

# Incremental Planning – Cooperative Scenario and/or Masterplan? Long- and Short-Term Planning Horizon of Urban Design Projects within the Existing Urban Fabric. Analysis of Projects in Vienna and Switzerland with Regard to the Factors Triggering Varying Planning Times

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## 1 ABSTRACT – INCREMENTAL PLANNING – COOPERATIVE SCENARIO AND/OR MASTERPLAN?

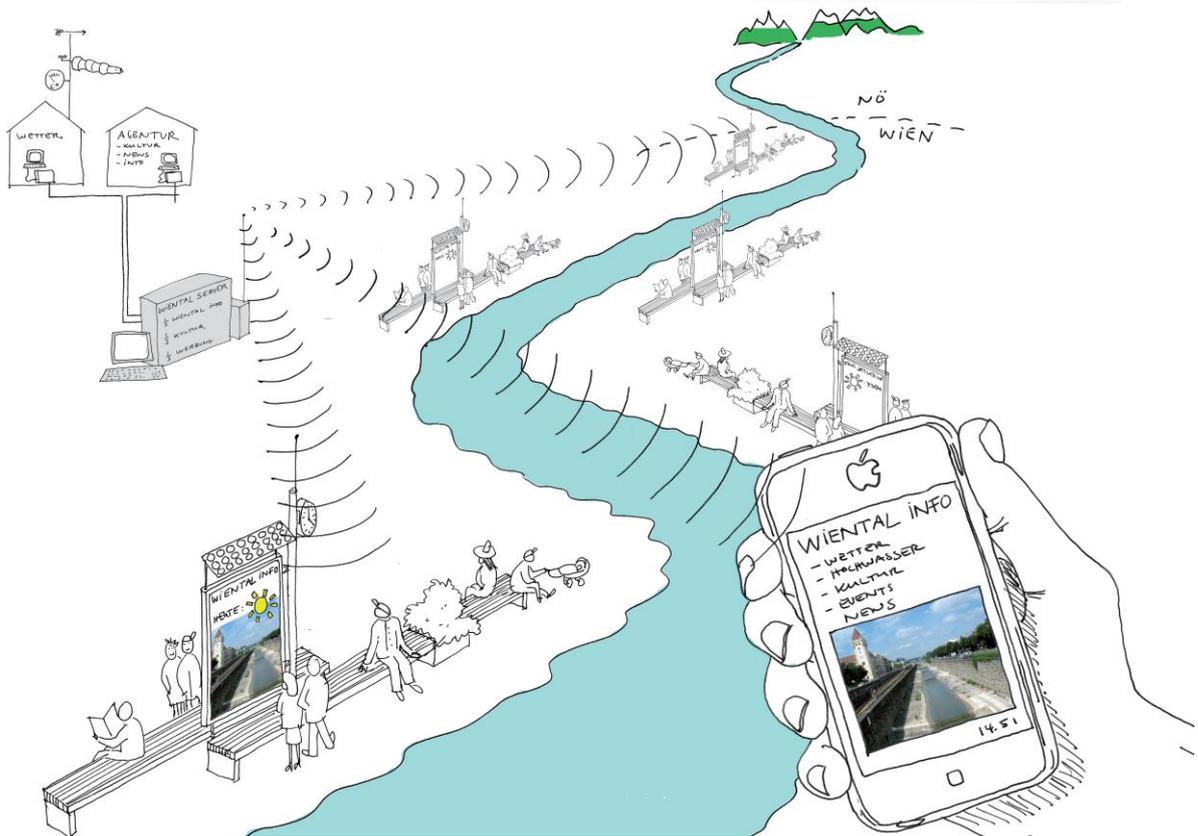


Fig. 1: Vienna River Valley Masterplan by Tillner & Willinger / Auböck & Karasz – interactive information and communication

Incremental planning means to break down the long-term planning horizon into smaller entities, i.e. to develop an overall plan with intermediate stages which are complete projects by themselves. These “plans within the plan” can be implemented independently at different points in time. They work combined or parallel but add up to a whole like pieces of a puzzle.

