrification (but I don't know because there are huge municipal houses with very poor population): so, you have an island, but it is an island, I would say in Vienna the project is how architecture is connected with city development and district development as a whole. So, I cannot say “this building is the best one”, I emphasise a more general aspect.

What was the impact of the Corona crisis on the social housing system in Vienna?

It was more at an individual level, at the household level, that people had to struggle with very difficult conditions, as everywhere in the world, of small flats, high density, and multifunctional use of home, especially in municipal housing and old stock where low income or immigrant people are living. I would not say the system itself was impacted but it was more in the everyday life of people. Generally, like in many other cities, wealthier people tried to get out of the city, and find something in the periphery, with green areas. So, to a certain degree, the gap between wealthier and poorer is increasing, but this is not only referring to social housing. I do not think there was a direct effect, we will maybe see it in the next years.

Viennese social housing system derives from the assumption that housing is a human right: how many

people are still excluded by the system and why?

This is the discourse of propaganda of the city of Vienna, the fact that housing is a human right is a slogan. The Viennese approach is affordable housing for everybody: this comes not so much from the 1920s Red Vienna because it was more about housing for the labour class, but from the after-war period, that had the consensus that social housing is not for the poorest, but for the working class, for people that are employed. And Vienna government since 1950 had the policy speaking about social city planning (*Soziale Stadtplanung*), which was a key feature already in the 1950s. Looking at this background we can say that we had two tendencies: a huge part of social houses addressed to wealthier people, with stable employment and income. At the same time, more and more structural problems were raised in our economy: immigrants were a cheap labour force, that maybe did not have enough money to enter social housing or had been excluded due to the fact that social housing was only for Austrian citizens. More and more people are in difficulties entering social housing. The situation became more and more important in the 1980s and 1990s: the differentiation between social housing and municipal housing grew. The municipal stock became the stock where the city of Vienna can more easily organize homes for people in economic difficulties, but there are criteria of access, for example, you have to register the *Hauptwohnsitz* (main residence) in Vienna for 2 years if you non-European you have to be in Vienna for 5 years in the same place. We have more and more people, often in huge need of housing, that have problems accessing social housing: these are for example immigrants from third-country nations, young people coming to Vienna, students, or young people leaving home. It is very difficult for people that do not have a lot of money because the category of social housing is not a residual category. Social housing is for people that are economically integrated. It is difficult to access for people that are in urgent need because of a life crisis: for example, divorces. If one of the partners have to leave, the list is very long, and they cannot immediately enter from one day to the other in social housing. The group of people more and more in

urgent need is increasing and the criteria of access are becoming more complex and the control for people over the choice whether living in social housing is decreasing. The problem is poor people, immigrants, people coming from other parts of Austria, in lifetime crisis (also retirement can be accounted for). But at the same time, if social housing was only for these people, it would not be in the sense and ideology of municipal housing, which is affordable housing for everyone. The situation is quite complex and the part of housing stock where the government can decide who can enter and who cannot is the way it tries to regulate this situation. But then there are also those with privileges: if you are living in Vienna, even as a young family, it is easy to enter the system.

How to deal with people who recently immigrated and thus do still not possess Austrian or European citizenship (apart from providing temporary accommodation)?

It is a complicated situation. There are two traditional ways to deal with it. One is the private rental market: part of it is in a very bad standard and construction situations, thus people can easily find renting contracts not to excessively expensive. Nevertheless, this section of the private rental market is diminishing because of refurbishing -which is the good side. On the other hand, social housing is difficult to enter because of the criteria, so especially for third countries people, there is the need to organize a two-year stay in Vienna, as registered citizens and this create a sub-market.

The second way (existing in other European countries) is to have a residual social part: a section of the social housing stock is for very poor people. This was not an option in Vienna because the city counteracted for a lot of time the risk of segregation. It is thus very important to know that until 2006 nationality has been a criterion to enter the system. At that time because of this nationalization, only 15-20% were non-Austrian citizens, thus the principal household member was naturalized, and other parts were not. It was only possible to get a contract being an Austrian citizen. Today up to 50-60% of households are non-Austrian,

especially from third-world countries. The diversity is enormous, the policy of municipal and social housing should not foster segregation, but at the same time, it became so difficult to enter the housing market for people with fewer resources and weakest strata, that municipal housing gives them a chance to enter: this is a dilemma, nowadays. We can observe also another phenomenon, a second generation is evolving: there we can observe the traditional social ladder climbing, for example, those whose parents have been renting very bad apartments now can access subsidized housing.

What are the problems that may arise because of a mix of cultures in a social housing community?

The mixing has different features: the landlords and associations select people who enter, but the main mixing feature in new constructions is that different forms of property relations are coming together: private properties, classical social housing, different schemes. This is the idea in general: in a new neighbourhood we have different landlords with different financial schemes, and this creates a social mixture. The fact that they live in a unique building, the idea that there is a kind of redistribution is something that people do not know.

Concerning the cultural mix, I do not think it is a problem nowadays. I think there was a certain period when if housing estate inhabitants were living there for 50 years in a relatively continuous situation, entering and growing old together, then changes created tensions, (young people with immigrant background). Vienna was for 50 years in the edge of Europe, so many developments that we observed in Milan, Paris, London, Amsterdam, did not take place. It was 60 km from eastern Europe, in a demographic and economic decline. Since the 1980s and in the 1990s there was a change, also due to huge immigration, and the tension produced was not only produced by immigrants but also by the fact that Vienna had been for a lot of time in decline. Thus, the people who lived in these 30-40 years of this stable situation of continuity, now see change and dynamism. We have no very important

segregation until today, it is on a very small scale.

What are the reasons, from an urban planning point of view, of the lack of connection between the districts Leopoldstadt and Brigittenau and the right riverbank of the Danube River?

I think this has a long tradition: the Danube was never integrated in the city. Today it is, thanks to *Donauinsel* and new huge development on the other side, which allowed its “re-centring”. The riversides never played an important role. On side of the 21st and 22nd districts, it was not urbanized and in danger of flooding. Only after the construction of *Donauinsel*, it became urbanized. On the other side, it is an industrial area: you have the railway, very old, connecting industrialized sites of Vienna, from the port to the western part. The first important urbanization in new terms is the *Vorgartenstrasse*: there is urbanization from the 1900s and it is based on the land making, which took place before. In the 1970s a huge building in *Handelskai* eastern form *Mexicoplatz* tried to urbanize and understand in a modern way this area. But there has never been a recreational area. The buildings from the 1970s turn towards the inner city, less to the Danube. The Danube became relevant as a mark of the city and integrated into the city only in the last 25 years. I would say that’s why today, in city planning, the Danube itself should become important or be integrated.

Then there are the two districts: *Brigittenau* is a working-class district with a very important industrial

production and then *Leopoldstadt* is the Jewish district, with an immigrant population, in some way isolated from other parts of the city. The part of *Leopoldstadt* closer to the city centre is the Jewish living area, but if you take for example *Stubenviertel* and the part oriented to the Danube, they had been related to the most important train stations, the *Nordbahnhof* and *Norhwestbahnhof*. This is a very fragmented area, which is now coming more together thanks to new developments. The 20th district really had been a close district, very poor and disconnected from the city.

How much important are Handelskai and the railway Donauuferbahn for the city?

Handelskai is still an important traffic axis, for cars, I don’t know about the relevance of the railway, but the street is important. And also contested. Today the private traffic is more and more contested. Especially where there are green areas, recreational areas, the river, considered more valuable for people. What is relevant for the train is the *Schnellbahn*, relevant for northern parts of the city, but not for industrial transport.

In 2003 there was a proposal from Christoph Chorherr (Grüne Partei), for a 24th district along the Danube Riverbank to “exploit the potentiality of Handelskai”: what do you think about this possibility?

I can’t remember the project. In general, I can say, this is an area of huge potential for the city: Vienna has lots of potential in urban development, this is a unique situation because in other cities there is no space for new developments. The Danube development, putting together all the very long area, could be developed as something which today is fashionable, like a riverside development, but made in a good way, not investing too much into luxury features. We should of course avoid those types of developments. Hiding the railway is not a problem, could be easily integrated into urban scenery, traffic could be reorganized, there are huge places, the shipping could use also for more relevant transport. It is a fantastic area; it should be a focus.

And for cities, today riverside development is really attractive. Many people living there could enjoy a new development. I think Chorherr's proposal was part of the city development plan, but a lot of parts were not developed. If this project is done, it should be done in the entire axis.

know who the owner of the housing is.

What services should be implemented to improve the attractiveness of districts 2 and 20?

These two districts are well served by public transport. 15 years ago, we did a study in the 20th district and the inner part was facing the problem of peripheralization, but I recently revisited it, and this has stopped thanks to city development. The main problem is always public traffic.

What public spaces should be implemented to improve the attractiveness of districts 2 and 20?

The Danube riverside. What is very important, as it is on the other side of the river, you need public accessible green space. If I did this kind of planning, I would organize the whole riverside with free, accessible, public spaces, not necessarily all organized with many features, it is enough to make the river accessible. This riverside should not be constructed and commercialized.

In this map municipal housing and subsidized housing are marked: do you think it can be considered complete or should other structures be added?

I would say in this area you have mainly municipal housing as on your map. I think there are some but not so many non-profit structures. I can now check the municipal housing; it seems quite complete. I think next to *Mexicoplatz* between *Wehlstraße* and *Engerthstraße* there is a municipal housing structure. Look at the *Mobilerstadtplan*, for controlling the municipal housing. But for the non-profit, I don't know whether there is a map. But you can contact the *Gebietsbetreuung*, there is Andrea Mann, she knows very well the area. Maybe they have the information. It is a bit complicated to

INTERVIEW 7

Interviewee: S.K., project manager

Association: Schwarzatal (no-profit association)

What are the main features of the Viennese social housing system?

My company is *gemeinnützige Genossenschaft*, meaning that we are a company focused on producing and maintaining social projects. We have a huge amount of housing built for ages and these buildings are bringing us some money, but being a no-profit organization, we have to re-invest all the money on a new project: it is circular money exchange. The main point is that we completely focus on social housing. Vienna has a really well-developed subsidy program; we get very good subsidies from Vienna. We have very good quality projects, investing our money from the existing projects and the one coming from Vienna city. It is like a kind of a popular credit, with very advantageous conditions, and this brings to really good rent prices for the inhabitants. One other feature is that to get this money, the project presented needs to have some quality of economic, ecological, architectural and social sustainability. The commission judges the quality of the projects to give the subsidy: you need to reach all four criteria.

What are the features that could be exported to other European cities?

I think the supporting system for social housing is really excellent because it is possible to develop really good projects, reaching good quality for all the four criteria. What is special in Vienna is that we need to give really good quality and at the same time we have to be really concurrent with the rent. Without subsidies would be not really easy. Without all the system of competitions, it would not be possible, associations would not care about the cheap rents. Thus, I think that the system of *Bauträgerwettbewerbe* could be exported because it is the only way to maintain high-quality projects and at the same time affordable rents.

What are the architectural projects for social housing that had greater success in Vienna? And why?

The whole *Seestadt Aspern* is really one of the best projects in Vienna. Also, all the empty areas (like the railway) developments, are strategically good positioned in the city. The important feature is to have a good mixture of functions. They have various and good architecture projects and very good public space outside. It is important to have a focus on the whole area, we do not have to design “sleeping cities” with only housing, but we need very different types of function, for example on the ground floor, to make the streets attractive, with shops, services, offices. Concerning the flats, we have this *Sozialesnachhaltigkeit* (social sustainability), which means we have to develop thematic housing, with a specific program, concerning also the life together with other people, thinking about what people like doing together, what connects them.

What was the impact of the Corona crisis on the social housing system in Vienna?

The impact was hard because the social housing with this *Sozialesnachhaltigkeit* we looked for years for having this *Gemeinschaftsräume* (common rooms), other spaces in the buildings for people living there and then with the pandemic we had to close them. It then turned out that having the possibility of socializing is really important also inside the house: we have to focus much more on common spaces. I think especially in Vienna it will change also the way of designing: for example, how to put a family in a small and affordable flat, still maintaining privacy? Flats are not only the place where we live and watch TV, but they should offer more than that.

Viennese social housing system derives from the assumption that housing is a human right: how many people are still excluded by the system and why?

I think in Vienna the system is really democratic: if you want to enter a social housing apartment you have to meet some criteria, and I think these are really good. You need to have your own money, but there are so

many subsidies, and the first step to reach is not that high, but if you have difficulties reaching it there are other types of subsidies you can receive. Of course, it is impossible to reach every person.

How to deal with people who recently immigrated and thus do still not possess Austrian or European citizenship (apart from providing temporary accommodation)?

I think we still do not have a clear answer, the problem is relatively new. The movement of all these immigrants exist for circa 5 years: it is not possible to change the system that quickly. But there are other institutions for that, like *Volkshilfe*. And we have them as project partners meaning that the refugee does not get the flat directly, but the association rents them and then distributes them among those who need it. This is not even so new as an initiative, but now of course they have more requests than before: there is then a method to deal with the problem, we cannot say the system is completely closed. Then the question is if that is enough if there are enough places from these associations.

What are the problems that may arise because of a mix of cultures in a social housing community?

This is a difficult question; I think it depends on the open-mindedness of people. It is not easy to have people all agreeing and getting along. For me, social housing is the best place where to actually solve the problems that may exist. In fact, you have a very big difference between the “first step” and the “last step” of the scale of people that can enter inside the social housing. So, you can reach both people earning good money and those who are poorer and put them together. Thanks to this *Sozialesnachhaltigkeit* sociologists who are working with us, really try to deal with the people, understanding their difficulties and differences. We are very focused on that point, it is not ignored, the fact that in Vienna there are people from really everywhere.

What are the reasons, from an urban planning point

of view, for the lack of connection between the districts Leopoldstadt and Brigittenau and the right riverbank of the Danube River?

I wonder the same question very often: I was not born in Vienna and I think that is a very attractive place, the Danube is really nice for me, lots of cities do not have the possibility of enjoying the water. It is not only the Danube River to be detached but also the *Donaukanal*, between the first and second district for example. Also the *Donaukanal* is a very attractive place, but it is actually exploited only for around 10 years. Thanks also to Millennium City for example. I think there is not a tradition of building on the river: it was before far away from the city, the city grew around the water ignoring it in a way. The river was dangerous before and people used not to build it, people are just realizing the attractiveness of the place now. They are starting now to develop something.

How much important are Handelskai and the railway Donauuferbahn for the city?

Parallel to *Handelskai*, on the other side of the river, there is the motorway A23 so, I do not think it is so important, it has potential to be something else than only a traffic area, it could be developed in another way. I do not know much about the railway, it is probably only used for logistic transport, but I am not sure.

In 2003 there was a proposal from Christoph Chorherr (Grüne Partei), for a 24th district along the Danube Riverbank to “exploit the potentiality of Handelskai”: what do you think about this possibility?

