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, similar 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 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 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 Rouflahing 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 Brunnviertel. 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.
Purpose: Construction of a new central railway station, in the course of ThinkBahn project.

Dimensions: 13 tracks, estimated 1,000 trains and 148,000 passengers per day. 

- Cost from 2008: 450 M€ for a 90 ha, 500,000 sqm service sector and office space, infrastructure, and housing units for 130,000 people, 90,000 office jobs.
- Estimated cost (incl. soft costs): 2,100 M€ (all estimations varying)

Stakeholders: 1,198 billion euro for station and infrastructure (recent estimates)

Description/Reason for this choice: Background context

The demolition of the former dead-end station (Stadtbahn) a central through station will be constructed. The project includes new track orientation, the ‘tram’ ThinkBahn, parking, services, (office, environment) and a major urbanisation (paving) process. The project is a part of a new settlement area in the middle of the city.

The project has strategic significance in two important ways: first it sets the stage for the program ‘Bahnhofsvision’ – it aims to trigger urban development through transport and modernisation of railway stations.

Secondly, it is the city’s effort to save up to more than one billion euros. All the efforts and plan are to save the area’s historical monuments.

And the construction of the new district – expressed by a new station and the new Metroline 9 – part of the nation wide project (Vienna’s urban Lakeside)

Purpose: The realization of a contemporary art and design museum dedicated to the visual arts and design.

Dimensions: exhibition space 18,000 m² on 80,000 m²

- Cost from 2008: 300 M€ (correction)
- Estimated cost: 320 M€

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

Description/Reason for this choice: Background context

The MQ is originally the Emperor’s horse stables built in 1732, now the MQ has been turned into an exhibition space.

In 2004, the space opened and invites the best international and local artists.

This museum is the result of the decision to use the area for contemporary art and to be a focal point for 21st century creative issues.

The goal is to attract European and international artists and to allow them to exhibit and create their work in Vienna.

The MQ started as a counterweight to Vienna’s over-developed modernist museums and to be a focal point for 21st century creative issues.

In terms of city planning and architecture the complex lay under constant change and in the course of various planning problems, (e.g. mapping of the heights of the buildings, which are not fixed) the MQ shows its potential for public space.

As a consequence there was a high role of building vacancy, which was then used by an art project to create temporary exhibition possibilities. By the MQ, SOHO turned into an established festival. Since the city development plan of 2005 the MQ showed the city development plan is to be shaped through urban renewal (sandef Stadtmobiling)

Significance for new Metropolitan Mainstream

Shift of priorities from transport systems to the arts. This shift can be interpreted as a symbolically orchestrating competitiveness, international competitiveness, and a new public space.

The street is the new arena of public space, and the MQ is a model for public space.

This new arena of public space has been created in order to stimulate urban development and to attract people to the city.

The MQ shows in recent years a tendency to consider the MQ as a new arena of public space. The MQ is an important test case for the future of public space.

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