## 2 INCREMENTAL PLANNING – CASE STUDIES IN DELFT, VIENNA AND ZUERICH

Currently, in the City of Vienna, as in many other European cities after Stuttgart 21 and after the financial crisis 2008, urban planners and architects can no longer conceive a comprehensive masterplan for an urban area and then hope to see it implemented as planned. The era of long-term master-planning has long gone. It is replaced by a more open system that addresses flexibility for future changes of developments. Participatory processes of all kind that are mainly structured to be inclusive for all stake-holders, community members, politicians have become. In these processes the planners retreat into the back-ground, they are invited to develop creative ideas in discussion groups and interdisciplinary working-groups. The advantage of this process is clearly the inclusion of all parties, the amicable and open atmosphere in which all issues are discussed before the planning process starts. The potential disadvantage of this type of process is, that with the disappearance of an “author” also vanishes a sense of responsibility. Several recent planning projects that were organized as a “cooperative workshop” ended with no clear result. In this paper this new trend is illustrated with two projects in Vienna: the Gürtel URBION and the Vienna terraces in the Vienna River Valley. A different type of cooperative process and masterplan is illustrated with a long-term planning project in Switzerland, the european country with the longest tradition of participatory planning due to its

Incremental Planning – Cooperative Scenario and/or Masterplan? Long- and Short-Term Planning Horizon of Urban Design Projects within the Existing Urban Fabric. Analysis of Projects in Vienna and Switzerland with Regard to the Factors Triggering Varying Planning Approaches. Swiss citizens are used to vote on a multitude of subjects – the addition to the modern art museum in Zuerich or the bonus payment of Swiss executive managers of private companies. Before the actual vote, they are supplied with in-depth information on the subject at-hand. Nevertheless, the creative process of design and the responsibility of decision-making are not transferred to the public. Finally, the Guertel project is an early and exceptional example of incremental planning; it was conceived in the late 1990s at a time when traditional master-planning was still the norm. The most recent and dramatic European example for a change in planning approaches is to be found in the Dutch city of Delft: Spoorzone Delft (2009-2012), a municipal project of exceptional magnitude. Spoorzone Delft consists of a new railway tunnel below the city centre and the subsequent area development of the current above-ground railway tracks and station area into a mixed use area (housing, office space, retail, services, etc.)<sup>1</sup>

An existing railway is moved underground, the large tunnel project is covered with public green spaces, adjacent to the park large sites for new development are created. The land value was calculated based on the potential sq.mt. of housing created and one developer was selected by the city of Delft who should invest and contribute with the land purchase to the municipal tunnel expenses. The original concept was conceived by the Spanish planner Busquets before the crisis in 2008 and represents a classic master-plan, 95 % of the planned uses were residential apartment-buildings arranged in classic block structures.



Fig. 2: Spoorzone Delft, original Masterplan by Joan Busquets with linear park and residential blocks

The crisis in 2008 brought the project to a sudden halt, the developer was no longer capable of financing the project. By 2012, the city of Delft found a viable solution in reducing the developer's responsibility to one third of the project and inviting other developers to participate. The masterplan was rethought and a new participatory process started with three new planning teams. Some components of the old plan were fixed, i.e. the park by Busquets above the tunnel. The new plan was created in an open atmosphere by including various parties and the public, it features built-in flexibility, the percentage of housing was reduced to approximately 78 %. The plan is now conceived in phases and temporary uses are included, so various cultural groups and initiatives will be selected to activate the area while the construction of the tunnel continues.