Sounds to me like a very good idea to develop this area. It is not easy, but I think there is a really huge potential. The problems are that lot of money are necessary, and then a project has to be well connected to the city: you cannot build something new that does not have a connection with the rest of Vienna. For example, it would be important to wonder what it does mean for other districts, for example, the 18th or the 22nd, to develop something in districts 2nd and 20th. The point

is that it has to be really attractive for all the districts because it is strategically really expensive, thus it has to become a real attraction despite the distance from other areas of the city.

What services should be implemented to improve the attractiveness of districts 2 and 20?

I think they have really good services. In the second district, there is the *Nordbahnhof* under development and will be very good. And in the 20th district, there are some areas under development too. I think the river is the key: what can we do to attract people to the waterside. I do not think in general Vienna needs something, but the only issue is to connect the various areas: for example, I know that some people complain about the lack of connection also with the other side of the river, there are only two pedestrian bridges.

What public spaces should be implemented to improve the attractiveness of districts 2 and 20?

Again, I think would be good to implement public spaces along the river, even if on the other side there is the *Donauinsel*, it is important also to wonder how much we want artificial public space and how much live them naturally like it is in the *Donauinsel* itself for example.

In this map municipal housing and subsidized housing are marked: do you think it can be considered complete or should other structures be added?

I think there should be more subsidized like *Aignerstrasse*, *Vorgartenstrasse*, also around *Brigittenauerbrücke*. You should ask *Gebietsbetreuung*, they should know it. It is very hard to know which are the single buildings. Have you asked *Bezirksvorstellung*? Or also to MA50 and IBA.

INTERVIEW 8

Interviewee: G. K., housing department

Association: Österreichischer Verband Gemeinnütziger Bauvereinigungen (no-profit umbrella association)

What are the main features of the Viennese social housing system?

When we talk about social housing we speak about municipal housing and the housing associations. The majority of people live in rented houses, and besides renting stock there is ownership. The biggest rental sector is the private, I think, and then there are housing associations, covering 20% of all households, and another 20% of municipal housing. The histories of the two sectors are really different, the municipal housing has a long history dating back to the period of 1920s when the municipality started building big municipal housing schemes, but they actually did not build much for the last 20 years, because they were busy at mainly providing fundings for housing associations. In terms of housing associations, the main point is that it is oriented to a broad range of income groups and provide good quality affordable housing based on cost-rent. The idea is that these organizations are only charging the cost that involves the construction, finance and maintenance of buildings in long term, in addition, they receive funding in terms of loans from the city. Within housing associations, there are different actors. In Vienna there are around 50 organizations, varying for their size and importance, the main idea is that they are independent, and they can take independent decisions on what they are constructing, and they are also in competition with private developers. So, they are non-state housing, they are part of the third sector, they are non-profit and not owned by the city council directly.

What are the features that could be exported to other European cities? Why?

We have a lot of requests about how the system works and a lot of cities are contacting us because there are big affordability crises, especially in Europe.

There was recently a study conducted by the Irish Housing Finance Agency into cost-rental housing. They compared the Austrian rental sector and the Danish housing association sector, which are both cost-rental. For example, in England the homes they provide are income-based: if you have a low income, then the rent costs are low. In the cost-based rental system, as the Austrian one, as an organization you have secure income streams which means you cannot charge more than what you need to build and maintain a building, but not even less because it means that then you will be not financially viable. Thinking about having a system where you charge the costs, so you have long term financial viability, but not even profit, but all the surpluses stay in the system. Copy-paste policy cannot and should not happen. Austrian system does not generate profit but only a few benefits, it is a system where a broad range of people can benefit from stability. Many countries, like Germany, have a similar system, cost-based, but in Austria, there is also the fact that these houses, once built, always stay (and stayed in the past) affordable without switching back to private rent apartments. I think this is important: whenever you invest in something it has long-term implications and having a housing stock with clear governance, really helps in the long term to build a considerable housing stock, which is now really valuable. It comes to providing affordable housing and the gap between market price housing cost rental housing is growingly increasing. Twenty years ago, the price difference between housing associations and market-rental homes would not be so big, but today because of what is happening in all the real estate sectors, this gap has increased, especially in new homes. What is really paying off now is that especially in the last 30-40 years housing associations built up a housing stock for affordable housing, and most importantly they continue now. That is something not happening in many other cities: they stopped for decades to invest in new affordable housing; because of the system in place, Vienna with internal re-investment, and with the increase in housing stock in the last decades helped the citizens. Another useful policy is to think about the quality of homes and neighbourhoods, one of the big

drivers in housing associations in the 70s, 80s, 90s was to increase the quality of housing because there was not a big shortage of homes, but they kept building high-quality housing. This actually influenced the market sector that had to increase the general quality of housing. The system also allows maintaining the building with the funds. There is a separate circle of financing for maintenance: when a tenant moves to a new building, a small part of the rent goes into a fund that is used in a renovation after 10/15 years.

What are the architectural projects for social housing that had greater success in Vienna? And why?

Because of the interlinks between housing associations, the city council and all the different policies, there is the tendency to think about housing and infrastructures together, built on locations accessible in terms of public transport. For example, *Seestadt Aspern* is a bit far outside for Viennese standards, even if it is actually half an hour from the city centre and they have built the metro there before people moved in. It is really successful not only for the housing you find there but also for their quality, streets are more accessible for kids, there is an emphasis on the integrated public space. And it is still ongoing, I think about half of the whole project has been completed now, but is really successful. There are also a lot of historical projects. If you look at the buildings, there are signs on them indicating if they are part of the municipal housing: the historic stock is well integrated into the housing stock inside the city, people might not even know they are living in historical social housing. Until 20-30 years ago the lower quality rents in private stock were even cheaper than the ones of social housing, because of their poor quality, which was not even comparable to social housing's one.

I think another scheme is worth mentioning is *Sonnwendviertel*: this settlement is partly a private development partly from housing associations, and it is quite innovative, there are all the common rooms and spaces they have in the complex, for example in a project they have a swimming pool, also open for outsiders, rooftop gardens, cinema, a little theatre,

used also as a common room. There is a lot of emphasis on the shared and communal areas. Also outdoors, there are a lot of playgrounds. The average m² is about 10 m² bigger than the private rental sector. People can afford to live also in houses more adequate to their living standards, not squeezed in tiny apartments, as it happens in many other cities at the moment, where people cannot afford any bigger flats.

What was the impact of the Corona crisis on the social housing system in Vienna?

In all the construction industry in the first lockdown, there was a big concern that the construction would not continue and that there would be delays: because of agreement between the construction industry and government due to safety standards, the construction paused only for 2-3 weeks. Thus, the impact was not that big. The biggest impact on the planning system was that meetings could not take place sometimes. We'll maybe see the impact in a few years. We thought the rent area would be a bigger issue but was not actually a big concern: in March and April, we'll see if the rents will be increased. The biggest problem is the home supply chain in the construction industry, and the labour mobility in the construction industry: there were also some cost rises, in materials cost. Our members while building a house had a maximum rent where they have to fit everything into, also construction cost and the issue is that because of these rises, some members, said they could not fit the whole project in the cost predicted. I think most consequences will be visible in the future.

And are there many issues raised by people living in social housing?

We did not have a lot of contact with the inhabitants, but one of the main concerns, which is the issue of rents, regarded both for tenants and organizations because they basically have to make everything work. There were lots of housing associations and providers making agreements, mostly individual, to help the tenants. There was national legislation on the topic, to

avoid eviction during the pandemic, so members made agreements with who was struggling to pay. People have the capacity to maneuver and cope with problems they face. But I think that the consequences, as it happens all the crisis, will be visible in some years.

Viennese social housing system derives from the assumption that housing is a human right: how many people are still excluded by the system and why?

I cannot give an exact number, but there is definitely an ongoing issue with homelessness, even hidden homelessness. I think a lot of issues arrested by the possibility of a large sector of people living in affordable houses, are not as evident as in other cities. But for more immediate problems arising, like people not being able to pay the bills and being evicted, there is program “housing first”, based on the principle that people are given a home unconditionally. Specifically in our sector, one of the barriers is the tenant equity contribution: a tenant when moving in housing associations home have to pay a contribution (which is not fixed, can vary from 20 €/m² up to 300-400 €/m²) that you get back when you move out. There are actually homes available for tenants not having these funds available: it is in some way acting as a barrier. There is a program in place funded by the central government, which takes place in all of Austria to help them with tenants’ contributions. This action has taken place especially because of Corona. It is difficult to say who is exactly excluded. But we don’t see a big difference in relation to income group from the different renting stocks, there is definitely a percentage of people who is struggling regardless of the tenancy they are living in.

How to deal with people who recently immigrated and thus do still not possess Austrian or European citizenship (apart from providing temporary accommodation)?

If you are an Austrian citizen, EU citizen or have a residence in Austria, basically you cannot be discriminated. For municipal housing, there is a clause saying you have to have lived in Vienna for at least two years. For housing

associations, the allocation works a bit differently: if they were built with the loan from the city council, then you have about half of the homes allocated by the city council, the other half by the associations themselves. The private rental sector is the first tenure and probably the most easily accessible tenure because you do not have any waiting list or additional requirement, maybe in the past was easier to find affordable rent in the private sector, now since the housing association is the only offering affordable housing, a lot of demands are focused on housing associations home. But also inside associations home you have broad differences: there are newly constructed buildings generally a bit more expensive than the older housing stock, thus there is already a difference in income group living in different housing inside the associations stock and some of the stock when is relet, then it would be for example either relet through city council and the other half is relocated by the associations themselves, so most of them advertise the flats in their webpages, like any other private housing sector. You also have to know a few basics, to enter the system, you have to know that you should pay the contribution at the beginning of the tenancy, how everything works. You have to know how to navigate the different tenure and how it works, I think it is something the people struggle a bit as just arrived.

What are the problems that may arise because of a mix of cultures in a social housing community?

The latest statistics show that the average population in a housing association are quite reflective of the average population of Vienna. I do not think there are some particular issues in those housings. Maybe in municipal housing stock where there is sometimes a majority of low-income groups, there might be issues around stigmas. Maybe since people have challenges already in their lives, living in a big housing complex also causes other types of challenges inside the housing. I think there are not in general particular issues in the social housing stock, but I think it is quite reflective of any other neighbourhood in Vienna. Traditionally in subsidized housing, the medium-income group,

compared to municipal housing, is higher, but that's a special case in Vienna since in other regions there is no municipal housing stock. I can see the dynamics of social challenges of people being in poverty, but in terms of living together, it is important to have mixed housing developments in terms of income groups, people's background and education. But that goes in both directions: having a lot of low-income households in the same housing complex would not be a good idea. On the other hand, it is not good having an increase in luxury development with a very homogeneous population. Social mixing is almost a default character, it is in the nature of social housing to bring together different types of income and social groups.

What are the reasons, from an urban planning point of view, for the lack of connection between the districts Leopoldstadt and Brigittenau and the right riverbank of the Danube River?

I just know that in these neighbourhoods with the *Norbahnviertel* they made better connections for pedestrians also to connect with the river. But honestly, I do not know, it is a quite specific question. I know the 20th district a little bit in terms of social structure, but I am not familiar with the current project plans. More generally I can say that most of the new developments, the second districts with the *Nordbahnviertel* and in the future also the *Nordwestbahnviertel*, are peculiar for their centrality: usually, there are more developments in the outskirts, where there is more land, it is easier to build. But specifically in terms of the connection of the two districts with the river, I cannot answer I am sorry.

How much important are Handelskai and the railway Donauuferbahn for the city?

I think, again I am not sure I can tell you much about this, I have lived in London for a long and it is only in the last 2 or 3 years that I am back. I do not know much about the traffic situation in that part of Vienna. I know *Handelskai* is an area quite busy with traffic, but I cannot say more.

In 2003 there was a proposal from Christoph Chorherr (Grüne Partei), for a 24th district along the Danube Riverbank to “exploit the potentiality of Handelskai”: what do you think about this possibility?

I roughly know the area and I do not know the proposal from Christoph Chorherr, it is hard for me to answer. I cannot tell you anything specific about that.

Do you think would be well-accepted by people to have new public spaces and maybe some construction on the river?

The *Donauinsel* is highly popular, so probably people from this part of Vienna would spend more time in the proximity of the river, but I prefer not to say any uninformed opinion.

What services should be implemented to improve the attractiveness of districts 2 and 20?

The second district is now also better connected, is a very central district. I lived there for a couple of years. It is very dense, the metro has been extended. The 20th district apart from the U6 is not as well connected as the 2nd. I can see as a general issue that there is a lot of unused potential in those densely populated districts: a solution could be to make use of streets in a better way. For example, there are lots of cars parked around. I am a big supporter of the idea that public spaces could be used a lot better than being occupied by cars, there is a lot of discussion going on in Vienna, not only applied to 2 and 20 districts. Knowing that they are quite dense and central, there is also a historical housing stock situation, overcrowded and not always in good conditions, would be better to have well-thought public spaces and green spaces to use. But it is something I would say for the whole of Vienna actually.

What public spaces should be implemented to improve the attractiveness of districts 2 and 20?

I read a book by Eric Klinenberg about social infrastructure: I think it is a concept I quite like. I

mainly mean having public institutions, like libraries, where people do not necessarily have to consume to have shared common facilities. I think the various type of social infrastructures, becoming more and more important, in terms of the social capital of neighbourhoods, where people can connect and get in touch with each other, with non-commercial spaces are really important in every city. Vienna actually has some of that at the level of housing schemes, where there are communal facilities, but at the neighbourhood level, could be improved also in terms of district identity. In some neighbourhoods, this could be definitely improved.

In this map municipal housing and subsidized housing are marked: do you think it can be considered complete or should other structures be added?

It is very tricky! We do not have this information ourselves. There is an organization doing a lot of research in new construction: they are called *Exploreal*. They are gathering information from different sources. But in terms of housing stock, would be really interesting to have such a map, but we do not have this level of information. If you find individual housing associations particularly active in these neighbourhoods, they might have the information. If a building is not newly built especially it is really hard to say. Sometimes they have signs outside the building, but it is tricky, it also could be from private associations.

INTERVIEW 9

Interviewees: F.B. and L.M., co-workers, architects

Association: einszueins architektur (architecture studio)

Quali sono le principali caratteristiche che contraddistinguono il sistema di social housing viennese?

F.B.: dal mio punto di vista una delle caratteristiche più forti è il fatto che è aperto a redditi molto diversi. Il tetto massimo per chi può mettersi in lista è quasi 48000€ netti per una persona, per una famiglia di quattro persone sono 90000€ netti l'anno. Ci vanno quindi persone di ceti molto diversi, raramente sono "casoni" popolari dove vivono solo persone con reddito basso. Non si creano situazioni estreme. Conosco anche architetti che vivono in case del social housing viennese. C'è quindi sia un'edilizia standard sia progetti più innovativi e interessanti. In linea di massima lo standard è molto alto. Per esempio, mi sembra che da poco tempo abbiano ammesso anche gli infissi in plastica, ma fino a poco tempo fa erano solo in legno, si era quindi creata una discrepanza perché c'erano progetti di imprenditori privati che avevano gli infissi in PVC invece l'edilizia comunale aveva addirittura standard più alti. Sono abitazioni di buona qualità. C'è sempre un tetto massimo per l'affitto. I progetti sono spesso molto interessanti da un punto di vista architettonico.

