

Austria	83'871Km2	* Inhabitants	8'383'784
Centroe	48'000Km2	* Inhabitants	6'000'000
Vienna Region PGO		* Inhabitants	3'300'000

New metropolitan mainstream in Vienna

Vienna is by far the largest city in Austria and functions as the cultural, economic, and political centre of the Republic. The city is situated next to the river Danube but, dissimilar to various other European cities, it does not open towards the water, due to the, at that time, rough water and unusable banks. Vienna expanded aside, southwest of the Danube with its city centre bounded to an arm of the main flow, the Danube canal. This location gave rise to the urban grid of the city. The ring-formed structure that characterized the Viennese city development is composed of two former city walls and connects the 23 districts.

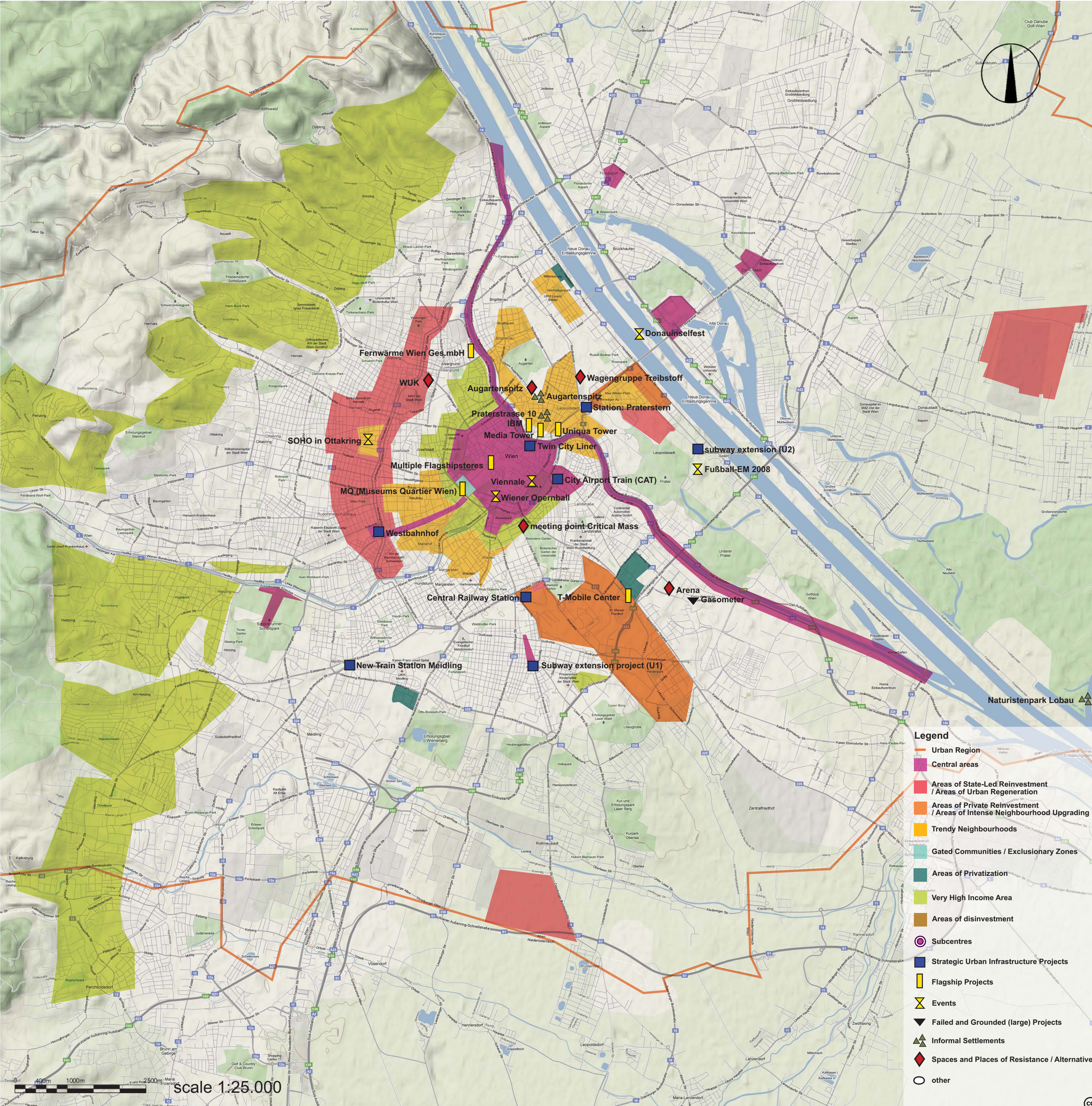
The inner city, enclosed by the ring, is furnished with many impressive public and private buildings, the monuments of the Habsburgisches Reich and the different museums and parks. This area is printed on cards and represents the general picture tourists have. However, what may symbolize Vienna for tourists is often [deliberately] avoided by its own citizens. In this way, Vienna's city centre can be perceived as the empire theme park.