### **3 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION OVER A LONGER TIME PERIOD – HOW TO KEEP THE INTEREST ALIVE WITH PHASED IMPLEMENTATION AND SMALLER PROJECTS**

Planning and Urban Design projects that are focused on the public realm and are not immediately linked to building projects quite often face a long time frame until implementation actually starts. The absence of private property development and related stake-holders make these projects “purely public” and therefore dependent on public financing. The lengthy processes to secure financing are usually accompanied by political change. Therefore, strategies have to be developed to secure support for these projects over a long time-frame. Public awareness is high when projects begin with public meetings, participation processes, etc. But when the process lasts too long with no signs of pending implementation, dwindling public interest is the consequence. Once formerly active community members have retreated from the process, it is difficult to rekindle their enthusiasm. Therefore, it is advisable to design smaller projects into the overall plan that can be implemented quickly and without problems. The planners have to actively search for these situations on the site in order to successfully organize their separate implementation.

### 3.1 Strategies to start with small-scale short-term projects to actively engage the community

One strategy that can help to start implementation immediately, is to plan on several levels and for parallel processes. Short-term measurements that can be realized quickly and with small budgets are conceived, as well as an overall planning concept for the mid- and long-term.

This strategy has the advantage, that first steps can be approved and financed more easily than large-scale projects where the public debate and the political agenda can delay the implementation ad infinitum. These exemplary projects have not only a high quality of their own but also act as a “scout” and represent the overall planning concept.

The public, the client and the planners can readjust the concept following the first experiences. Since community participation has become quite common in order to accommodate different needs in a changing society and to increase identification with the neighborhoods, the test case can actually reinforce and deepen the community involvement.

### 3.2 International Examples of long-term and short-term planning projects with high levels of public support

Internationally, several famous planning projects have become extremely successful, once they were finally implemented. An aspect that is often forgotten though is the long process and the enduring public engagement before these projects were finally realized. One of the most popular public space projects of all time is the New York Highline. Today, it is hard to imagine that for decades, James Corner, (Field Operations), the landscape architect, the architects Diller + Scofidio and local community groups fought for the creation of this public space on an abandoned rail line against severe public resistance. The Boston Dig or the Seattle Freeway Bridge, the L.A. River or the Glendale Freeway Park are other examples that spanned decades. In Barcelona the extension of the Avenida Diagonal and in Madrid the Rio project are examples where with intense political backing projects of that magnitude were implemented faster. The absence of public participation processes in Spain is one reason why in the past, these projects could be realized in comparatively short time spans. Today, as a consequence of the financial crisis and many scandals in connection to land development, also Spain has experienced an awakened and alert public, where projects can no longer be implemented without information and public discussions and will readjust towards a more participatory planning approach. Smaller public budgets will also inspire innovative low-budget projects.

### 3.3 Local Examples of incremental planning in phases – Opfikon, CH

The “incremental planning process” and the public involvement will be investigated by exploring three practical examples in Zuerich and Vienna over the course of 20 years.

To combat the bland suburban sprawl of metropolitan Zürich, Swiss authorities desire the creation of new small urban centers to root the expansion. The creation of the Opfikon Master Plan is part of this initiative and the Market Place is its first intervention.