L.M.: quando si parla di social housing, oggi non sono alloggi di proprietà del comune come nella Vienna Rossa, che si chiamavano *Gemeindebauten*, con affitti molto bassi e costruiti dal comune. Questo non avviene più oggi a Vienna, i nuovi edifici che vengono ancora chiamati social housing sono alloggi sovvenzionati in cui circa 1/3 dei costi di costruzione è sovvenzionato dai soldi pubblici. Per accedere a questi alloggi, che non sono comunque così economici come se fossero costruiti dal comune, si paga un prezzo calmierato che è abbastanza accessibile. L'80% delle famiglie viennesi può accedere a questo servizio, solo i "super ricchi"

sono esclusi, creando un mix sociale. La qualità degli edifici è riconosciuta internazionalmente.

F.B.: nel 2015 credo abbiano rifatto partire l'edilizia comunale *Gemeindebau Neu*, ma si tratta di pochi edifici.

Quali caratteristiche sono esportabili in altre città Europee? Perché?

L.M.: queste caratteristiche sono esportabili, ma ci vogliono le condizioni politiche, con uno stato che investe: Vienna investe 600 milioni di euro l'anno per sovvenzionare questi alloggi. A Vienna questo viene fatto da molti anni perché c'è un'amministrazione socialdemocratica e fa parte delle loro politiche. Il modello è quindi esportabile ma la preconditione è politica, per il discorso economico. Per il discorso della qualità la preconditione è che ci siano dei bravi architetti e che soprattutto, cosa secondo me da esportare a tutti i costi, è che i progetti vengono assegnati tramite concorso. Sono concorsi difficili che la maggior parte delle volte vengono vinti da studi locali che sono esperti della realtà locale, che potrebbe essere una nota negativa (non c'è internazionalizzazione nei progetti) ma anche studi giovani e relativamente inesperti sono riusciti a entrare nel settore e hanno molto lavoro, possono lavorare per il pubblico e per il privato con successo.

F.B.: un'altra cosa che aggiungerei è che la città ha un sacco di terreni, comprati negli anni della Vienna Rossa, e hanno potuto costruire a prezzi contenuti, e ciò ha creato la base per gli sviluppi successivi. E continuano a farlo. Negli ultimi anni c'è una parte di terreno che dovrebbe sempre essere costruita come social housing, non so esattamente le proporzioni, che qui si chiama *Widmung*.

Quali sono i progetti di social housing che hanno avuto maggior successo a Vienna? Perché?

F.B.: io ho una visione un po' parziale. Ad esempio, c'è un progetto relativamente nuovo, con poco più di 10 anni, che si chiama *PaN* sviluppato da Werner Neuwirt,

von Ballmoos Krucker e Sergison Bates: è un'eccezione a quello che diceva Lorenzo, poiché hanno collaborato con uno studio svizzero e uno studio inglese. Hanno sviluppato un progetto molto interessante, sono tre edifici, ogni architetto ha progettato il suo. Fanno parte dell'edilizia sovvenzionata anche i cosiddetti *Baugruppen*, come per esempio il *Wohnprojekt* o come *Gleis21*, i progetti di *Eder Krenn*. Ci sono poi i progetti della Vienna rossa come il *Karl Marx-Hof*.

L.M.: *Mühlgrund* è interessante perché è costruito in parte in legno. Le tipologie di alloggio sono particolari, gli alloggi sono basati sulla flessibilità per il futuro, con volumi che si intersecano, duplex. Una caratteristica dei concorsi è che hanno dei criteri, uno dei quali è la sostenibilità sociale, termine generico, che significa che premiano i progetti con caratteristiche particolari, per esempio loro hanno puntato sulla flessibilità degli alloggi, cioè hanno fatto alloggi per diverse generazioni, per giovani, per chi vive in famiglia, oppure con la possibilità di allargarli o restringerli con poche modifiche. Il tema di *PaN* era anche il mix culturale: hanno messo come criterio per accedere agli alloggi quello di avere diversi background culturali.

Qual è stato l'impatto della crisi causata dal Corona virus sul sistema di edilizia sociale?

L.M.: Limitato se non limitatissimo. Infatti, il 2021 è stato l'anno in cui si è costruito di più, forse anche più del dovuto. La premessa è che a Vienna c'è una grande crescita demografica: l'obiettivo è quello di realizzare quindi 10000 alloggi all'anno. Quest'anno ne hanno realizzati 15000, e c'è stata una crescita demografica inferiore alle aspettative a causa del virus. Per noi come ufficio c'è stato nel 2020 un blocco dei cantieri per alcuni mesi, ma sono poi ripartiti tutti a gran ritmo e quest'anno non ci sono state altre restrizioni.

E dal punto di vista dei fruitori del social housing?

F.B.: Riferito al Corona, so che ad esempio hanno inserito agevolazioni per chi è in difficoltà. Poi una cosa che è emersa è il fatto che l'*Existenzminimum*, non è funzionale per le famiglie. In molti nuovi progetti mostrano la possibilità, per esempio, di utilizzare degli

spazi per l'home office.

Il sistema di housing sociale Viennese deriva dal presupposto che avere un alloggio sia un diritto umano: quante persone sono ancora escluse dal sistema e perché?

F.B.: Per avere diritto a entrare nelle liste bisogna essere stati almeno 2 anni a Vienna. Significa che quindi bisogna avere intenzione di restare qui. L'affitto poi non è limitato, una volta che si è dentro ci si resta. Chi non ha il permesso di soggiorno non può accedere.

L.M.: per i criteri ti consiglio di controllare su *Wohnfonds Wien*, so che devi essere registrato come residente a Vienna. Il discorso del reddito comprende fasce molto alte.

F.B.: Da un po' di anni c'è poi il programma SMART, con delle metrature un po' inferiori, ma con maggiori sovvenzioni, ci sono limiti più restrittivi per l'affitto, c'è un'attenzione particolare ai ceti svantaggiati. La limitazione è più avere troppi soldi che averne troppo pochi, solitamente a chi ne ha pochi vengono molto incontro con diversi tipi di aiuti, si vede l'impronta socialista del programma.

Come affrontare la situazione di persone immigrate di recente per cui non ancora in possesso di cittadinanza europea o austriaca (escludendo le residenze temporanee)?

L.M.: Sono esclusi gli immigrati richiedenti asilo. Ci sono un sacco di programmi anche se non rientrano in questa forma di social housing. Sono cose che riguardano la politica sociale della città, non so darti informazioni precise, si parla di housing di emergenza diverso dal social housing che non c'entra col primo soccorso, col primo asilo. Quello che c'è da dire è che in molti dei progetti nuovi, sempre rientrando nel criterio di sostenibilità sociale che è un criterio base che deve esserci sempre, spesso ci sono un certo numero di appartamenti che rimangono vuoti e rimangono a disposizione di famiglie in condizione di estrema necessità e vengono gestiti dalla Caritas e da

altre associazioni, che hanno gli indirizzi di questi nuovi complessi e contattano i proprietari in caso di bisogno.

F.B.: La Caritas collabora spesso con il *Wohnfonds Wien*, affittano loro gruppi di abitazioni per persone con diverse esigenze, anche invalidi. Altre istituzioni raramente sviluppano progetti all'interno del social housing.

Quali sono i problemi che potrebbero sorgere da un mix culturale in una comunità di housing sociale?

L.M.: è una questione di visione politica. I problemi possono esistere anche tra varie culture. La città di Vienna con questi nuovi progetti che guardano molto a un discorso di quartiere, quindi all'interazione di diversi edifici, per creare senso di comunità, come *Sonnwendviertel*, cerca di risolvere il problema non creando ghetti e questo insieme alla qualità urbana: questi due elementi hanno già dimostrato di funzionare. Un terzo elemento è il *Betreuung*, cioè parallelamente alla sovvenzione di progetti, vengono stabiliti nei quartieri, questi *Gebietsbetreuung* (territorial support ed.) che anche nella fase progettuale intervengono e cercano di capire chi entra negli edifici. Negli edifici ci sono talvolta stanze comuni in cui queste associazioni organizzano meeting e altre attività per far conoscere le persone. Queste associazioni sono molto finanziate.

F.B.: il social housing com'è fatto qui è più uno strumento che aiuta a superare le diversità culturali che non ad acuirle. È una delle cose che rende la situazione sociale a Vienna più tranquilla. A Vienna c'è molta tolleranza proprio perché ci si incontra e si convive tutti i giorni.

L.M.: È importante l'azione del *Gebietsbetreuung*, perché per quanto siano curati i progetti architettonici se vengono lasciati a sé stessi c'è il rischio che non funzionino. Sovvenzionando l'azione di queste associazioni invece, l'integrazione viene portata avanti.

F.B.: per esempio nel secondo distretto il *Gebietsbetreuung* ha raggiunto notevole successo. Fino a qualche anno fa non godeva di buona fama, era considerato pericoloso. La città di Vienna, allungando la linea della metro e con tutti i nuovi sviluppi, ha

migliorato la situazione. Il *Gebietsbetreuung* è stato molto attivo in questo frangente.

Da un punto di vista urbanistico, quali le sono le ragioni della mancanza di relazione tra i distretti Leopoldstadt e Brigittenau con la riva destra del Danubio?

F.B.: intanto c'è il passaggio della ferrovia e la riva non è molto sfruttata. Sta cambiando un po' la situazione. La parte del secondo distretto vicino al distretto 1 ha avuto successo e si è sviluppata grazie alla vicinanza al centro. Appena è stata restaurata ha avuto subito molto successo. La parte più vicino al fiume si sta invece sviluppando: per esempio le aree lasciate vuote dalla ferrovia vengono ora riprogettate. La linea 2 che porta ora fino ad *Aspern*, ha reso il distretto non più marginale. Lo sviluppo è più intenso nel secondo distretto che nel ventesimo. Dieci anni fa il secondo distretto non godeva di buona fama. Il quartiere ha quindi mantenuto una connotazione periferica.

L.M.: lì c'è la barriera fisica della strada e della ferrovia. Quella riva del Danubio offre quasi nulla, c'è solamente la ciclabile, e ci sono attracchi per le crociere. Non ci si può dunque fare un granché. La zona che funziona bene come luogo pubblico è la *Donauinsel*: credo che chi abita nei due distretti attraversi il fiume. C'è il nuovo progetto di *Nordwestbahnhof* che dovrebbe consentire un collegamento tra i due distretti.

F.B.: con il Corona, ad esempio, c'è stato una riscoperta della *Donauinsel*, prima era frequentata quasi solo durante i festival. Stanno cercando, dove c'è la DC Tower, di rivalutare le rive e renderle un po' più fruibili. Dal lato del secondo e ventesimo però effettivamente non è una Promenade, anche se ristrutturata da poco. Ogni tanto si parla nella ÖBB di togliere la ferrovia che è solo per i treni merci.

Che importanza hanno Handelskai e la ferrovia per la città?

F.B.: La ferrovia è quasi più un ostacolo che un qualcosa che viene utilizzato davvero. C'è un pezzo condiviso

con la *S-bahn* ma è un tratto molto corto. Non c'è un collegamento lungo il Danubio nord-sud, forse perché non ce n'era bisogno. Adesso c'è effettivamente molto sviluppo, c'è il progetto di *Querkraft*, la Marina Tower; quindi, forse una nuova linea sarebbe necessaria.

Nel 2003 ci fu una proposta da parte di Christoph Chorherr (Partito dei Verdi) per un 24imo distretto lungo la riva destra del Danubio per poter “sfruttare la potenzialità di Handelskai”: cosa ne pensa di questa possibilità?

L.M.: Non conosco il progetto, non sarei in grado di rispondere alla domanda. L'idea di un nuovo distretto un po' complessa da un punto di vista amministrativo.

F.B.: sicuramente è più semplice sviluppare un nuovo progetto nelle aree in disuso della ferrovia, come sta accadendo. È un'area piuttosto omogeneamente suddivisa: ci sono le case, poi la strada e la ferrovia e poi il Danubio, non c'è connessione. Dal mio punto di vista avrebbe senso quindi pensare a un progetto sviluppato nella lunghezza di questa fascia e avrebbe senso rendere la riva più raggiungibile, superando la strada, la ferrovia e la banchina. Queste barriere sono motivate anche dal fatto che il distretto è a un livello inferiore rispetto a quella del fiume. Si può fare sicuramente qualcosa per rendere la zona più attraente.

Quali servizi bisognerebbe implementare per migliorare l'attrattiva dei distretti 2 e 20?

L.M.: mi viene in mente un dato: il ventesimo è il distretto a Vienna con il più alto tasso di persone con background immigratorio dopo il decimo, nonostante dia un distretto molto centrale.

F.B.: tra il 2 e 20 distretto c'è solo una linea di autobus, più o meno parallela a Danubio, ma secondo me non è sufficiente. Adesso hanno iniziato a collegare la zona del secondo con il tram e già ha aiutato molto. Un tram è stato ad esempio tolto tra i due distretti. C'è una linea parallela al Danubio e poi solo linee che si muovono verso il centro. A parte la metro quindi, la mobilità è un po' marginale. Una cosa di cui ho sentito parlare,

è il management dei piani terra: appena si esce dalle strade principali ci sono molti negozi chiusi, usati come magazzini, anche a livello culturale ci sono gruppi etnici che li affittano solo a persone del loro gruppo etnico o piuttosto li lasciano sfitti.

Quali spazi pubblici bisognerebbe implementare per migliorare l'attrattiva dei distretti 2 e 20?

F.B.: Stanno cercando di rendere più verdi alcune aree. Secondo me ciò che aiuta molto a svilupparsi le aree locali, sono i mercati, che mi sembra funzionino bene, se non diventano troppo turistici. Rendono l'area dinamica, sono punti d'incontro che funzionano piuttosto bene.

Vienna non è una città di piazze, che sono molto poche.

L.M.: Sia il 2 che il 20 hanno accesso ad aree verdi, accesso all'acqua che è da migliorare magari perché la riva destra è usata solo per infrastrutture. Di piazze funziona bene la *Wallensteinplatz*. Sono quartieri interessanti. Un po' in tutta la città mancano attività anche di spesa giornaliera più locali come appunto mercati, non so se nel ventesimo ci siano mercati come nel secondo. Nel 20imo bisognerebbe riuscire a integrare la popolazione immigrata, ad esempio nel 10 stano cercando di migliorare la situazione di isolamento di questi gruppi etnici, con progetti come ad esempio *Sonnwendviertel* che attirano molti viennesi. Lo stesso effetto credo avverrà con il nuovo progetto di *Nordwestbahnhof*, evitando una ghettizzazione e isolamento anche spontaneo di questi gruppi. Penso vadano lì sia per i prezzi accessibili sia perché si tratta di distretti ben forniti.