Vienna is not only praised for its long tradition of art and culture it is also known under the nickname 'Red Vienna', which refers to the city's highly socialists focus during the interwar period. Nowadays, Vienna retains the highest score spot as the city with the world's best quality of living, according to the Mercer 2010 Quality of Living Survey and remains at this top for the second time in a row.

More and more the municipality who proudly represents its rich history sees the need to counterbalance this image. Examples as the Museums Quarter, presenting contemporary art in a creative atmosphere and wrapped by functioning modern urban public space, next to historic monuments are significant. Moreover, Vienna seems to be on the way of establishing a profound international position. Since the 1970s it is home to a number of international institutions and companies. It is hosting United Nations and OPEC offices in the Vienna International Centre, colloquially also known as UNO City. Apart from this, Vienna seeks to take advantage of its central position within Europe and actively engages in the formation

of a cross-border region CENTROPE, strengthening ties with its flourishing eastern neighbors. The cities largest urban development Aspern also relates to this ambition. Along the same line the prestige project Hauptbahnhof project should be named.

And Vienna also has learned its lessons. After the struggles of the 1970s it developed the internationally debated model tool "soft urban renewal" and after the 1990s it advocates creative city tools as the SOHO-festival in the Brunnenviertel. As "soft" and comparatively slow urban transformations may occur in Vienna – to what extend Vienna's city marketing slogan 'Wien ist anders' (Vienna is different) holds true is subject of continuing discussion.





Urban Renewal:  
**Aspern City** (Vienna's urban Lakeside)

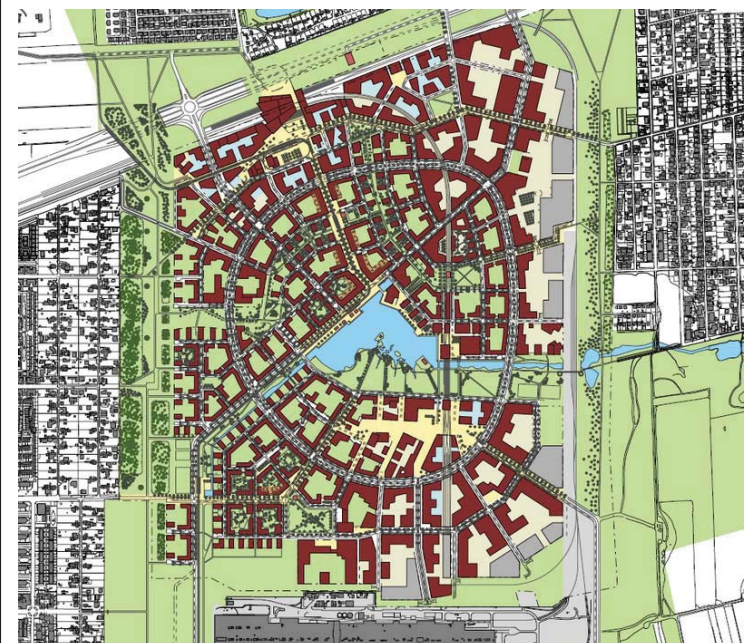
**(Original) Purpose:** At the disused Aspern airfield, situated to the north-east of Vienna, will be built a new district including underground links to the city and ring road high-way systems together with fast train connections to Bratislava.

**Dimension:** A 240 Hectares site including 800 000 sqm housing (means 8500 apartments) and 1 100 000 sqm commercial, retail and research, everything situated around a 90.000 sqm artificially produced lake; a daily population of 45,000 people living and working there.