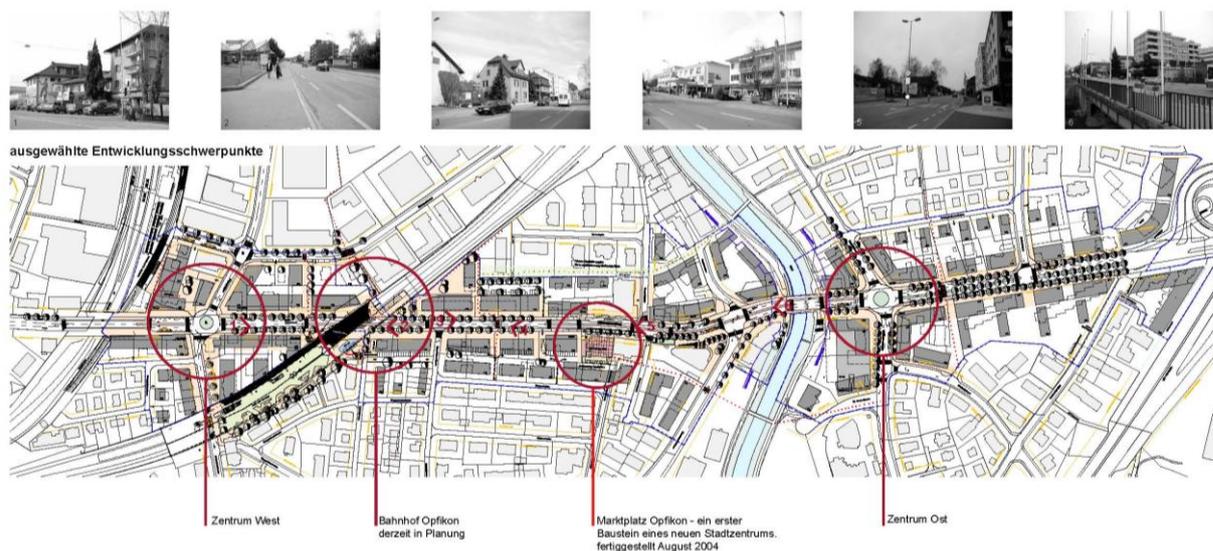


Fig. 2: Opfikon Masterplan by Tillner & Willinger with four areas selected for implementation

One is the “planning of a center” for the community of Opfikon, a suburb of Zürich, located only 5 minutes from the airport Kloten. The lack of a center was apparent to the city authorities and a motion to reduce through-traffic and increase pedestrian movements led to the planning initiative of a new master-plan by Tillner & Willinger in cooperation with swissplanners Planpartner and the innovative traffic planners METRON from Bern. In 2000 this new plan started and also addressed the topic of incremental planning – therefore it included immediate action: a public square „ market-place“ as a gathering spot for the community that was designed already after the 1st year of planning and built in 2006. This was possible thanks to an unbureaucratic linkage to a private construction project. The 2nd intervention, the redesign of a traffic intersection, was to follow in 2011.

The Master Plan defined four urban centers along the main traffic axis, Schaffhauserstrasse. One of the new centers, the Market Place transformed the square into a multifunctional plaza that provides a place with a sense of identity to anchor the disparately developed area. The ground surface, made of red prefab concrete panels, and the red-housed access ramp of the underground garage are the strikingly new defining elements of the square.



Fig. 3 : Opfikon Market Place, the 1st intervention of the masterplan by Tillner & Willinger



Fig. 4 : Opfikon Market Place

Reacting to the inconsistency of the surroundings, the square is organized into three different areas of activity. Parallel to Schaffhauserstrasse, there is a footpath separated from the busy road by a strip of green and clearly delineated from the center of the square by a layer of black asphalt. On the opposite side, the southern edge serves as a buffer zone to the adjacent residential area. An elevated wooden area with benches, sheltered by a greening pergola, invites passers-by to stop and rest. The various materials used for the surfaces accentuate the different qualities of the three zones. The inclusion of a quaint café with an outdoor area breathes new life into the square.

The whole process was accompanied by public meetings with the property-owners and stake-holders. Their recommendations and responses were addressed in a professional manner while still adhering to the desired high level of quality. The Swiss model of an open public debate with citizens and property owners is a result

of a long tradition of direct democracy. This allows for in-depth discussions of the planning agenda with a non-professional audience and consequently, a successful implementation of the plan by private developers.