In questa mappa sono stati segnate le strutture di housing sociale gestite da associazioni governative e quelle gestite da organizzazioni no-profit o limited-profit: pensate che la mappa sia completa o che bisognerebbe aggiungere altri edifici?

L.M.: Credo sia molto difficile mapparli tutti, nel secondo distretto manca per esempio tutta la zona di *Nordbahnhof*. Ce ne sono tantissimi sparsi. Si può

guardare i *Bauträgerwettbewerbe* degli ultimi anni. Probabilmente puoi chiedere a *Wohnfonds Wien* se hanno un database con queste informazioni.

TRANSLATION

What are the main features of the Viennese social housing system?

F.B.: From my point of view one of the strongest features is the fact that is open to very different income groups. The maximum income for applying is 48000€ net for each person, for a family of four is 9000€. People from different economic strata are thus included, social housing is hardly about huge popular buildings where only low-income people live. There are no extreme situations. I also personally know some architects that live in the Viennese social housing structures. Thus, there are both standard constructions and innovative and interesting projects. Generally, the quality of buildings is really high. For example, some time ago, they allowed the installation of PVC windows frames as well; until then there was a diversification because there were projects of private entrepreneurs with PVC windows, and the social housing had even higher standards. They are dwellings of good quality. There is always a maximum that can be requested for the rent. Projects are usually interesting from an architectural point of view.

L.M.: When we speak about social housing, today we do not refer to the houses property of the municipality like during the Red Vienna, named *Gemeindebauten*, with really low rent and built by the municipality. This does not happen in Vienna anymore, the new buildings which are still called social housing, are subsidised dwellings of which about 1/3 is funded by the city. To get access to these flats, which are still not as cheap as the ones built by the municipality, a controlled price is paid. Around 80% of Viennese families can access this service, only “super-rich” people are excluded, creating a social mix. The quality of the buildings is internationally acknowledged.

F.B.: I think in 2015 they restarted municipal housing projects, the *Gemeindebauten Neu*, but it regards only a few buildings.

What are the features that could be exported to other European cities? Why?

L.M.: these features can be exported, but the political preconditions are necessary, together with a state that invests money in social buildings: Vienna invests 600 million euros every year in order to subsidise those dwellings. In Vienna, this has been done for a lot of years, because there is a social-democratic administration, and it is part of their policy. The model is exportable, but the precondition for the economic aspect is political. For what concerns the quality, the precondition is that there are good architects and above all, something that I think must be exported, the project should be assigned through competition. The competitions are hard, usually won by local architecture studios, experts on the local reality, that could be a negative note (there is no internationalization in the projects), but also young and relatively inexpert studios managed to enter the sector and had a lot of work, they can work for the public or private sector successfully.

F.B.: something I would add is that the city has a lot of land, bought during the years of Red Vienna, and could build at lower prices, and this created the base for the following developments. And they keep on doing it. There is a portion of land that always has to be devoted to social housing, I do not know how it works exactly, it is called *Widmung*.

What are the architectural projects for social housing that had greater success in Vienna? And why?

F.B.: I have quite a partial view of it. There is a relatively new project, it is around 10 years old, called *PaN*, developed by Werner Neuwirt, von Ballmoos Krucker e Sergison Bates: it is an exception to what L.M. said before since they collaborated with a Swiss and an English studio. They developed a very interesting project: there are three buildings, and each architect designed one. Also, the so-called *Baugruppen* are part

of the subsidised housing, for example, *Wohnprojekt* or *Gleis21*, the projects of Eder Krenn. There are also the projects of the Red Vienna, such as the *Karl Marx-Hof*.

L.M.: *Mühlgrund* is interesting because it is partially built with wood, the typologies of dwellings are particular, they are based on the concept of flexibility for the future, with intersecting volumes and duplexes. Another feature of the competitions is that they have criteria, one of which is the social sustainability, which is a generic term, meaning that they choose the projects with peculiar features, and for example, they focused on the flexibility of the flat, making flats for different generations, for young people, families, with the possibility of enlarging or reducing them with few modifications. The theme of *PaN* was also the cultural mix: they set having different cultural backgrounds as a criterion for entering the project.

What was the impact of the Corona crisis on the social housing system in Vienna?

L.M.: limited, if not very limited. In fact, 2021 was the year in which they built the most, maybe, even more than what was necessary. The premise is that in Vienna there is a very strong demographic growth: the objective is the realization of 10000 dwellings each year. This year they realized 15000, and there has been a lower demographic growth than expected because of the virus. For us, as an architecture studio, there was a worksite stop in 2020 for a few months, but then they restarted and this year there were no restrictions.

And from the point of view of the social housing inhabitants?

F.B.: referring to Corona, I know there has been some concession for those that had economic difficulties. Then, something that emerged is that the Existenzminimum concept is not functional for families. Lots of new projects show the possibility, for example, of using some areas for home-office.

Viennese social housing system derives from the

assumption that housing is a human right: how many people are still excluded by the system and why?

F.B.: in order to have the right for applying to the system, you need to be in Vienna for at least two years. It means that one needs to be intentioned to stay longer. Those who do not have a residence permit, cannot enter the system.

L.M.: for the criteria to enter I suggest looking at the *Wohnfonds Wien* page. I know you need to register as a resident in Vienna. Concerning the income, a lot of strata are included.

F.B.: since a few years there is a SMART program, with slightly smaller flats, but more subsidies, there are more restrictive limits for the rent, focusing on particularly disadvantaged classes. Having a lot of money is more of a limitation that having few for this system. Usually, those who have more difficulties also receive different types of assistance, it is here visible in the socialist line of the program.

How to deal with people who recently immigrated and thus do still not possess Austrian or European citizenship (apart from providing temporary accommodation)?

L.M.: immigrants asylum seekers are excluded. There are many other programs, even if not part of this form of social housing. They are facts that concern the social policy of the city, I do not have precise information, they talk about emergency dwellings more than social dwellings, which do not include first aid. In many new projects, always speaking about social sustainability, which is a basic criterion, there is a growing number of flats that are reserved for families in extreme conditions, and are managed by Caritas and other associations, that have the addresses of these new complex and contact the owner in case of need.

F.B.: Caritas often collaborates with *Wohnfonds Wien*, which rents to them groups of dwellings for people with different needs, also disabled people. Other institutions rarely develop projects inside the social housing system.

What are the problems that may arise because of a mix of cultures in a social housing community?

L.M.: it is a question of political vision. The problems can arise also among different cultures. The city of Vienna with these new projects that take care also of the neighbourhood, thus the interaction among different buildings to create a sense of community, as in *Sonnwendviertel*, attempts at solving the problem by avoiding the creation of ghetto districts, together with an attention to urban quality: these two elements already demonstrated to be successful. A third element is the *Betreuung*: in parallel to the subsidy of the projects, these *Gebietsbetreuung* (territorial support ed.) are established in the districts and in the design phase they intervene and try to understand who enters the buildings. In the buildings, there are sometimes common rooms in which these associations organize meetings and other activities to create contact among people. These associations are largely financed.

F.B.: social housing in Vienna is an instrument that helps at overcoming cultural diversities, not enlarging them. It is one of the things that make the social situation in Vienna much quieter. In Vienna, there is tolerance because people meet and live together every day.

L.M.: it is important the action of the *Gebietsbetreuung*, because, even if the project has a high quality, if they are not followed later on there is the risk that it will not work. Funding the action of these associations instead, the integration is carried on.

F.B.: for example, the second district, was helped by the *Gebietsbetreuung* to reach great success. A few years ago, it had not a good reputation, it was considered dangerous. The city of Vienna, expanding the metro line with all the new developments, improved the situation. The *Gebietsbetreuung* is very active from this viewpoint.

What are the reasons, from an urban planning point of view, for the lack of connection between the districts Leopoldstadt and Brigittenau and the right riverbank of the Danube River?

F.B.: there is the passage of the railroad, and the riverbank is not well exploited. The situation is slightly changing. The portion of the second district close to the first one had success and was developed thanks to the proximity to the city centre. As soon as it has been renewed, it had great success. The portion closer to the river instead is developing for example the areas left empty by the former railway stations are now redesigning. Line 2 which runs until Aspern, has made the district more central. In my opinion, the development is more intense in the 2nd district, than in the 20th. Ten years ago, the second district had not a good reputation. The neighbourhood had thus maintained a peripheral position.

L.M.: there is the physical barrier of the street and the railroad. That riverbank offers almost nothing, there is only a bike line and the docks for cruises. There is not much to do. The area that works well as a public area is the *Donauinsel*: I think that those who live in the two districts usually cross the river. There is the new project *Nordwestbahnhof* that should connect the two districts.

F.B.: with Corona, for example, there had been a rediscovery of the *Donauinsel*: previously it was popular only during festivals. Where there is the DC tower, they are trying to reevaluate the riverbank and make them more accessible. On the side of the 2nd and 20th districts, there is not a promenade even though it has been partially renewed. Every now and then, there is a proposal from the ÖBB of removing the railway.

How much important are Handelskai and the railway Donauuferbahn for the city?

F.B.: the railway represents an obstacle rather than something actually useful. The rails are partially shared with the *S-bahn*, but for a really short path. There is not a connection along the Danube from north to south, maybe because it was not necessary. Nowadays the development is really active, with the projects *Querkraft*, *Marina Tower*; thus, a new transport line would be necessary.

In 2003 there was a proposal from Christoph

Chorherr (Grüne Partei), for a 24th district along the Danube Riverbank to “exploit the potentiality of Handelskai”: what do you think about this possibility?

L.M.: I am not familiar with the project, and I cannot answer properly to your question. The idea of a new district is quite complex from an administrative point of view.

F.B.: it is surely much easier to develop a new project in the vacant areas of the railways, which is happening. It is an area quite homogeneously subdivided: there are the buildings, then the street, then the railway and the Danube, there is no connection. From my point of view, it would make sense to think about a design developed along this land strip, and it would make sense to foster the accessibility to the riverbank, crossing the street and the railway. These barriers exist because the district level is lower than the river one. Something to improve the area could surely be done.

What services should be implemented to improve the attractiveness of districts 2 and 20?

L.M.: some data come up to my mind: the 20th district is the one with the highest rate of population with an immigration background in Vienna, after the 10th one, even though it is a quite central neighbourhood.

F.B.: between the 2nd and 20th districts there is only one bus line, more or less parallel to the Danube, but in my opinion, it is not sufficient. They recently started to connect the area of the 2nd district with a tram, and it already changed a lot. For example, a tram line between the two districts has been cancelled. There is one line parallel to the Danube and all the lines moving towards the centre. Apart from the metro, thus, mobility is a bit marginal. Something I have heard about is the management of the ground floor: in the secondary streets there are several closed shops, used as storage rooms, and also at a cultural level, some ethnic groups rent the spaces only to people of the same ethnicity, or they leave them empty.

What public spaces should be implemented to

improve the attractiveness of districts 2 and 20?

F.B.: they are trying to create more green areas. I think what helps a lot to develop local area are markets, which I think work quite good if they do not become merely a touristic attraction. They improve the dynamism of the area; they are gathering points that function really well. Vienna is not a city with a lot of squares.

L.M.: both the 2nd and the 20th have access to green space, to the water, even if it has to be improved since the right riverbank still is used for infrastructures. A square which is quite popular is *Wallensteinplatz*. They both are interesting neighbourhoods. In general, in the city some activities for the daily grocery shopping are missing, such as markets: I do not know whether there are any in the 20th district. In the 20th, the immigrant population should be more integrated, for example in the 10th district where they are trying to improve the situation of isolation of some ethnic groups, with projects like *Sonnwendviertel*, which attracts a lot of Viennese people. The same effect will have the project in *Nordwestbahnhof*, avoiding the ghettoization and isolation, sometimes spontaneous, of those groups. I think they all move there both because of the accessible prices, and because they are well-served districts.

In this map municipal housing and subsidized housing are marked: do you think it can be considered complete or should other structures be added?

L.M.: I think it is really hard to map them all, in the second district, for example. All the area of *Nordbahnhof* is missing. There are many which are spread out. You could look at the *Bauträgerwettbewerbe* of the last years. Probably, you could also ask *Wohnfonds Wien* whether they have a database collecting that information.

INTERVIEW 10

Interviewee: Christoph Mörkl, company founder

Association: Superblock (architecture studio)

What are the main features of the Viennese social housing system?

The Viennese model provides very unexpensive housing to a wide variety of inhabitants: it is managed by the *Wohnfonds Wien* which buys the plots of lands and then with *Buträgerwettbewerbe* gives the land to the associations that then implement the social housing projects. The main thing is that the m² of land has not to be more expensive than 300€. Free financed housing projects deal with prices of 1000-2000 €/m². This is why social housing is still affordable.

What are the features that could be exported to other European cities? Why?

Mainly it is a political theme, the land price is thought through political minds. We had a talk in Hamburg, and they were really excited about the Viennese model. It is not something we must export but you can notice the difference: other cities know the system but implementing might be a big thing, Vienna has a tradition 100 years long. Berlin has something similar; they stopped the social housing system in the 1990s and they are trying now to come back to it because people want it: they want, in general, lower prices on the housing market. What other cities can see is the reduced price of the land, mainly.

What are the architectural projects for social housing that had greater success in Vienna? And why?

Traditionally the housing started 100 years ago, after First World War, and Austria went back to small borders: a lot of people came from the countryside back to Vienna, causing a big problem in housing. The community established the Red Vienna program, and social housing started in Vienna. The superblocks between the two wars were the first big projects of

the city. After the Second World War, there were poor-designed apartments because there was a need for lots of housing in a short time, then in the 70s and 80s there were more prototype projects, like *Alt Erlaa*, a large housing project by Harry Glück, he thought it is not only the flat important but also the community facilities: there are a lot of common spaces, like swimming pools. Because of its large scale, it is not possible to replicate it today. Then there are some projects like *Am Schöpfwerk* focusing on the social features, namely of how to integrate different types of inhabitants in a project. In the last 20 years, Vienna established the system of *Bauträgerwettbewerbe* with the land bought by the *Wohnfond Wien*, is not really an open competition, but architects and other people involved in a house project, become a team and make a project following a brief given by *Wohnfond*. It is a very good system, establishing high quality because of the very competitive characters. The quality is very high, in the last 20 years there were really exceptional projects by different architects, by old and new studios: it is a bit of “training” also for the young architect studios in Vienna.

What was the impact of the Corona crisis on the social housing system in Vienna?

I think the problems we are facing are previous to corona. Talking about housing, there is the *Flächenwidmung*, the land is divided into functional areas. Vienna is really dense and there are not many spaces inside the city that can be developed. The large railway areas in the 20th and 2nd districts are under development. Construction became more and more difficult even because of European regulation and the processes are much slower. Since 2015 all the processes have been slowed down and there is a lack the development areas inside the city. We can expand outside, but in the outside areas is more expensive because all the infrastructures have to be built, instead of inside the city the infrastructures are already there. Thus, there is a lack of development inside the city. This problem does not come from the Corona crisis, but from before. Corona did not help solve these issues, and everything

had slowed down even more, for housing in general, but especially for social housing.