**Project costs:** 4 Billion Euro - . . .

**Investors:** Magistrat Wien, Bundesimmobilien Gesellschaft, Wiener Wirtschafts Förderungsfonds & Wohnfonds Wien

**Architects:** Masterplan: Tovatt architects and planners, Stockholm



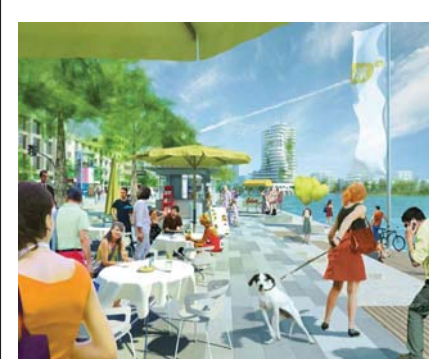
**Description / Reason for this choice / Background context**

Aspern is one of the biggest urban expansion areas in Europe. A new district for housing, science, art, leisure and innovative projects is planned and promoted under the slogan *'work-life-balance'*. Urban design shall be modern and flexible and at the same time based on ecological and social criteria and provide space for future inhabitants from different generations and origins to 'realize their dreams'. The idea for the project emerged in the course of the EU-eastern enlargement in 2004, in order to create a new prestige project as a solution for the growing society. At the same time the new urban development is part of the City of Vienna's effort to engage in the new cross-border region CENTROPE and create a visible link between Vienna and Bratislava.

**Significance for New Metropolitan Mainstream**

The projection of the new town Aspern creates a new utopian model space to imagine ideal "new ways of living" – which is powerfully filled with dominant conceptions of normativity (little bit open society.., but still closed). At the same time it expresses a strong commitment by the City of Vienna to the development of a competitive, prospering and growing metropolitan region CENTROPE in which Vienna is seen as a nodal point. And the construction of the new district is closely linked to the extension of the subway line (U2) – and vice versa.

**Stakeholders and their interests** Beside the City of Vienna, who focuses on the masterplan and the subway extension, and apart from some families and the technological park, where the Vienna University of Technology holds the majority, it is not clear right now who the stakeholders will be altogether, because especially in the second of three building legs, starting in 2015, a lot of private investment is flowing into the project.



**Deals** There is a crucial deal between the City of Vienna and the ASFINAG (Austrian Highway Building Company). After a new ecological law was enacted, the costs for the projected highway connection exploded (from 428 million up to more than one billion euro) – which provoked a conflict whether the completion could be guaranteed until 2016. There are as well some deals made at the tertiary sector with the Vienna University of Technology. Yet, until now, the aim of these deals apparently is to promote the whole project towards new potential users.

**Impacts** As the project is only in its planning stage, possible impacts can only be estimated theoretically. However, it could have an enormous regional and international, positive or negative impact on Vienna in the future.

**Synthesis over all 4 projects and outlook**

The dominant narratives about the city of Vienna are populated by three main features: Firstly the glorious Habsburg empire, today still present in numerous historical monuments throughout the city and sold to tourists. Secondly, the heritage of the "Red Vienna" of the 1920s, incorporated in a large number of social housing projects (Gemeindebau). And thirdly, the allegedly 'high living quality', propagated in all kinds of international rankings – in a recent Mercer quality of living report positioning Vienna as top one worldwide, above Zurich and Geneva.

At the same time, since the Second World War, Vienna struggled against an image of being a small, slow and backward oriented country at the very edge of Europe – internally disrupted after the loss of its former empire. Since the 1990s – with the fall of the Iron Curtain, Austria's EU accession and the EU eastern enlargement – Vienna strongly tries to shape a 'new image' of a country/city which in fact counts on prosperous traditions, but which is modern, internationally competitive, and tries to position itself actively as a new nodal point in Central Europe.

In this context, the selfdefined slogan 'Vienna is different' (*Wien ist anders*) refers to two seemingly contradictory features. On the one hand the city engages desperately in the production of images of modernity and competitiveness – expressed by a high priority for flagship projects and steel-glass-front skylines, and supported political-economically by internal corporatist agreements and strong alliances between dominant elites and the role of the construction industry. On the other hand the city profits strongly from its tradition and reputation as a socially inclusive place. The high stock of social housing, still comparatively strong rent control regulations and the Viennese model of soft urban renewal' (*sanfte Stadterneuerung*) still make the city 'different' to other places. But at the same time this seemingly 'being different' conceals the fact, that these features are leftovers from former times, which are constantly hollowed out and reperformed only superficially – giving way and priority to various 'new metropolitan mainstream' features. The ambivalent planning process of the MQ demonstrates, how the ambition to reshape

Urban Renewal:  
**Hauptbahnhof (VIE Central Railway Station)**

**Purpose:** Construction of a new central railway station, including "BahnhofsCity" and urban development

**Dimensions:** 13 tracks, estimated 1,000 trains and 145,000 passengers per day. Total area of new urban development 59 hectare, 550,000 sqm service sector and office space, 5,000 housing units, for 13,000 persons, social infrastructure (2 schools and child care), 20,000 jobs (all estimations varying!)