### 3.4 Local Examples of incremental phased planning – Vienna URBION

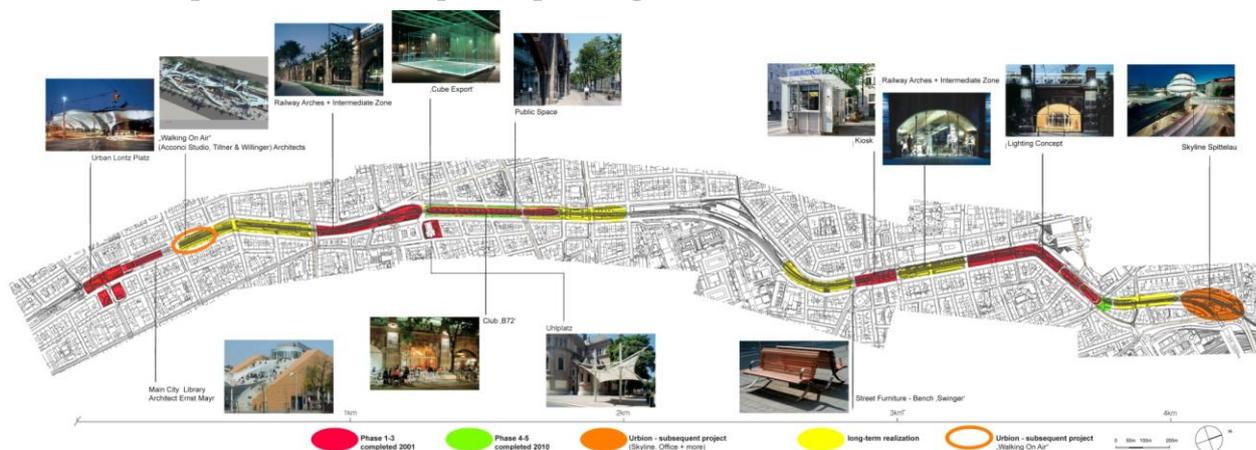


Fig. 5 : Vienna Gürtel map of phased intervention with various interventions of the masterplan by Tillner & Willinger

The second example is the re-programming of the center of the Vienna Westgürtel 1994-2000, a highway separating the inner from the outer city districts since the 1960s which was the target of numerous planning initiatives until the mid 1990s. 1995 a successful EU co-funded project started: “URBION”. City-wide revitalization of the Vienna Gürtel, implementing new urbanistic uses to transform the image of a previously derelict zone. URBION was one of the five key projects of the EU URBAN program.

The Vienna Gürtel is the transportation backbone of the city with ten municipal districts bordering its busy lanes. The historic railway “Stadtbahn” project by Otto Wagner (today the Vienna Underground), which runs along the highway, is the primary means of access to the entire URBAN zone. At the core of the Gürtel concept was the preservation of the architectural heritage of Otto Wagner and how to address the conflicting demands of public space versus high traffic volumes. By designing transparent and connective architecture for the Gürtel median, the area re-emerged as a pivotal space of interaction that once again links the outer and inner districts.

URBION developed a comprehensive set of measures for a new, low-cost design of the median strip that would respect existing structures and could be implemented in consecutive phases.

Key to the success was the immediate implementation of certain measures, i.e. lighting the arches or installing new uses, while the overall plan was developed further. The open space was transformed to accommodate newly designed bike paths, pedestrian areas with generous landscaping, squares and parks. The arches were filled with new activity thanks to the life-music-clubs. Image transformation was the key to the success of URBION



Fig. 6 : Vienna Gürtel: electronic music event with DJ in the RHIZ

Fundamental to the “image transposition” strategy was the general improvement of the Gürtel with green landscaping, pedestrian and bicycle zones, and populating the “Stadtbahn” brick arches with cultural and

Incremental Planning – Cooperative Scenario and/or Masterplan? Long- and Short-Term Planning Horizon of Urban Design Projects within the Existing Urban Fabric. Analysis of Projects in Vienna and Switzerland with Regard to the Factors Triggering Varying Placements of entertainment facilities, restaurants and music clubs. Thus, the lively Gürtel provides daytime recreation as well as a progressive nightlife destination.