Viennese social housing system derives from the assumption that housing is a human right: how many people are still excluded by the system and why?

Not many people are excluded. So many people can get a subsidized flat. Foreign people coming to Vienna are the main topic we deal with in Europe, but actually, the system is open to a wider group of people with different incomes: they all can ask for subsidised flats. For one flat there are about 1000 applicants: there is registration at *Wohnservice Wien* and there are so many people for each flat, so many are looking for changing their living possibilities. That shows there is a bit of pressure in Vienna for social housing. Vienna is slow in some development and maybe we can say we are always 5-10 years behind European events. There are many developments in the free financed sector, but not so many in the social housing sector, and this is a problem.

How to deal with people who recently immigrated and thus do still not possess Austrian or European citizenship (apart from providing temporary accommodation)?

This is a big thing we talk about but not very common in political discussions. When we talk about migrants, we think about people coming from far or near east, we do not think about people from Europe are coming to Vienna. The problem is also they cannot elect the community government, so there is no voice for them, and this is reflected in the housing market. The discussion is beginning in Vienna, but we have no solution, maybe because there are also fewer housings available right now.

What are the problems that may arise because of a mix of cultures in a social housing community?

I think this is a topic we all know. People from different cultures behave differently. People need to be much

more tolerant of religious topics, in the use of spaces. We know about it and we think there are some percentages: for example in a housing project of 100 flats, 20% of inhabitants can be "different", if this percentage rises, problems arise and sometimes they are not solved. It would be better to spread these people in different projects, so to create a better integration momentum. This is something we discuss heavily in every project: it is politically hard to do because it is not transparently communicated, but it is done.

What are the reasons, from an urban planning point of view, for the lack of connection between the districts Leopoldstadt and Brigittenau and the right riverbank of the Danube River?

This is a historical problem: the Danube was regulated 30 years ago. The city is disconnected from the river, the situation is completely different for example in Budapest where the river runs through the city and some areas of the historic centre are directly connected to it. The Danube does not even touch historic centre in Vienna, just the *Donaukanal* where many things happened to bring the city centre closer to the river. The Danube is traditionally totally different, in the *Donauinsel* there are leisure and cultural activities, but none of these activities is on the side of the city. I think not even in the next 20-30 years we will be able to bring the city to the river. By now there are not really projects trying to do so: there are some crossings where the metro line U2 is crossing the Danube, there are some points of interest, but are small areas, in a larger or linear scale there is no movement to bring Vienna to the river. It was something in the town planning of 20 years ago, but now it is not. The 20th and the 2nd districts are much more oriented to historic districts than to the Danube.

How much important are Handelskai and the railway Donauuferbahn for the city?

We are discussing right now heavily about closing the connecting circles (highway circles). Right now, these longways along the river are needed. Closing the circle highway, there is the possibility of taking off the traffic

from this line along the Danube. The railway along the right side of the Danube did not grow in the last years, but it is still important because of the harbour, to bring there all the lorries. It is important, it cannot be eliminated. This is the main topic why has not been done because there were some competitions in 2000 but there was not a manageable plan for the extinction of the highway along the riverbed.

In 2003 there was a proposal from Christoph Chorherr (Grüne Partei), for a 24th district along the Danube Riverbank to “exploit the potentiality of Handelskai”: what do you think about this possibility?

Christoph Chorherr is a bit of a utopistic man. The idea was an intellectual way of thinking about town planning, I don't think there has ever been the potential for the implementation of such a project. I don't think there is a real need and because in town planning possibility, Vienna could have done only one project and there are other districts also important, it has never been done. It is a bit critical in terms of realization in my opinion. It was good to have some strategic thoughts and plans for this area but not for a real realization project.

What services should be implemented to improve the attractiveness of districts 2 and 20?

By now mainly the 2nd district is a young district. The *Nordbahnhof* finishing in 4-5 years attracts many young people, young families, because of *Prater* and *Donauinsel* and because of the direct connection to the city centre. We are not a poly-centric city but really a mono-central one: *Stephansplatz* is still the main area of the first district and the main area in Vienna. Thus, the second district is attractive also for its proximity to the first district. There is also a very young culture but maybe would be good to have an event centre to attract more people to the area. In the development plan of *Nordwestbahnhof* would be nice to include such a space, something like the *Museumsquartier*.

What public spaces should be implemented to improve the attractiveness of districts 2 and 20?

The density of public spaces is very high, dealing with these new development areas and there are the *Augarten*, the *Prater*, the *Donauinsel*: they are high-quality public spaces in the area.

In this map municipal housing and subsidized housing are marked: do you think it can be considered complete or should other structures be added?

To complete it, you should check on the website of *Wohnfond Wien*. There are some problems because of the new developments, but the process started a long time ago, so maybe they are already in the database. Check also *Wiener Wohnen* and get a list of the *Gemeinde bauträger*, in Vienna. if you search them, they have lists of projects finished, in development or future development.

INTERVIEW 11

Interviewee: Jan Schröder, project strategy and development

Association: AllesWirdGut (architecture studio)

What are the main features of the Viennese social housing system?

As far as I know, there are several aspects which are important. First, it is a very long tradition, it is there since after the First World War and never stopped. I think the city of Vienna owns around half of the flats, this means that the city has very good control of the rent prices because half of the flats are not much expensive, thus also the rest cannot be too much expensive, otherwise, nobody would like to live there. Then, I think in a lot of cases the land where the building is built, goes back to the city after for example 100 years, including the building; thus, the buildings do not really leave the ownership of the city. It is not easy to speculate with them and is not possible to sell them on the free market, which is not very powerful in Vienna. It is a mix of tradition and ongoing situations that never changed over the years. It is not the city that builds the projects, not anymore, but some no-profit oriented associations, not working in the classical capitalist way. Of course, they have to earn wages and function as a company, but they don't build buildings to make money, they have to make sure that the way of doing the business is sustainable.

What are the features that could be exported to other European cities? Why?

At the moment in Germany for example lot of cities regret that they sold away social housing buildings and land: Berlin is trying to get back the flats and houses from developers, to make sure they can control the rents again, they are trying to regain what they sold, but it is quite difficult because it costs a lot of money. Thus, I think it is important not to sell the land and keep it for social housing purposes. In most cases, though, it is too late. In Germany, there is also a time limit on social flats,

like 10 years, after that the developer can sell them into the free market. So, they are social housing only for a limited span of time. I think to keep the system going and leaving as it is, is important. But I think it is also a cultural thing. For example, I know that in Italy most people own their house, whereas in northern Europe, in German-speaking countries, it is a bit different. It is, thus, easier also to have the system in place.

What are the architectural projects for social housing that had greater success in Vienna? And why?

The most famous one is *Alt Erlaa*, by Harry Glück, and is also the weirdest one: the buildings get really big at the base and are really high. Apparently, people living there are the happiest in Vienna: maybe it is because is really convenient, it is like living in a hotel at a cheap price, you have a swimming pool at the top, in the basement, there are a lot of spaces for communal activities, I don't think they are very nice because they are quite dark, but they are there. And then you have garden spaces, and greenery on balconies, which are also really big, and there is a wide view from the flats since the distance between the houses is extended. These are basic things, but it is really comfortable to live there, probably it is not so important their aesthetic but more their functions. For architects is quite hard: we do not really know which buildings work well because nobody tells us. *Alt Erlaa* example is sort of proven.

We just finished with *feld72* a building in Vienna where one woman was in charge of social contacts between inhabitants for the time people moved there and got to know each other and she always says people enjoyed being there, even if we were afraid people would have not liked it, since there are long corridors, lot of people living in one staircase, so the scale of the building is not very nice, but there is a huge courtyard and good views from the apartments and big balconies. It is also an identity question: to recognize a place like your house. The name of this project is *Kapellenhof*.

What was the impact of the Corona crisis on the social housing system in Vienna?

I think so far none. For example, in *Kapellenhof*, there is one big social community base to have meetings but was closed because of the Covid. Of course, all social spaces for gathering are not so used, but that does not mean that we are not supposed to plan them anymore: as soon as it will be possible to use them it would be a shame not to have them. The life inside the flats is the same, but what is missing is the meeting between people.

Viennese social housing system derives from the assumption that housing is a human right: how many people are still excluded by the system and why?

The speciality of the Viennese system is to be open to not so poor people: few of my colleagues live in social housing as well. I think this is very important because this means there is a mixture in the buildings and not only poor people. In Germany for example when you speak about social housing, people think of it as a ghetto, a bad place where live only people that have troubles or people that do not know how to live in society. This is not the case in Vienna. There are certain rules for very cheap flats where you have to prove that you do not have a lot of money to get them, or you have to prove your salary is below a certain threshold. Of course, there are still homeless, but there are lots of shelters, but this is a problem every city has: people having problems in general with life and not fitting in the system. You need to know how the system works to find a house in Vienna, you have to be part of the general system, and those who are outside the system cannot access it. The problem is not so big in Vienna compared to other cities: as soon as you are applicable to earn money, then you can afford to live in one of those flats.

How to deal with people who recently immigrated and thus do still not possess Austrian or European citizenship (apart from providing temporary accommodation)?

I don't know how the law is in Vienna. Around 50% is immigrants, I think not all of them have citizenship.

If you have the right to stay in Vienna, then you can apply for one flat. I don't know who is allowed to stay in Vienna, only those not at risk to be deported back to the country become part of the system, all the others have to stay in the shelters, which are temporary. This does not have anything to do with the social housing system because as soon as you are legally allowed to stay in Austria even as a refugee, then you can get a flat. There are rules, for the line order, and can be that people already living in Vienna have precedence, but I do not remember exactly.

What are the problems that may arise because of a mix of cultures in a social housing community?

The usual ones I would say: different ways of living. Who has not a lot of money, has a lot of problems, then there is a lot of lack in education, not knowing much of the world, from both sides, who comes to Vienna from foreign countries and who comes from Austrian villages and towns. The problems are the same as everywhere, just in areas where rich people live there are chances of people being more educated, to have more space, fewer worries because of certain security in their life. I assume in social housing those problems are stronger than in other situations. What is a good thing is that in some projects there is somebody that tries to get everybody in contact and tries to find out who is interested in what, who has a problem with what and get people talking to each other and find solutions or put together people that have the same interest. It is the first step, knowing all the people and removing prejudices and stereotypes. I think this helps, living in well-organized social housing in Vienna is even better than living somewhere in the free market where you do not have all this support.

What are the reasons, from an urban planning point of view, for the lack of connection between the districts Leopoldstadt and Brigittenau and the right riverbank of the Danube River?

I think it is historical. In earlier times the *Donau* was not regulated as it is now and was difficult for the city

to build there because it is too close to the river, and there was a risk of flooding. This is why the city centre is a bit away from the *Donau*. Not so long ago was regulated and the edges were used for infrastructures: the railway and the road. On the other side, there is a motorway. Therefore, they are difficult to reach, you need bridges to cross the road and railway, and there are very narrow strips of land. It is used, there is a small harbour for yachts, landing for boats going along the river, there is also a little park, but not very big and not very attractive. The city was not really interested in having the river as part of it as in Budapest, for example, where it is completely different: the *Donau* is going through the city centre. In Vienna, only the edge of the city touches the *Donau*, which is not considered the interesting part. In some places this is changing, thanks to the U2 metro line going on the other side, there are few high rises being built now on the edge of the river, on the side there is the *Donau City* from the 90s where there is a big tunnel for the motorway, thus people can reach the water. But this is really far away from the city centre.

How much important are Handelskai and the railway Donauuferbahn for the city?

The street is actually quite important, I do not know about the railway. I think it is not used for people, maybe just for goods. But could be very important for bringing containers, in the container harbour. The street is important, it is always used.

In 2003 there was a proposal from Christoph Chorherr (Grüne Partei), for a 24th district along the Danube Riverbank to “exploit the potentiality of Handelskai”: what do you think about this possibility?

Never heard about it. Living near the river could be nice, and they are constructing some new buildings now, maybe they are the reminiscence of this proposal, I do not know. But I think for this would be probably better to get rid of the road and railway, to get them into a tunnel, so that the city can connect to the river and it is not only a tiny stripe of buildings along the

river edge, so people using behind it can use the ground floor, which would be interesting to help this to make it attractive for everybody, the edge of the *Donau* should remain a public space, not privatized. Would be interesting if also people living now on the other side of the street could use them. On the other hand, there is not much space to build, Michael Obrist, did this introductory course for students, and they proposed to build a tunnel to cross the street and then the project was a strip along the river. But this is really a potential that is not used right now.

What services should be implemented to improve the attractiveness of districts 2 and 20?

I think there is nothing to add to the districts, they are functional. Of course, big museums and theatres are in the city centre, but they are not that far from it. They are also well equipped with good green spaces, compared to the rest of the city.

Which public spaces should be implemented to improve the attractiveness of districts 2 and 20?

Yes, what Vienna always needs is interesting urban spaces: in my opinion Vienna is a rather ugly city and does not really have many interesting public spaces good to use, in the 20th and 2nd districts there are a few squares that are nice, but not nice streets, if there were a big-size development, (as it is happening in the two railways) what is needed is urban space, like you have in Italy, these things are missing, but it is true for all Vienna.

In this map municipal housing and subsidized housing are marked: do you think it can be considered complete or should other structures be added?

I think your map is not the newest one. *Nordbahnhof* area will not be built with social housing. I think around the Rudolf-square there could be more than what you marked. I am not sure though where to find all this. *Wohnservice Wien* is the most address to apply in the city of Vienna buildings, I think there is a percentage for

each building for social housing. But it does not look so bad. The subsidized are more on the other side of the *Donau*.

INTERVIEW 12

Interviewees: Ernst Gruber, Spatial and Urban Research, Housing and Participation

Association: wohnbund: consult (private association)

What are the main features of the Viennese social housing system?

I think funding is the most important characteristic. There are two ways of funding social housing, you can fund an object construction or the rent of people. In Austria, and especially in Vienna, the tendency for funding the object rather than contributing to people rent is much higher. This is a more sustainable way of financing, the second most important feature is the *Gemeinnützigkeit*, a legal framework, which means you have limited-profit corporations, *Gemeinnützige* means that certain developers are given the right to have tax reduction and in return, they commit themselves to invest their profit into social housing construction. Then we have quality security, regulations that demand a certain quality. For example, in Vienna, you have the four pillars of quality: economic, ecological, architecture and social sustainability and those four are the basis for the so-called competition where the city gives land for a fixed price to developers. So, these three aspects are the most important for me.

What are the features that could be exported to other European cities? Why?

All of them could be exported because they correspond to European law. Probably every country has a different starting point, maybe in some countries it is easier to implement quality assurance, in others to shift from subject subsidy to object subsidy, but I think all of these are equally implementable.

What are the architectural projects for social housing that had greater success in Vienna? And why?

I like the project *So.vie.so*, which is a project of about 10 years ago, quite big in a new development area.