**Project costs:** 1,199 billion euro for station and infrastructure (recent estimates)

**Investors:** City of Vienna, Federal Government Austria, Austrian Rail (ÖBB), private investors

**Architects:** Hotz/Hoffmann and Wimmer



**Description/Reason for this choice/Background context**

After the demolition of the former dead-end station (Südbahnhof) a central through station will be constructed. The project includes new track orientation, the adjacent "BahnhofsCity" (shopping, gastronomy, hotels, parking, services, offices, entertainment) and a mayor urbanisation (housing, offices) of Austrian Rail estate (former freight terminal). The project has strategic significance in two important ways. First, being part of the nation wide programme "Bahnhofsoffensive" it aims to trigger urban development through enlargement and modernisation of railway station buildings. And second, embedded in the City of Vienna's effort to leave behind its dead-end position from the Cold War times and play an active and competitive role as a nodal point in Central Europe, the project performs also a visual integration



into the Trans-European Network (TEN). This ambition is also related to Vienna's engagement in building up a CENTROPE region. Meanwhile the infrastructural significance remains questionable. Instead of improving the subway system (subway passes at long walking distance), an expensive cable liner (automated people mover) is planned to connect the subway station, the railway station and the new neighbourhood. And throughout the country deficitary lines are closed down.

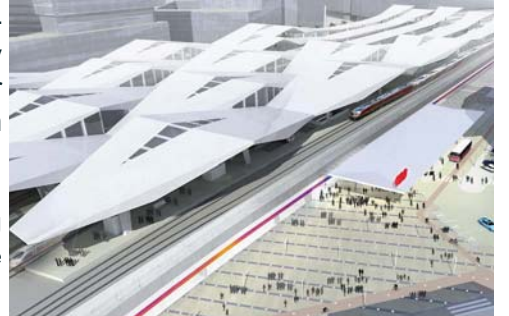
**Significance for New Metropolitan Mainstream**

Shift of priorities from improvement of spatially inclusive transport systems to spectacular flagship projects. By this symbolically orchestrating competitiveness, international connectivity and nodal functions within Central Europe as well as stimulating urban redevelopment and valorising existing neighborhoods. Physical and symbolic eradication of the old images of inner and outer periphery (demolition of Südbahnhof). Festivalisation of the construction place (Bahnorama) and featuring of an expensive Cable Liner (by this activating NMM tool kit of Berlin Potsdamer Platz and Hauptbahnhof). Entrepreneurial engagement of City of Vienna and Austrian Rail (ÖBB).

**Stakeholders and their interests** The City of Vienna tries to improve its position in interurban competition. The entrepreneurial restructured Austrian Rail hopes to profit from the valuation of its property. Big deal for the construction industry. The neighborhoods fear disturbances due to higher activities in the area and threats to its historical monuments (approved by UNESCO). Strong criticism from the Austrian court of audit for cost explosion, omission of an open tendering procedure and poor public transport project. Very little resonance or resistance from the rest of the city.

**Deals** Strong growth alliance communicating mainly through glossy brochures.

**Impacts** Possible and probable impacts on adjacent working class neighbourhood and public expenditure priorities. Poor impacts on public transport system. Poor architectural quality compared to former station.



Flagship Project & Exclusionary Zones:  
**Museums Quarter**

**(Original) Purpose:** The realization of a contemporary art museums complex with international recognition

**Dimension:** exhibition space 58.000 m² on an 80.000m² area, approx. dimensions 400x200 m, 3.2 million visitors per year. At the time of its realization the Museum's Quarter was the 8th largest museums complex worldwide

**Project costs:** 300 Mil €

**Investors:** Republic of Austria 75% , City of Vienna 25 %

**Architects:** Ortner&Ortner



**Description**

The complex now hosting the 'MuseumsQuartier' (MQ) was originally the Emperor's horse stables built in 1725, after the First World War until 1998 it was Vienna's fair ground. Following on a circuitous planning process, the MQ opened in 2001. Today the area consists of 3 major museums, a variety of smaller contemporary art spaces, various cultural organizations and a broad open chill out area in the courtyard.

The MQ, intended as a counter weight to Vienna's overwhelming historical monuments, meant to transport contemporary art and to be a focal point for 21st century creative issues.