At first, immediately implementable measures were instrumental for the success of the project. The public awareness of the project was extremely high – therefore it was important to prove that this was not yet another theoretical plan but finally a realistic chance for improvement of this forgotten and neglected part of the city. Therefore, the strategy to start with implementable and modest improvements of the public spaces proved successful. The first step taken was to illuminate the dark areas of the Gürtel median. Formerly unattractive and inhospitable public spaces were transformed into inviting public promenades. But even before any design measures were taken, a use concept was developed in order to secure long-term social acceptance and liveliness of an area that had a negative reputation and as a consequence was derelict and unattended at night. This use concept was based on an analysis of the adjacent neighborhoods and a series of interviews with their inhabitants. Young families, singles and students had moved to this area that was traditionally populated by immigrants from Turkey and eastern European countries, thus creating a lively ethnic mix with an attractive open-air market, „Brunnenmarkt“ and some original stores and interesting affordable restaurants. This was a good starting-point for the idea of a „life-music-mile“, a series of pubs and bars with live-music entertainment. The idea was first tested by inviting a reknown music-club, the Chelsea, to move to the Gürtel. After the opening it then became an immediate success and established the Gürtel median as „the spot for avant-garde life-music“. The RHIZ was the second club to follow and quickly became the hot-spot for avant-garde electronic music in Vienna. Today, the scene has established itself and celebrates annually in August the „Gürtel night-walk“ with open-air concerts along the median.

A lighting concept was also developed, on one hand to illuminate the historic structure, on the other hand to create an inviting atmosphere and increase public safety on the promenades.



Fig. 7 : Vienna Gürtel illuminated public spaces in the median as one of the first immediate interventions of the masterplan

#### 4 FAÇADE CONCEPT

Decades of neglect had left many of the Stadtbahn arches below the elevated train line either bricked-over or shuttered with billboards, thereby concealing the original viaduct structure. The aspect of securing and reviving the historic heritage of Otto Wagner (who thought long-term) became an important chapter of the revitalization project.



Fig. 8 : Vienna Gürtel – historical image of the historic Otto Wagner facades

A flexible modular system was created to accommodate the varying arches, in addition to a discrete lighting solution for the viaduct and overpasses. A minimal steel structure and a uniform, spot-fixed glazing system achieves a high level of transparency, promoting public safety and cultural preservation. The structural elements respect the design principles of Otto Wagner's original façade.



Fig. 9 : Vienna Gürtel – the transparent facade respects the proportions of the historic Otto Wagner facades

#### 4.1 Local Examples of incremental phased planning – The Vienna Valley

Within the boundaries of Vienna the River Wien runs along a length of 14 kilometres, from the retention basins in the west of the city to the point where it flows into the Danube Canal. Along its length the urban context of the Wiental (River Vienna Valley) shows a number of very different characteristics, from the scattered development, commercial areas and extensive green spaces in the west followed by a gradual, but at places very abrupt, development to the densely developed inner city areas.

In the course of history the Wiental has developed from a natural river into a regulated urban watercourse and from the mid-20th century onwards, thanks to the intensive development of road and rail connections, it became the most important traffic artery leading into the city from the west.

The Vienna Valley also was the target for numerous planning initiatives, most of them were abandoned due to incompatibility with the historic heritage of the river walls, a protected monument. The previous projects relied on major public investments along the entire length of the river and would have caused enormous costs, which also led to their cancellation. 2008 a new plan took a different, more local and sensitive approach and identified locations where existing public amenities can be maintained and immediate improvement of the public realm for the citizens could be realized.



Fig. 10: Vienna Valley – selected areas of intervention

## 4.2 The Wiental – a study on five levels

The considerable length and linear nature of the Wiental as a space means that it presents urban planning with a very special kind of challenge.

To deal adequately with the scale and complexity of this planning area in the framework of the study, the latter is divided up into five spatial or content layers that allow the preparation of a detailed yet overall view, an analysis and a design concept. The study proceeds in steps from the large to the small scale, in this way not losing sight of the overall context.