It has a wide range of communal rooms that can be used by inhabitants, the architect predefined the size and location of those rooms and we together with future residents made program, deciding where functions should be, it has a great response and is very well accepted by the resident. The residents could participate in the design process.

What was the impact of the Corona crisis on the social housing system in Vienna?

The pandemic is a temporary crisis because it will have an end soon. This is the fundamental difference with the climate crisis, which is an ongoing process, and we will have to adapt to it. I think it has an effect on the way the immediate surrounding area is perceived, it has become more important to have lots of amenities you need for covering your daily needs, that kind of correspond to the concept of 15 minutes city. Within the housing projects, there is now a shift to re-organize floor plans to accommodate workspace inside the flat. Flexibility towards the possibility to temporarily close a space, so you can have your own private space also for working.

Viennese social housing system derives from the assumption that housing is a human right: how many people are still excluded by the system and why?

I cannot give you an exact number but the reason. Why they are excluded: it is because there is a certain threshold you have to overcome to be eligible for social housing. There are two main thresholds, one is that you have to prove you have lived in Vienna for at least two years, and the other one is that you have to have a certain amount of money to give a deposit, that is given back when you move out, but that you need when you move in and this is about 500€/m²: if you have 50 m² you need 25000€ to give to the developer. Probably there is a third one, that is it is very complicated to find a channel to go and apply. There is a centre of city government that allocate flats, but only a small amount and the rest is allocated by the developers themselves, and you have to know which developers to address

your request. If you don't have a lot of money and if you are new to Vienna, it is very difficult to enter. You have to know how the system works.

How to deal with people who recently immigrated and thus do still not possess Austrian or European citizenship (apart from providing temporary accommodation)?

They do not have access to social housing. We are currently in a research project: we look at one example a Vienna where we found a niche on how to do it and we are looking at a similar project in Sweden and the UK. The way it works in Vienna is that there is an organization called *Neunerhaus*, which take care of unemployed and homeless. The association rents the flat and then give them to the people who need it. As an association, they can rent flats from developers and pass them to someone else, and they managed to do with refugees, but it is a very small percentage of flats. They got an unlimited rental contract because they lived in another place for two years, and were part of the development: from planning to completion of the project usually you need three years, thus you need to be able to accumulate the time you need to enter the system and they could move in.

What are the problems that may arise because of a mix of cultures in a social housing community?

The language barrier is the main issue. But also different habits. How to deal with communal areas, responsibility issues. Culturally is very difficult to understand the responsibility of someone else or my responsibility.

What are the reasons, from an urban planning point of view, for the lack of connection between the districts Leopoldstadt and Brigittenau and the right riverbank of the Danube River?

It is not integrated because there is a railway line and it used to be a harbour. The strip of land in the middle is artificial, done around 45 years ago, before that

the river used to overflow. Basically, there is a natural reason why the riverbank is not attractive, it is kind of uncertain, and I guess this is why this area is not very well connected with the city. In terms of housing development, it is not well connected because it was not the main purpose to live there.

How much important are Handelskai and the railway Donauuferbahn for the city?

They are important. The street is a traffic artery and I guess would be useful for the development of the city. For example, *Westbahnhof*, since the area is really central, they one to build something on the top of the railway. The prices are gone up so much, the price for m² of land is equal for m² to construct something. Thus, if the city of Vienna continues to develop also the riverbank will become a development area. The railway is necessary, the street maybe is not necessary to be so wide. The railway is partly shared with the *Schnellbahn*, but I do not know if the rest is only used as a logistic transport system.

In 2003 there was a proposal from Christoph Chorherr (Grüne Partei), for a 24th district along the Danube Riverbank to “exploit the potentiality of Handelskai”: what do you think about this possibility?

I think it is happening, there are some new high-rises buildings. It could work.

Why do you think it could work?

The potentiality of the area is given by the proximity to the water, and it is also very attractive because in a central area with well-served districts.

What services should be implemented to improve the attractiveness of districts 2 and 20?

I find it difficult to think of any missing service, it seems they have everything, they have parks, transportation, new development, it is a perfect mix.

What public spaces should be implemented to improve the attractiveness of districts 2 and 20?

There can always be more public spaces but if you look at the plan of the districts, they have a lot of green areas already.

In this map municipal housing and subsidized housing are marked: do you think it can be considered complete or should other structures be added?

There is no map for the subsidized. But there is a map called *Gebietstypologien*, so they made 13 building types and assigned them in terms of density (built density and resident density) and the time when they were built. If you look at the legend, the subsidized are from the period from 9 and 13 numbers. You can subtract all the other parts of the legend. That's the better way to complete in the closest way possible the map.

INTERVIEW 13

Interviewee: Sonja Gruber, sociologist

Association: freelance, moderator of settlement processes

What are the main features of the Viennese social housing system?

The city of Vienna has a lot of *Gemeindebauten*, its own properties and it builds them with its own money, giving it to those who need it. Then the city stopped this practice for a while. Now there are these competitions called *Bauträgerwettbewerb*, and if you want to be a *Bauträger* (property developer), and get funding for the housing, you have to prepare your project paying attention to architecture, economy and ecology and since 2009 also to the so-called fourth pillar of social sustainability. And this is about the neighbourhood, community buildings, how people can interact. And also, it is important that housing is not too expensive. The city gives money for the competition, but the city does not own it. Today sometimes there are some *Gemeindebau Neue*, but still, I think it is important that the city keeps the property, because then it is really difficult to provide cheap spaces for those who need it. There are a lot of activities, the SMART program, for even more affordable flats.

What are the features that could be exported to other European cities? Why?

I criticize a bit the city of Vienna but compared to other EU cities it is still great what Vienna has. There are still a lot of buildings owned by the city and thus they can regulate the rent cost, who can get in the flat. Other states just give the housing stock to private companies. What is very good is that you can find *Gemeindebau* in all areas and districts, even in richer districts, where there are rich people's villas. This mixture is really great, and it prevents the creation of ghetto suburbs. People do not have to be friends, we should not expect too much from communities, but at least is good having a good neighbourhood. With new buildings, with the

social sustainability pillar, there is more social work coming into it, like works of Caritas, *Nuenerhaus*, flats for refugees, for women coming from women shelters. And you can see those flats built in a way that also attracts rich people creating a huge mix. The "housing first" project works with those who are homeless or at risk to be homeless, that maybe are alone, but also families and the associations provide spaces for them: it is not the organization renting the flat, but the people, which are then accompanied by these associations in a social integration process. The concept is that housing is the first and most important thing, and then all the rest come. Now there is also a very special focus on flats for single parents, which is really important because it is hard for them to find flats they can afford.

What are the architectural projects for social housing that had greater success in Vienna? And why?

You will always hear about *Alt Erlaa* because people who live there are really content with their living conditions. Some *Gemeindebauten* are really well known, they have normally *Mieterbeiräte* (tenants), representatives for the whole building, today there are mostly old people, it is not easy to find young people wanting to do the same participation they did. Today participation does not work so well if you want people taking responsibility for a lot of time. Maybe they do it for a project, and when it is over, they do something else. I think these kinds of participation possibility is having a hard time now, sometimes is presented in new buildings, organized by the inhabitants themselves. In former times they were mainly Austrian, now there are other cultures living there. People not having a lot of social capital are not used to saying what they want and don't even know it is possible to want something and participate. When it comes to the moderation of settlement processes in new buildings those who participate most are the ones with more capital: they can express themselves, they have a self-understanding to say what they want and they try to reach it, they can organize themselves. Not so well-educated people, immigrants or poorer people do not have this self-understanding. For me thus the projects

that work better are the ones where the participation works well. This is my opinion since I work in the field of social sustainability: I do not care that architecture is really great if then the neighbourhood does not work. But with this *Bauträgerwettbewerb* the four pillars come together. It is also important not to overstress the importance of community, because, for example for single parents, architects sometimes try to find solutions with special projects for children, with shared spaces, but if you ask them what they really want is their own private space. *Baugruppen* is when groups of people come together and participate in the project: it is a long process to get in a group for two years, and for single parents, it is hard to find time and energy to do that. It is important to have the *Baugruppen* possibility, but it is also high-threshold.

What was the impact of the Corona crisis on the social housing system in Vienna?

It showed how important outdoor spaces are. For me, it was interesting to see that first the bigger community rooms were closed (usually you have bigger and smaller community rooms). People were not allowed to use these community rooms anymore, not to have new Corona outbreaks, and not to create other tensions between inhabitants that maybe were checking what other people were doing. The small rooms were still open in the first lockdown and in a good way, they could be used in a few people or just with the family. They were used for example for courses, like language courses. But then they were closed in the second lockdown also because they were integrated into laundry rooms, and other people were afraid to get in contact with positive people while making their laundry. In the pandemic, those rooms were lost. But people could go outside and since it was not possible to travel, also richer people that usually travel more, stayed in their leisure time in parks, which were really crowded, not only by people that had always used them, and also for that the tensions were higher. Thus, also the quality of outdoor spaces played a role. I am doing moderation of settlement processes, so all the activities where people come together were

moved in zoom. Sometimes it worked: if there is a group that wants to work together, then it can work really well, but usually, in leisure time many people do not want to seat in front of the computer. With established groups it works a bit better: we now have two meetings with two new projects, and we'll see how many people will come. Another thing working really well were community garden projects, during the first lockdown, we started gardening with people: there is this really huge garden and at the beginning, we found it really hard to find people wanting to cultivate it, with lockdown everything was full, there was even a waiting list.

Viennese social housing system derives from the assumption that housing is a human right: how many people are still excluded by the system and why?

I think many criteria are linked to citizenship and legal stay, with jobs. You need to have some money, if you do not earn money, then it is hard. It also depends on the visa people have: who is a migrant need Austrian or EU citizenship to enter the system.

How to deal with people who recently immigrated and thus do still not possess Austrian or European citizenship (apart from providing temporary accommodation)?

Yes, with the limit of the 2-years stay and the fact that there are mainly temporary accommodations, how will you ever enter the system in this way? In Vienna, the 10th district is known as the district where people newly moved to Vienna start: it is a very mixed place; people are from all over the world. Those who just came to Vienna usually go there because there are people from their community. Later on, they move away, maybe to other districts. When I was working with young people many years ago, I met a person, living in the 15th district with all family, but the kids all then moved to the 21st district: it was like a social upgrading. And now in new housing, I am always surprised because people come from very different places.

Is there any initiative from social housing or associations for these people to get into the main system?

Yes, but mainly they are shelters, not real flats, they are mainly temporary or under bad condition. I was also a moderator in a Caritas project called *Eltern Grätzel*, and they gave advice to their community about housing: some people accepted very high prices for bad conditions flats because they do not have a choice or do not even know sometimes. This project started from very low threshold people.

And do you think the social housing system should change something to let people in more easily?

Firstly, I think there should be more rights for people without an Austrian passport but still living and working here: this would already change a lot. It is not just a question of housing, even having the right to vote for example.

What are the problems that may arise because of a mix of cultures in a social housing community?

If there are problems, they exist also because of prejudices, and even without migrants around them, maybe there are even more. Problems of racism are more spread where there is less of a cultural mixture. It is important that people live together, but not everybody has to be friends, they can only be neighbours.

What are the reasons, from an urban planning point of view, for the lack of connection between the districts Leopoldstadt and Brigittenau and the right riverbank of the Danube River?

I did a social analysis there, and I did not even know this place, it is not like *Donauinsel* or the *Donaukanal*. You cannot experience a lot there, there are not many people going there because there are not a lot of crossing, only people living in the districts know where they are. The street and the railway are kinds of barriers. When I did the social study, there was a group of Turkish women that every evening was going on

the riverbank: they live exactly in front of one of the crossings, so they used to go there because they had no problems on the riverbank side, the kids could run around, and nobody was interfering. I think who knows the place go there, but it is not really attractive. For young people it is more attractive for example going to Millennium City: they are attracted mainly to the shopping centre.

The riverbank is not really comfortable because you have to cross the street and maybe in the evening is also a bit scary, so maybe is not a place where kids go alone. A lot of people enjoy more going to the *Donauinsel*.

How much important are Handelskai and the railway Donauuferbahn for the city?

I do not live in Vienna anymore, but when I was living there, I only used the metro lines to move inside the city. I did not even know how the railway works, and the same for everybody I know. Now instead, that I live in the countryside, I know all the railways, with which you can go everywhere much faster than with the metro: for me, it is important the railway in general to cross the city. For what concern the street, I think it is important if you want to go outside of the city, I think, but I do not know the area really well.

In 2003 there was a proposal from Christoph Chorherr (Grüne Partei), for a 24th district along the Danube Riverbank to “exploit the potentiality of Handelskai”: what do you think about this possibility?

I do not know the proposal. The riverbank is kind of small, I do not know if it makes sense to have a long district then it is not connected with the rest of the city, people on one end have no connection with people on the other one. And there are a lot of residential buildings anyway, I wonder why they never did it on the river. There are two possibilities, in my opinion, if you build housing: either there it is even a bigger barrier for people from the district or maybe could make the river more part of the city. There are mainly luxury hotels or towers, and people staying there probably do not want people coming from the city to stay there, so also this

has to be taken into account.

What services should be implemented to improve the attractiveness of districts 2 and 20?

The 2nd district changed a lot in the last few years: it is the new popular district to live in, at least on the side close to the historical centre. *Karmelitermarkt* is a bit gentrified but is also very functional as an outgoing area: 20 years ago, it was not like that. The 20th district is not much developed yet, but there are the new development areas of *Nordbahnhof* and *Nordwestbahnhof*: there is really a new neighbourhood.

What public spaces should be implemented to improve the attractiveness of districts 2 and 20?

Maybe with this social sustainability pillar, the city gives a lot of money for new areas: but what about old areas? What I see in the field of social sustainability is that in those urban communities you have sort of islands with lots of possibilities: you have nice community spaces, moderation for settlement processes and so on but old houses do not have community rooms and the problem is that community rooms in newly built houses are not for everybody. The city has to work on the integration of these “islands” with the surrounding city.

In this map municipal housing and subsidized housing are marked: do you think it can be considered complete or should other structures be added?

It is really hard to map them all, somebody from the city probably knows. But I have no idea which buildings could be missing, I am sorry.

INTERVIEW 14

Interviewee: Peter Rippl, association founder

Association: HausWirtschaft e.Gen.

What are the main features of the Viennese social housing system?