In terms of city planning and architecture the complex lay under constant siege of the monument protection and faced various planning problems (e.g. capping of the height of the buildings, omission of rear entrances, lack of barrier-free accesses, poor design of front door area and no open call for bids) – resulting in a baroque fortress with its piazza. While the piazza functions well as a public space, it faces daily struggles between the Facility Management, the gastronomy and, a suspiciously homogeneous, urban youth. In short the MQ shows how projects at such a scale are approached and dealt with in Austria.



**Significance for New Metropolitan Mainstream** The underlying strong ambition to form a cultural flagship

qualifies the MQ to be top listed as NMM. In fact the MQ is now used as a brand to promote itself internationally as a hip urban area with a multitude of cultural diversity. Additionally the MQ shows in recent years a tendency to censor the smaller participants of its "self-chosen symbiosis" since the holding is handling all rental contracts. Especially the restriction of its public spaces created discontent among the younger generation of visitors which concluded in a series of demonstrations organized on Facebook against the ban of self catered drinks on the 'hip' public furniture.

It underlines the point that the whole complex seems to promote a way of life exclusively for those who are able to afford or are willing to live under the surveillance of the management and their house rules. Homeless people are prevented to access the area during late night, as well as all informal entrepreneurship (e.g. sale of beer and films)

**Stakeholders and their interests** The Republic of Austria and City of Vienna are in strong need for a modern urban image. Further to be named are major art collectors such as Rudolf Leopold and the Family Ludwig (MUMOK) who got much of the share of public planning attention. Leopold even managed to tip the plan and to place his house in the most prominent position. A minority of approx. 15 state owned apartments, with its few tenants who heavily oppose every form of nightlife activity in their 'backyard'.



**Impacts** Though the project doesn't seem to have failed – its acceptance is remarkably high. It is a very good example of how the state led planning deals with the potential of certain areas and is neglecting the precise qualities that made the choice of the development in the first place.

Trendy:  
**Brunnenviertel**

**Purpose:** Prime example for the *Sanfte Stadterneuerung* (soft urban renewal) in cooperation with SOHO in Ottakring (art project festival).

**Dimensions:** Approximately 7000 inhabitants, 0.2km².

**Project costs:** Around 40 million €

**Investors:** city/ urban district, co-financed by EU funds (UTN II, CADSES); Conwert

**Architects:** none



**Description / Reason for this choice / Background context:**

The Brunnenviertel is a small part of the 16th district (Ottakring), located at the west of the city center. Nowadays the former working class neighborhood holds a high share of immigrant population (40%). Until the mid-1990s the area was affected by disinvestment and had a bad reputation. As



a consequence there was a high rate of building vacancy, which was then used by an art project to create temporary exhibition possibilities. Bit by bit, SOHO turned into an established festival. Since the city development plan of 2005 the Brunnenviertel is defined as to be upgraded through soft urban renewal (sanfte Stadterneuerung).

**Significance for New Metropolitan Mainstream:**

The Brunnenviertel has become part of the 'creative city'. As a place of creativity and innovation, it was discovered by cultural workers and now gets consumed by the new urban middle class. This development was supported by the municipality of Vienna and private investors. The interconnection between (soft) urban renewal and gentrification as well as the importance of private-public-partnership mechanisms within this process make it significant for the NMM in Vienna.



**Stakeholders and their interests:** The organizers of SOHO and others cultural workers are interested in cheap living- and workspace and an inspiring environment.

The municipality of Vienna wants to position itself as a destination for the cultural class and simultaneously avoid the possible social and reputational costs of the discursively anticipated slumification of the neighborhood. Landlords and real estate funds seek rent-gaps. Local (ethnic) entrepreneurs hope for new customers.

**Deals**

With the tool of soft urban renewal the municipality of Vienna expects to benefit from the advantages of private reinvestment while at the same time avoiding its possible disadvantages. The high public fundings for the renovation of old buildings are therefore linked to relatively rigid conditions concerning the possible rent increase after the renovation. Yet, in the Brunnenviertel major landlords and real estate funds bypass these conditions by focusing on loft conversion and new constructions, both not subject-matter of the regulation.



**Impacts**

The municipality of Vienna, SOHO, cultural workers and the new urban middle class benefit from the vibrant atmosphere and the rich cultural life in the neighborhood. Landlords and real estate funds make a profit on highly increased rents. While some local (ethnic) entrepreneurs rose socially, the majority of the generally poor local residents faces the danger of displacement and remains invisible.

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