### 4.2.1 Level 1

In the 1st level an examination is made of the overall regional context of the Wiental, and the historical, hydrological and cultural background of this planning area is explained.

### 4.2.2 Level 2

On the basis of level 1 an understanding of the nature of the Wiental within the Vienna metropolitan area boundaries can be acquired. The second level deals with the important overall characteristics of the Wiental within Vienna itself.

### 4.2.3 Level 3

In Level 3, the next step, the Wiental is divided into six sections, each of which is characterised by a relatively homogeneous urban appearance and therefore offers the next, more precise framework for an urban analysis.

### 4.2.4 Level 4

On Level 4 local urban areas are identified within these six sections that make focused, strategic and detailed planning and design possible. These sections are described in the report as “intervention areas“.

### 4.2.5 Level 5

Finally, on Level 5 individual typological measures for the respective intervention areas are suggested and are then summarised in an overall catalogue. By using these typologies along the entire length of the Wiental a continuous linear design language is developed. The goal is to enable the development of a “Wiental identity” and to anchor the river in the public consciousness.

### 4.2.6 Level 1: The Wiental in Vienna and Lower Austria

Level 1 outlines the historical background, the hydrological conditions as well as the cultural context within the regional setting.

### 4.2.7 History

In historical terms the transformation from a natural river to a regulated watercourse, or the planning of a monumental boulevard from Karlsplatz to Schönbrunn, which Otto Wagner carried out in part by culverting

the River Wien in the area of the Naschmarkt, represent important measures that have had a lasting impact on the appearance of the city of Vienna. These are the current basis for planning.

#### 4.2.8 The Wiental as a culture axis

Here the issue is the cultural identity of the River Wien.

It is not just the river itself that is a constant within the urban diversity. The many cultural monuments arranged like a chain of pearls along it also form a constant and a culture axis that contributes to the linear identity of the Wiental.

This on the one hand gives the current experience of the Wiental a special quality, while on the other these cultural attractions form important lynchpins, also for future urban planning, where local measures can be employed to further develop the current experience of the linear River Wien.

Other examples of important planning strategies for the Wiental include improving urban connections between important cultural features such as the Urania and Karlsplatz, or making it possible for people to experience the River Wien, for example in the Naschmarkt area where the river was culverted and an open space made over it.

#### 4.2.9 Level 4: Intervention areas (fig.10)

Within the study 24 intervention areas were identified which are distributed across the six sections, starting from where the River Wien flows into the Danube Canal to the retention basins in the west of the city.

These areas were chosen because in them the necessity for individual urban design measures condenses to such an extent that, on account of their complexity, their spatial dimensions or due to the way in which they overlap, the measures necessary can only be planned within an overall context.

Each intervention area is examined in three respects:

##### (1) Current situation: urban characteristics

In a first diagram the current situation is sketched, here attention is paid to urban design qualities and categories such as existing high urban quality and attractors, open spaces with potential for upgrading, barriers or visual axes.