There are two parts: there are the community housings from the city of Vienna. They are buildings that were built or are built directly from the city of Vienna and are called *Gemeindebau*. It is a very big and great tradition. The other point is that the city stopped building these buildings and then there was a kind of buildings called *geförderte Wohnbau* (subsidised buildings): there are companies that are building housing and they get money support from the city and this support is very cheap credit, 1% per year for 45 years, which are very good conditions for financing housing and the city of Vienna instituted competitions for land owned by the city. The city of Vienna has a department called *Wohnfonds* that is a very big landowner. Land which is owned by *Wohnfonds* and gets to development has a fixed use for subsidised housing. The company decides to build buildings at the condition decided by the city. The flat rent price has to be no more than 7,50 €/m² and this category is open to normal building companies as well as special kinds of building companies, which are the base of the social housing buildings in all Austrian area which are the *gemeinnütziger* companies (no-profit). These are very special because they are not allowed to earn money, they have to build buildings only for their own costs, they are not like for-profit investors, but just want to make social housing. The limit for the rent for a subsidised building is just for the time of the credit. If there is a normal company and after 30-35 years of credit, it is allowed to take all the money they want, *gemeinnütziger* are not allowed instead to raise the rent. Flats built by limited profit are always cheap flats. The ones built by normal companies sometimes go, with a new renting contract, for the normal market price. But only for new contracts because Austria has a very strict rental law. So, if someone leaves the building, then the owner is allowed to raise the rent. If

you want a very good social housing system you have to build the buildings on your own as a government or to establish a market for *gemeinnütziger* companies.

What are the features that could be exported to other European cities? Why?

I think the points I just said. One is to establish *gemennütziger* companies not allowed to make profits and sell the flats because if you sell something it goes in the private market. The other is buildings made by the municipality. In Vienna, there is a department that makes competition for the land and so there is a very good quality in building construction. This is one of the main points: if you as a government have control over what is built over the land, you can define your rules. Being the landowner is the key.

What are the architectural projects for social housing that had greater success in Vienna? And why?

There are a lot of buildings, sometimes very big like *Karl Marx-Hof* for example, they are areas with thousands of flats. They are very old and with very high quality in detail. For the time they were built, they are very high in quality because they all have social parts like libraries, washing rooms, some rooms for community, theatres and sometimes also restaurants. There are interesting new development areas where it is hard to find one only project, for example, the area where I am living, *Nordbahnhof*, *Seestadt Aspern*, *Sonnwendviertel*. Some special parts are called *Baugruppen*, housing projects built by normal people, groups of people that want to leave together and they build and develop projects together. One of these projects is *Sargfabrik*, some are in *Seestadt* and *Sonnwendviertel*. In *Nordbahnhof* there is a famous project called *Wohnproject Wien*. Around ten people maybe already knowing each other start a project together and then you have the maximum outcome from that.

How does it work exactly?

There are two ways. Either some architects have ideas

and look for people or some people have an idea and look for architects. Normally the city of Vienna has land where makes a competition, reserving one portion to such special buildings, and groups can propose a project.

And is this really successful?

Yes, they are the best buildings, it is like common people designing a building as they always wanted it. Of course, there are price limits, but you can define what is important for you. It is your decision and not from a company that wants to choose the easiest solution or from the architects that want to design fancy buildings.

What was the impact of the Corona crisis on the social housing system in Vienna?

There are two things, one is the prices raise, for the material, and then there was the need for more time for some projects. The rent prices remained fixed, but they could not build some projects because the developer companies that are not city companies cannot build for a higher price than the one they can rent later. The city just does not allow them to raise the price over 7 €/m², the companies thus have problems in paying the construction companies that maybe raise the prices of the materials. They decide to build maybe in the lowest quality, but they cannot decrease the rent price to less than 10 €/m². Then they cannot build it. That is a problem of rising market prices together with maintaining a fixed rent price for the companies.

And do the users have any problems?

Of course, there are the normal effects. Some people may be lost their job for example. Also for people who lived in social housing. Since some people living in social housing are also in economic difficulties, for example, they are a part of the society not so good at handling such situations.

Viennese social housing system derives from the assumption that housing is a human right: how many

people are still excluded by the system and why?

This social housing system has one big, criticized point: it is not for the lower part of society but for the middle part, because of the rent prices and the prices to enter the system. Most of the time you have to pay in addition to the rent a *Finanzierungsbeitrag*, apart from financing the project, of about 500 €/m². You get the money back when you leave the flat, but you need the money when you move in: for example for a 50 m² apartment you need 50000 € and for lots of people that are not able to pay this. There is also a minimum income you need sometimes because the building companies need to know that you can always pay your rent. The owner needs to know that you can pay the rent. This is criticised because sometimes there is a too high threshold that people have to overcome to get the flat. The city for that reason established some years ago the so-called *Gemeindebau Neu*, thus you have the fixed rent but not the one-time payment. And these are made by the company that belongs to the city.

How to deal with people who recently immigrated and thus do still not possess Austrian or European citizenship (apart from providing temporary accommodation)?

I do not know these things in detail. Most of these people are displaced. Some go to big refugees shelters in the private market, most of the time living in very small and in bad conditions apartments. Maybe in a 50 m² apartment lives a family of 6 people for 700 €/month.

What are the problems that may arise because of a mix of cultures in a social housing community?

I think there are normal problems if different cultures or ages come together. It is not only a matter of development but of people who live there. It is not only a matter of culture but for example of age: kids are playing in the courtyard and old people would like silence and quietness. Some cultures maybe have different uses of the space and when a lot of people live all together in a small apartment then they tend to spend most of the

time outside in the open air. Maybe they stay out until late at night, and someone else wants to sleep. There is not a more important use than the others, there are always several sides of the usage. For example, also students sometimes make parties until the night, but if there are twenty people on the balcony, the others cannot sleep. At the same time maybe, there are kids in the morning playing outside and these students want to sleep. In social housing especially you have the possibility to manage these conflicts. This is necessary especially for buildings owned by the government. In fact, there are institutions for managing these conflicts, there is an institution called *Wohnpartner*. Many years ago, there were people called *Hausmeister*, like facility managers, living in these apartment complexes and sometimes they were really strict, sometimes they were good friends and moderators for conflicts. Now the law is changed, and these kinds of people are not allowed, but there are these institutions. I do not know which of the two was better, it depends on the person that acts. Not every person is a good moderator but just want to make their duty.

What are the reasons, from an urban planning point of view, for the lack of connection between the districts Leopoldstadt and Brigittenau and the right riverbank of the Danube River?

I think it is very accessible, of course, it is not like having a pedestrian zone. It is a really busy street, not very attractive and the side of the buildings normally face the other side, so from there, it is visible the back of these buildings. The riverside by itself has many bridges to cross. And the main reason for this detachment is maybe the railway. There is a big area used as storage for trains, so of course, if you take it away there is a big area to develop. There were plans to develop the area building above the train, but I wonder why to do so. It is one of the big things discussed in Vienna: it is not like living on the riverside in Paris. The Paris situation is more comparable to the *Donaukanal*. The Danube is very isolated, on the other side there is a big highway, and on the Danube Island, on this side, the railway and the street make a barrier. But this also saves the

riverbank from being built and privatised.

How much important are Handelskai and the railway Donauuferbahn for the city?

The railway is only partially used for transporting people. There is a railway line called *s45* and it is going until the station called *Handelskai* after that is only the storage for a railway company. There is always a discussion about making this *s45* go further but they are different ownerships, the railway company is the state company and not from the city government. The state asks for payment if the trains go further, but the city does not want to pay it because the train is not part of the city ownership. The rails are there already so it would be fast to develop but there should be the construction of the stops. The other problem is that the stops are far from the buildings: the rails are on the side of the housing area and not on the middle of the housing area so you only have one side of people that can use it and normally it is better to build a traffic infrastructure more in the middle of the houses. The rest of the railway is more of storage of ÖBB (Austrian Railway Company).

What about the street?

It is a very big connection along the river, it is important but would be nice if there was no railway but maybe just a tram line, and social housing along the riverbank and if the *Handelskai* got smaller with cars not going so fast it would be nice.

In 2003 there was a proposal from Christoph Chorherr (Grüne Partei), for a 24th district along the Danube Riverbank to “exploit the potentiality of Handelskai”: what do you think about this possibility?

Yes, he called it the 24th district. I think it was the proposal I explained before of building above the train line. I think it would be a very difficult development area because it would be a good idea just to take the railway away and buildings on the level of *Handelskai* and not two floors above. And also making a new

development of the traffic system, maybe not with a train. If you raise the building above the train line you have a very long street hole because on the riverside the buildings are two floors above, on the street, you do not have shops or buildings and on the other side you have the back of the buildings, and you take the view away from the existing constructions. There was a new *Gemeindebau* in *Handelskai 214a* and there you see the problem because it was raised two floors, at the first floors there is a parking garage, and it does nothing for the renewal of the area. If you raise the building over the street level, you kill the public spaces.

What services should be implemented to improve the attractiveness of districts 2 and 20?

One of the most needed things is a swimming hall, there is one in the 20th district, but I think there is a need for another one and there is a lack of cultural buildings like libraries, theatres for example.

What public spaces should be implemented to improve the attractiveness of districts 2 and 20?

There are lots of parks, but I think you can always have more parks, I think it is always better to have more green space.

In this map municipal housing and subsidized housing are marked: do you think it can be considered complete or should other structures be added?

You can write to the city government for more information, the *Wohnbaustadtrat*, but I can tell you some buildings are missing. On the *Nordbahnhof* you have between *Vorgartenstraße* and *Engerthstraße* there is a *Gemeindebau*. Also in the area of *Nordbahnhof*, there are a lot more, maybe you can find it on the *Gebietsbetreuung* website.

INTERVIEW 15

Interviewee: Judith Moser-Harnoncourt, project development manager

Association: Neunerimmo (No-profit association, helping homeless people)

N.B.: the interviewee did not accept to record the interview, thus only notes are reported.

What are the main features of the Viennese social housing system?

In Vienna, there are special communal housing projects since the 1930s. In those years Vienna had a special position in the monarchy, in 1917 there were 2 million inhabitants, which is quite a lot. It is foreseen that in 2025 we will have again 2 million citizens.

The special feature of social housing in Vienna is that there are social housing projects in all districts, creating a mixture of social strata, in fact, people used to say that it is impossible to know your social status only from your address.

The 43% of the residences are social housing and the associations providing them are regulated by a strict law that prevents them from having any profit.

The system of no-profit associations works quite well because they are not allowed to sell the properties to the private market

What are the features that could be exported to other European cities? Why?

The feature that could be exported is the implementation of these organizations. And the other thing is the need for land, especially cheap land, which is the precondition for building cheap housing.

What are the architectural projects for social housing that had greater success in Vienna? And why?

(did not answer)

What was the impact of the Corona crisis on the social housing system in Vienna?

There was a political decision, and it was forbidden to social housing to make any eviction. Social ministry gives now money to people who cannot pay the rent. In *Neunerimmo* there was a lot of money provisions from the government to solve the problem too. But probably there will be problems emerging in the future. The problem of money is only momentarily solved. Some people live in expensive apartments because of the limits to enter social housing.

Viennese social housing system derives from the assumption that housing is a human right: how many people are still excluded by the system and why?

Neunerimmo was founded in 2015 for refugees to offer them basic services. First, they receive shelter from the government, but when they receive asylum, they have to leave those accommodations, and that is when the problems start, because they do not have a salary, they cannot get any apartment. There is also the limit that you have to stay for two years in Vienna before accessing the social housing system. *Neunerimmo* gives them residences for those two years. There is also the "housing first" program: we look for private stock apartments to rent to people. The concept is that before solving all the other problems people need a home. It is not like homeless shelters, where people just sleep and then the day after leave. The aim is a promotion of residential stability and security. There are also social workers taking care of them to organize their lives.

How to deal with people who recently immigrated and thus do still not possess Austrian or European citizenship (apart from providing temporary accommodation)?

There are associations like ours, like Caritas, we also organize apartments for other social organizations. We do not have any social workers; we are the link

between real estate and social organizations. The main part of apartments is from the no-profit associations because the rents are cheap. We rent the apartment and give a limited agreement to those people to reach the two years needed.

What are the problems that may arise because of a mix of cultures in a social housing community?

In particular, the difficulty with homeless people is that they have other problems, are not interested in communal areas, they need to stabilize their existence. A good social mix helps people to know each other. About the housing first apartment, nobody knows that a specific apartment is a housing first, it is anonymous. In no-profit complexes there are some people that own the apartment, creating a social mixture. The problems are not solved by having communal rooms but have to be organized by somebody.

What are the reasons, from an urban planning point of view, for the lack of connection between the districts Leopoldstadt and Brigittenau and the right riverbank of the Danube River?

The main street *Handelskai* is really large, with six lanes, it is a barrier. In the 1960s the Danube was not attractive, the *Donauinsel* which have a lot of free time activities has not been built. There was nothing even on the other side.

How much important are Handelskai and the railway Donauuferbahn for the city?

They are the main connections. The railway is also used for people. The street is used also for moving inside the city, for internal connection. On the other side of the Danube, there is a motorway, and *Handelskai* is used as an internal connection.

In 2003 there was a proposal from Christoph Chorherr (Grüne Partei), for a 24th district along the Danube Riverbank to “exploit the potentiality of Handelskai”: what do you think about this possibility?

Do not know the project. There are new developments like the Marina Tower, it is a luxury area. There is a mix of buildings because there are some social housings for the 60s and 70s for example. The infrastructure is really good, so they have to increase the density of buildings.

What services should be implemented to improve the attractiveness of districts 2 and 20?

Leopoldstadt is really big, with different areas, difficult to say for the overall district. *Brigittenau* is developing and gentrifying now. I do not know the area.

What public spaces should be implemented to improve the attractiveness of districts 2 and 20?

There are lots of green spaces already.

In this map municipal housing and subsidized housing are marked: do you think it can be considered complete or should other structures be added?

On each subsidized project, there are signs saying who are the owners. I think in general there could be more in these two districts.

INTERVIEW 16

Interviewee: Katharina Kirsch-Soriano da Silva, architecture, urban development and social management

Association: Caritas (no-profit association)

What are the main features of the Viennese social housing system?

One important feature is the communal housing, the *Gemeindebau*, which began in the 1920s with the Red Vienna. The city administration began to build social housing itself. So today we have around 220000 apartments in the *Gemeindebau*, which is around 1/4 of all housing units in Vienna. Another feature is the *Gemeinnützige Wohnbau*, the limited-profit housing sector, where lots of housing associations have a regulation for buildings housing on a limited-profit basis, so the rents they are taking is limited to the costs they have to sustain, thus they do not have a profit. I don't know the exact number of the apartments; I think a bit less than a 1/4 but in the last years this sector is growing and there is new subsidized housing. Especially no-profit associations use subsidies to build new social housing constructions. There are two aspects, you have a certain rent and surely is lower than the private rental market, but it is not that cheap for vulnerable people, there are also access conditions and there is also the initial cost of *Baukostenzuschuss*, which is an additional payment to contribute at part of construction costs upfront. So, you have the "super-subsidized" housing, the "SMART" housing program, where this upfront payment is very low, 3000 € to 5000 € but still is a lot for someone, but in general can be up to 20000 € 30000 €, which is an access barrier. Looking at the older stock, mainly from the 50s, 60s and 70s, these housings are already financed, they are really cheap and there is no upfront payment. There is also the private market, but in comparison to other city is smaller, because there are these two large rental segments, thus it is maybe half of the market. And in the private market, there are different regulations, there is the historic housing (*Altbau*) stock, building built until 1945, which

regarding rent regulation usually have stricter ones because there is a Tenancy Law, where there is a limit of rent that can be asked to tenants. The Tenancy Law is very protective but in last years there has been a liberalization and openness, to make it more profitable, so there are systems with *Zuschläge* (supplements) and *Abschläge* (discounts), so you can have additional fees if the building is in a good location, if it has an elevator, so the price is not fixed anymore. Originally there was also strong protection on permanent rent, and now there is the possibility of temporary rent, it is possible to make temporary contracts only for three years, and this is a development of the last 10-20 years, so you do not just have higher prices but also uncertainty on whether you can stay there or not. Especially the private stock has become more object of speculation, people use housing also for profits, that was not that common in the 80s or beginning of the 90s.

