

SUMMARY

100 YEARS OF SOCIAL OPEN SPACE

A JOURNEY THROUGH THE OPEN SPACES OF SOCIAL HOUSING

IN VIENNA FROM 1919 TO 2019

ACHIEVEMENTS IN SOCIAL OPEN SPACE IN THE PAST 100 YEARS

This study highlights achievements in open space in Vienna's residential landscape over the past 100 years. Types of open space, design policies, forms of use and typical shortcomings in open space are considered in a historical context. Particular attention is paid to the interaction between a housing project, open space and the neighbourhood, as well as its effect on the everyday lives of women and children.

As preliminary research, more than 150 subsidised housing estates scattered throughout Vienna were examined based on traits such as indicators, construction and open space typologies, and analysed for their achievements in open space, resulting in a selection of 54 estates. These 54 housing estates were then inspected and evaluated on site on the basis of a questionnaire, the "open space checklist", developed in a preceding pilot study for evaluating the efficiency of open spaces (Standler, K., 2019). Subsequently, the development of the social open spaces of these 54 housing estates in their historical context was examined for their achievements in open space, in order to analyse various thematic areas of open space use in their social and ecological dimensions, and a walking tour – a common thread – along the underground line U1 was put together. The aim of the study is to compare the original intentions of open space design with the changing societal requirements and the current state, so as to outline the challenges of open space design in future residential construction in Vienna as a set of measures.

The study begins in "Red Vienna" (1919–1933). What seemed conceived as a utopia appears today as a logical and comprehensible development from the settlers' movement to municipal housing, as new structures of housing and open space (residential courts, planted inner courtyards, tenants' garden plots) addressed the prevalent problem of lack of housing and open space in Vienna in an exemplary way, and improved the residents' health and social situation. The motto of housing design, including the corresponding social open spaces, was based on the mantra of air, light and sun. In many housing estates, open space zoning was aimed at self-subsistence, in strong correspondence to the allotment garden movement emerging at the time. In the 1920s and 1930s, social open space meant an enormous improvement in the lives of women, as the infrastructure of social housing made their everyday lives substantially easier.

The second phase of residential construction policy from the 1950s to the 1980s focused on repairing the urban fabric by filling gaps – rapid reconstruction was the priority. The functionalist urban plan (the "Vienna Planning Policy") brought a breakthrough in 1962. It provided for the explicit spatial separation of residential, leisure and industrial areas, and was based on an intensification of passenger car traffic; at the same time, a decline in the quality of open spaces became noticeable. This period is considered as the second wave of residential relocation from the inner city's early 20th century buildings to the suburbs. Large-scale housing complexes such as the Grossfeld estate, the Per Albin Hansson estate, the Trabrenngründe estate, the residential park Alt-Erlaa, the complexes Am Schöpfwerk and Wienerflur, as well as industrial areas (Auhof, Strebersdorf, Inzersdorf) and shopping centres (Donauzentrum, Shopping City Süd) emerged on the outskirts of Vienna. Social problems ensued in some estates, such as the housing complex Am Schöpfwerk, completed in 1980: youth unemployment, crime, vacancies, vandalism and a homogenous age structure. To counteract these problem cases of Vienna's urban development, social work resources were increased and local support offices were initiated. The open spaces, however, were neglected; their redevelopment continues to be an open issue, unsolved to this day. Interestingly, the Vienna Tree Protection Act "to conserve a healthy environment for Vienna's inhabitants" entered into force as early as 1974.

A third phase in the 1990s saw the beginning of a first wave of redevelopment of the city of Vienna's old housing stock in order to raise housing standards. New estates were to be better integrated into their environment, detached from street traffic, easily accessible by public transport and above all equipped with the necessary local

supply structures. This brought a fundamental idea of “Red Vienna” from the 1930s back into focus: once again, great importance was placed on the socialisation of housing, and the planning of open spaces was increasingly entrusted to landscape architects. Among other things, playgrounds for toddlers (30 m²) and playgrounds for children and adolescents (500 m²) were mandated by law during this period in the Playground Ordinance.

In the past ten years, the city of Vienna has also looked to research studies on the topic of open space. In the urban development plan Vienna 2025, the indicators to ensure open space provision were set out as mandatory. Urban renewal and specific thematic projects, urban expansions, large-scale projects, developers’ competitions, construction groups and cooperative processes were systematically enshrined for the city of Vienna. In 2009, the three-pillar model for evaluating subsidised housing projects in Vienna was expanded by a fourth pillar. The pillar of social sustainability was added to the pillars of architecture, economy and ecology. Open space is enshrined in the ecology pillar, but also plays into architecture and social sustainability, taking on a qualitative role. Quality criteria for evaluating open space characteristics have been defined in the four-pillar model.

The analysis of existing open spaces in housing estates of the past 100 years attests to a change in user demands, for instance when it comes to play and recreation facilities for children and adolescents. Lacking facilities, the elimination of related uses and the already perceptible effects of climate change point to a neglect of open spaces. In particular, the disappearance of garden use for neighbourhood get-togethers and of self-subsistence facilities such as tenants’ plots and gardens gives cause for criticism. The original functions such as recreation, play and production must be restored, the greening rate improved, the use of open spaces optimised and facilities currently lacking must be added.

Despite 100 years of social open space, the lack of green and open spaces has become increasingly obvious, and the need for specifically planned structures is growing. Consequently, new challenges are emerging for the future of social open spaces, which this study explores in greater detail. The focus is put on the fact that social open space constitutes added value for the city and contributes to the overall enhancement of a neighbourhood. Social open space is also an issue of resource distribution between genders and social groups, especially when a city’s open space resources are becoming increasingly scarce. Gender-sensitive planning takes into account different groups of users and situations in life in equal measure. Finally, social open space plays a significant role in environmental issues. It is key to climate protection and contributes to preventing urban overheating. Green spaces improve the microclimate and are an essential factor, now more than ever, in completing and connecting the city’s network of open spaces.

Vienna’s first underground line U1 lends itself beautifully to undertaking a journey through time to the most varied open spaces of subsidised housing in Vienna. This infrastructural axis through the entire city not just in the geographical sense; it forms a proverbial “red thread” due to the colour of its signage systems and the various themes that can be explored in the 21 selected housing estates near its stops. Last but not least, this underground line is itself part of the history of urban construction in Vienna, and has always been an important planning tool in accessing new (residential) areas.

In conclusion, the study maps out three tours that illustrate and track the development of social open space in Vienna based on three thematic areas and the proposed set of measures. All three tours are designed as urban walking tours that can be combined or explored individually; in all their forms, they each present a cross-section of a century of social open space in Vienna – and thus of 100 years of urban development.

TOUR 1 SOUTHERN VIENNA: AROUND LAAER BERG HILL - THE FAVOURITES OF FAVORITEN DISTRICT

TOUR 2 CENTRAL VIENNA: IN THE DANUBE VALLEY - FROM VORGARTENSTRASSE TO KAISERMÜHLEN

TOUR 3 NORTHERN VIENNA: FROM THE SETTLERS’ MOVEMENT TO PARTICIPATIVE PROCESSES