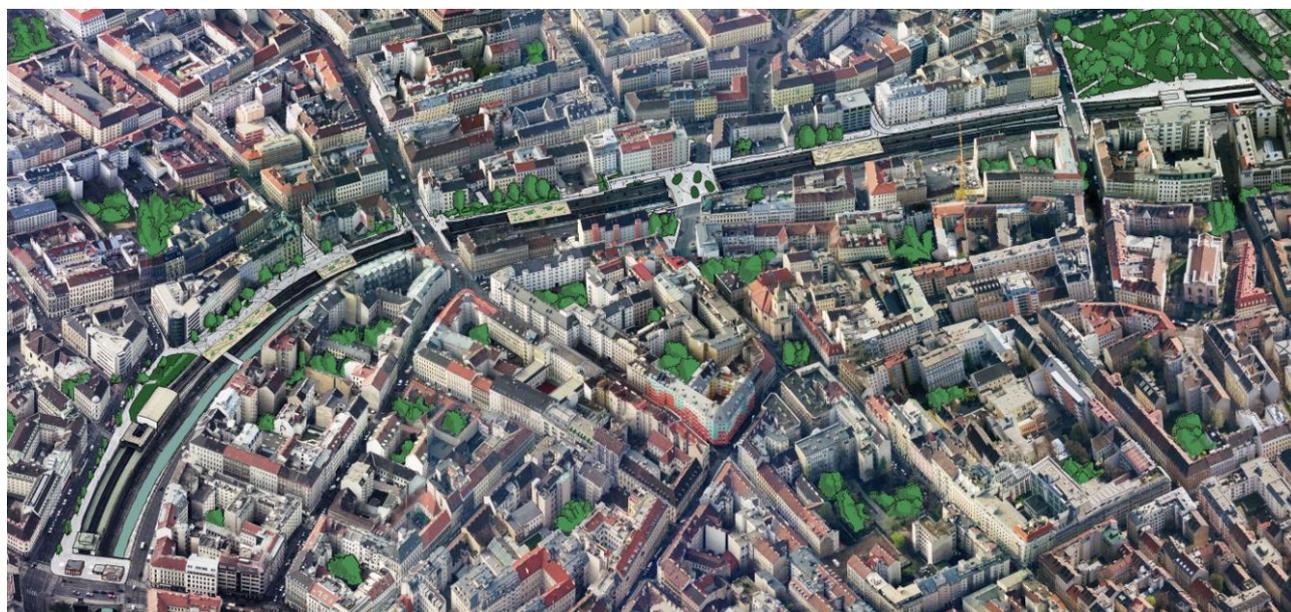


Fig. 11: Vienna Valley – selected areas of intervention – 4 terraces above the subway connect to the river

##### (2) Goal: improved connectivity

A second diagram depicts the targeted improvements to connectivity. Here the special focus is on important routes, the connections of pedestrian and bike paths including those that need to be optimized, as well as the shortage of crossings over the River Wien.

##### (3) Goal: urban cohesion, the creation of identity

A third diagram shows a series of measures aimed at upgrading the urban mesh. Important measures proposed include improving the amount of open space available by means of parks, green areas or public squares, reduction in traffic volume, urban furniture, improved street crossings with traffic lights, individual tree planting as well as so-called info or aqua points and crossings over the River Wien.

The proposed measures were organized into those that can be implemented in the short-term, medium term or long term, as well as an approximate classification of the measures in terms of the financial expenditure they involve.

The project also proposes the conversion of traffic areas into pedestrian zones, novel connections between the districts and the river embankments, and introduces green landscaping. Thanks to the „small implementable“ projects, a public space and river terraces will be realized in 2014, following and representing the overall plan.



Fig. 12: Vienna Valley – selected areas of intervention – Terrace 1, wooden deck above the subway connects to the river

Nevillebrücke/Underground station Pilgramgasse (Intervention area 9)

This intervention area is in an urban area with a high population density that is characterised by the footpath and bike path running along the River Wien. However this important traffic connection is unclear, too narrow and not adequately connected to the neighbouring urban districts.

The low amount of traffic travelling across the Nevillebrücke means that it could be closed to motorised vehicles and used as public green space. Here a proposal for a new design will be presented.

## 5 CONCLUSION

In order to not only conceive but also implement long-term planning projects that improve the public realm within the built-up city fabric, it has obviously become necessary to actively engage the community. But furthermore the “incremental planning” process helps to keep the public interested and heighten their enthusiasm while being able to test the ideas and readjust the plan if necessary.

The applicability of this strategy of incremental planning to similar challenges lies at hand. In times of dwindling city budgets and rising media attention authorities and planners have no longer the time to develop elaborate plans.

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