What features could be exported to other European cities? Why?

What Vienna did in the sector of social housing, like to implementation of no profit associations, how they systematically construct and maintain the social housing stock. But in this segment, you also have access criteria. For instance, Viennese people are preferred, you have to live here for 2 years, at the same address (which I do not understand why you have to stay in one specific address and not in Vienna) then you can apply. Other access criteria are for example that you do not have to own an apartment; overcrowding and unhealthy housing conditions will get you past in the system. I think some criteria make sense, some others are really difficult to reach for some people. There are also complementary initiatives: if there are specifically vulnerable groups the city prefers to cooperate with NGOs, like Caritas, where I am working, like with the program "housing first", for homeless people that are ready to enter the housing market. Usually, the NGOs have contracts with the associations, and after a while, if everything is working well they give the contract to the person. Sometimes for other target groups, also the elderly for example, that need a lot of healthcare

support, there is cooperation with specific NGOs. I do not know whether it is similar in other European cities, but I think these features would be exportable. And another interesting thing is that is not only for the poor or marginalized but aims at creating a social mixture and the city is responsible for providing a home to all or to a lot of people at least. The buildings are spread all over Vienna and there is a social mixture in all the complexes and in the last years is also a cultural mixture. Some decades ago, was just for Austrian citizens, so you had to apply for Austrian citizenship to enter the *Gemeindebau*. But this was abandoned at the beginning of the 2000s, now it is open to other nationalities as well. In other federal states, though it is more common to have privately owned housing, the proportions are not the same as in Vienna, where there is a large number of rental houses.

What are the architectural projects for social housing that had greater success in Vienna? And why?

I think there are some good projects from the beginning, from the 1920s, because they were still originated in the idea of the garden city (*Gartenstadt*), for instance, one of the first was *Auf der Schmelz* in the 15th district, where you have one of the older housing complexes. There are very large green spaces inside the courtyard. Especially if you think about how the building where at the time with the *Mietkasernen*, with the private marked housing block very dense, with almost 80% surface built up and only 20% of green space, this was a novelty. They tried to subvert the ratio of built-up area and green area, trying to have 70% green space. The idea was of having open and collected space in the courtyard, which is also a bit protected from outside. There are a lot of examples of these kinds of architecture. There were also really large collective spaces, including for example washing rooms. In terms of architecture also some of the modern quarters are remarkable. Some buildings of the 60s or 70s have instead lower quality, following the logic of the standardized modern functional city, with very dense housing stock and nearly no collective spaces. Green spaces are more “distant green”, not really friendly for people to use.

In recent years there has been the subsidized housing the instrument of *Bauträgerwettbewerbe*, which are architectural competitions, generally with the participation of teams formed by housing associations, architects, landscape designers, sociologists or social services (also Caritas). Each team tries to make a proposition with architectural qualities but also the ecological and landscape qualities and a social concept where you have an emphasis on collective spaces and participation processes. In the end, the jury assigns the subsidies: I think this system works quite well, the quality is high in terms of architectural quality, much more than the private market, despite they have more money, which just wants to maximize the profit and investments. For instance, in *Seestadt Aspern* or also in *Wildgarten*, there are really good quality projects, not only for the buildings themselves but for how the space is designed.

Does Caritas take part in these competitions too?

Yes, in the competitions you have these four criteria of sustainability, one is architecture, one is ecology, one is economy, and since 2009 there is also social sustainability. In this last criterion, we collaborate as an association. This means that on one hand, we ask our colleagues within Caritas if there are some housing forms that we integrate into the buildings, for example for elderly people, or for single mothers, but we also try to design the collective space and do participation process and assist in the process of settlement, when people move in. We try to work in this initiation of the neighbourhood: Vienna has grown a lot and in big complexes, it makes sense to support the starting phase, so to get people to know each other, avoid conflicts and finding a common ground.

What was the impact of the Corona crisis on the social housing system in Vienna?

I think in the housing system only two months the construction sites stopped and then they were the first to start working again. In terms of buildings construction, the system went on, but there were

some changes in the housing costs and materials costs. The prices are higher and especially the limited-profit associations are struggling to maintain an accessible rent with these construction prices. On the other hand, people are struggling with more existential problems, like job loss, reduction of income, lockdowns. For people with less income, it is more difficult to afford houses, and there is an increase in the social gap and inequalities. On the other hand, in the different districts, the neighbourhood and the home become more important, since people spend more time at home. The place that was only for the weekend or for the night has become the place where we spend most of the time. Depending on housing conditions, maybe there are no problems, but in precarious situations, this is a time when you have more conflicts and difficulties. Of course, in the beginning, we could observe a lot of solidarity as well, between people, but I do not know if it really lasted over time. But the districts, not only the house, became socially denser, and there was more potential for conflicts. About common spaces, there were different ways in which housing associations acted. Some said that especially nowadays that families stay in small apartments, it is important that these rooms stay open, and they left them open if following the rules, for example, to use them as a home office. Others instead preferred to close them because of legal responsibility, they did not want to take the risk. So, these are the two tendencies we detected. For us, it is important to set safety rules, but it is really important also to leave these spaces open for people that need them more than ever.

Viennese social housing system derives from the assumption that housing is a human right: how many people are still excluded by the system and why?

I think there are people excluded from where they come from, like migrants which are systematically excluded especially from social housing. Why? I think is a political question. Lastly, social democrats have lots of votes from the right-wing, so it is part of the program not to be too open in this area. A lot of people are still excluded for income as well. In the *Gemeindebau* you

can enter even with a low income or municipal aid, but in limited profit housing, you need to do an upfront payment, which is an income barrier. Even in the older stock, it would be easier, but it depends on the housing association because I think to get an apartment you need to show that you have a stable income, and this is of course another barrier. In the private sector there are many different segments: some are owned by small private owners, trustworthy and that takes the risk; but the bigger ones have their own rules and barriers. And there is still a substandard stock, where lots of immigrants come in and maybe there are also subcontracts, not totally legal, and some people, in the end, makes money in that way, renting a small house to big groups of people or families, for a high amount of money. But those who do not have an official right to enter regularly, are happy that there is a possibility to get a spot and maybe after some years they can enter on a bigger apartment. I think this segment is not so big in Vienna but still, there are situations not in really good legal conditions.

How to deal with people who recently immigrated and thus do still not possess Austrian or European citizenship (apart from providing temporary accommodation)?

Once you get permanent asylum then you get a status that is comparable to Austrian nationality, and you have more rights. For those who do not have asylum, but are migrants that came for different reasons, it is more difficult. Because if you come with an asylum background you have access to certain accommodations, generally you stay there in the beginning and then you see how you can enter in the housing market, you have I think four months' time to find your own apartment and it is quite difficult. In general, in the other federal states of Austria, you have the accommodation. In Vienna instead, there are not accommodations enough, so asylum seekers receive some financial support, part of which is for paying for an apartment, but usually they end up in the private housing market. In some cases, would be better than the refugees try to stay in other federal states of Austria,

instead when they get the resident permit, there is the tendency to come to Vienna. But the social housing segment, in the beginning, is quite impossible to enter.

It is not that easy to take political decisions, but our idea would be to set the housing stock in general as more inclusive, and this would be better for migrants and Austrians as well. But the government is afraid that if it is too inclusive it would attract too many people. In terms of quantity, in Vienna, there is a lot of talk in the media of refugees, but in reality, they are the smallest group. Especially for what concerns EU citizens, many of them have a work permit, formal or informal possibilities to work. Some of them live permanently some go back and forth. There are a lot of women from Slovakia or Hungary that stay some weeks here, then go back to their countries to stay with the family for example.

What are the problems that may arise because of a mix of cultures in a social housing community?

Yes, I think there are some problems but sometimes are projected. I mean they are not originally cultural problems, maybe people have in mind that some problems are linked with cultural differences, but in many cases, it is not primarily a cultural question. Sometimes of course people have some different habits or practices, that can cause estrangement or conflicts, but what is most common are conflicts between people that have different ideas on how to use the spaces in the neighbourhood, in many cases these different visions are caused by people with different ages because they also have different needs. In the practice, there are fewer cultural conflicts, there are many different needs and perspectives of people, rarely because of culture. Many times, these conflicts are attributed to cultural differences even if they are not caused by cultural differences. To solve them, it is important a community life. Of course, having language barriers, maybe make it more difficult to open this channel of communication and there are some real but also felt barriers. This is why there are professional communities like ours: you can help people to make activities together, sometimes this is not something that works well as self-organized

activity.

What are the reasons, from an urban planning point of view, for the lack of connection between the districts Leopoldstadt and Brigittenau and the right riverbank of the Danube River?

I think the spot where there is *Handelskai* station, with the subway access, with Millennium Tower and Millennium City, would be a busy point. I think the inaccessibility is due to the large street that is only for cars, and for the pedestrians, some parts are difficult to cross, there are few passages, there is no connection between the residential area and the riverbank, but I do not know the exact reason for that, I am not an expert about the development of this area. I think there is also a train line so maybe in the time, it was planned the urban traffic was more important in the urban planning and the perspective of how could be important for pedestrians was forgotten. There are, in my perception, some popular spots like Millennium City and others that are more in the shadow and difficult to reach.

How much important are Handelskai and the railway Donauuferbahn for the city?

I am not really an expert on the traffic there. I think they are used, but this does not mean that you could not reorganize them in another way, from the point of view of today. Maybe it was planned in the 70s when at some point, as I referred also to the housing market before, the modern and functional city was also the city of the automobile, so in many cases, it was a priority to plan for cars, but if it would be done nowadays maybe it would be different. It is also a pity to have such a large traffic way directly on the Danube, maybe it could be thought in another way. I do not know much about the train line. I think that the street is quite used, but it depends on how the traffic is organized.

In 2003 there was a proposal from Christoph Chorherr (Grüne Partei), for a 24th district along the Danube Riverbank to “exploit the potentiality of Handelskai”: what do you think about this possibility?

It depends on which development. Maybe there would be some potential for residential buildings as well, but when I think about this area, I think it is a pity that is not well connected to the river as an open landscape and not as a built one. There is the *Donauinsel*, quite a good practice of space planning: so, you need recreational space for the city as a whole. In this part it is present the barrier of the traffic, there are pedestrian ways but the connection to reach it is bad. I see as more important this aspect of recreational space, cultural space, but not more business or necessarily residential buildings. It is not the first thing that comes to my mind when I think about this area.

What services should be implemented to improve the attractiveness of districts 2 and 20?

I think especially the 2nd district is already quite dense in the social structures, there are many social organizations, even migrants' associations. And it also changed a lot, there are lots of developing projects. There is the *Prater* area which is quite dynamic and heterogeneous. In the 20th district, I am not so sure. In my perception, there is more deficit, or at least a potential to still develop. In terms of population density and residential buildings, it is quite big as well, but the 2nd district is more popular I think, maybe because of the *Prater*, the 20th is less known and busy. There are parks and *Gemeindebauten*, but in general, there are fewer social and commercial infrastructures.

What public spaces should be implemented to improve the attractiveness of districts 2 and 20?

As I said when I think of the riverbank, I think of it more as a public space. There are some parks within the residential area, but in the already built environment, it is difficult to implement something new. Since they are quite dense there could be new public spaces to use for sure. Maybe there could be more, even if it is not easy to create them. And in the 2nd district especially in the newly developed areas, there are new concepts for public spaces. In the second district, there is also the *Karmelita Markt*, which is historical. I think

some kinds of spaces work well if they are historically and traditionally developed, not designed starting from scratch. The *Prater* is a huge area of historical importance for the whole city. What I think it is missing more is indoor collective spaces, which is normal to find in the new developments, but it is not really common in the older stock. This is an aspect that could be initiated more in the historic city.

In this map municipal housing and subsidized housing are marked: do you think it can be considered complete or should other structures be added?

For the *Gemeindebau* you can easily find them in the *Wiener Stadtplan*. For limited profit, there is nothing like this. Sometimes the *Gebietsbetreuungen* do this kind of mapping to know the owners. From the map, you can see which are the historical buildings from the plan shape, and for sure they are not from no-profit associations. I would try to associate the typology of buildings and the area where they are built, to exclude those which are not. Maybe you can see it in the *Grundbuch* (land registry). For the owner of the buildings but it is more common to look at smaller parts. I do not know if there is an easy way to do it.

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Figure 2: Kössl, G. (2021, May 25). Mieten in Österreich 2020 und Entwicklung 2010-2020. Free data visualization software. (Re-elaborated by the author)

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Figure 4: Schiefer, C. J., (1865) *Übersichtsplan der k.k. Reichshaupt und Residenzstadt Wien bis zur Burgfriedens-Linie mit der im Jahr 1862 geschehenen Theilung des IV. Bezirks in 2, nämlich Wieden und Margarethen daher 9 Bezirke sind*, gesammelt von Cajetan Schiefer, 3.2.1.1.P1.249.3, Stadt Wien. <https://www.wien.gv.at/act-aproweb2/benutzung/image.xhtml?id=8h5AtH+5zrGn-POj2uoylr+Mo+8OkdD4Jp25sfgC2ACs1>

Figure 5: graphic design by Friedrich Hauer, based on an orthophoto by the city of Vienna, the former floodplain is taken from the land survey under emperor Joseph II—”Josephinische Landesaufnahme”—from 1773–1781 (Winiwarter, 2013)

Figure 6: Lukacsy, M., & Fendt, C. (2021). (rep.). *Statistisches Jahrbuch der Stadt Wien 2021*. Vienna, Austria: Stadt Wien. (Re-elaborated by the author)

Figure 7: Lukacsy, M., & Fendt, C. (2021). (rep.). *Statistisches Jahrbuch der Stadt Wien 2021*. Vienna, Austria: Stadt Wien. (Re-elaborated by the author)

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Figure 10: created by the author

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Figure 11: created by the author

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Figure 16: Wolfgang Pichler, Vienna. Millennium Tower. Rivergate (2019), <https://www.flickr.com/photos/10623250@No3/46391399704>

Figure 17: Schwarz und Schwarz Architekten, Wallensteinplatz (2000), <https://www.architekt-schwarz.com/wallensteinplatz-2000>

Figure 18: created by the author

Figure 19: created by the author
(base map from Google Earth)

Figure 20: created by the author

Figure 21: created by the author

Figure 22: created by the author

Figure 23: created by the author

Figure 24: created by the author

Figure 25: created by the author

Figure 26: created by the author

Figure 27: created by the author

