

Gundula Rakowitz

**Vienna: reconstructing in the in/between**

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**Abstract**

The changes taking place in Vienna led the city in 2016 to start analysing future scenarios and experimenting design methodologies to draw up a city development plan: *STEP 2025 Urban development Plan Vienna*. The project's thought is nourished by the productive and imaginative force of memory, intervening on a terrain treated not as an inert ground, but as a layered system of signs, traceable and measurable through an operative inventory. The starting point is the *Planungskonzept Wien* elaborated in the years 1958-1961 by Roland Rainer whose ideas for the city of Vienna are incredibly current, and just as unexpected is the absolutely sustainable vocation that the same plan for reconstruction reveals. The plan is proposed as a valid tool to face future challenges for the city.

**Keywords**

Reconstruction – Vienna – Zeitraum

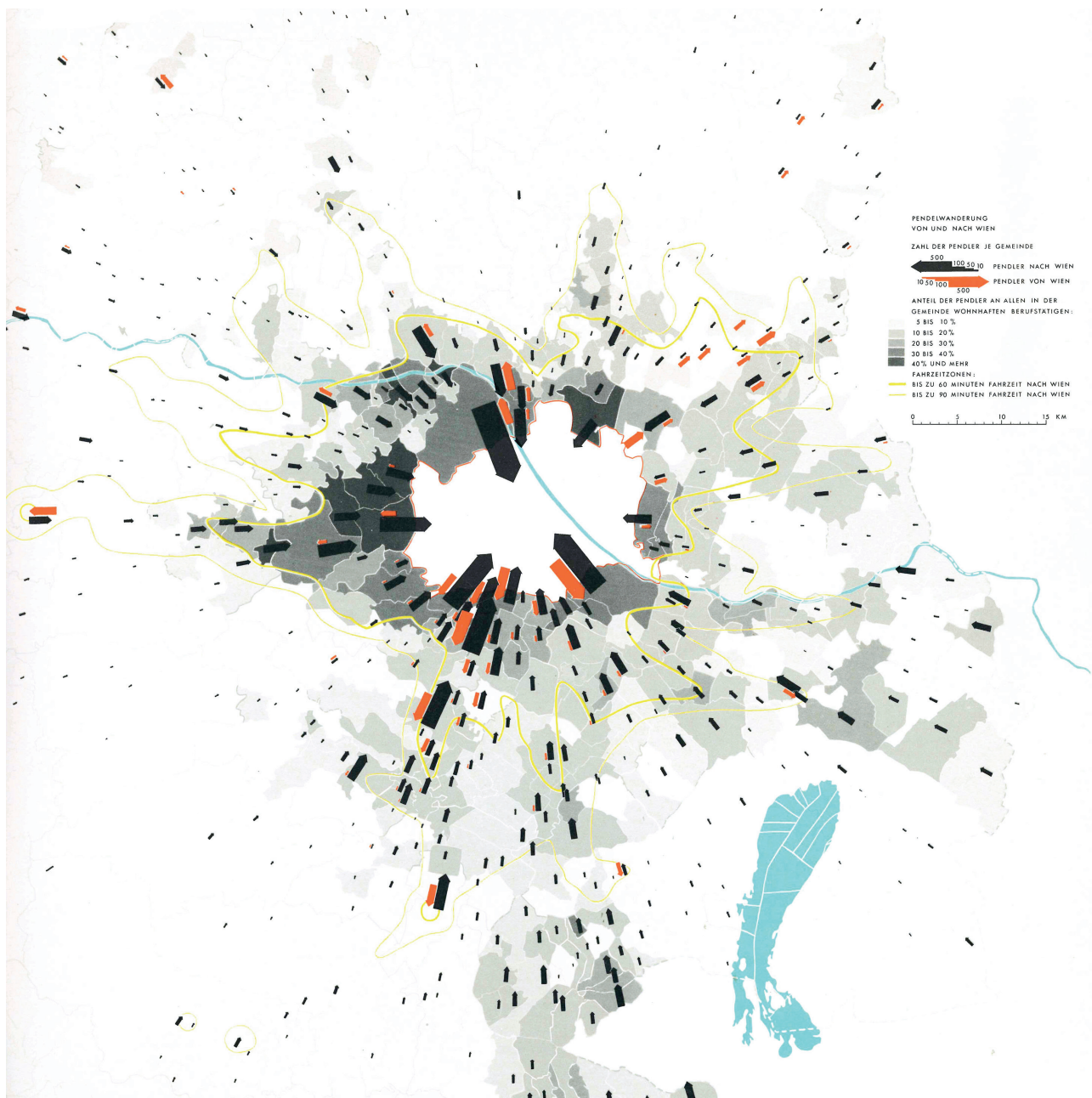
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The case study is the city of Vienna starting from the experience of Roland Rainer and his reconstruction plan, the *Planungskonzept Wien* drawn up in the years 1958-1961. To this investigation it is necessary to premise some general reflections<sup>1</sup>.

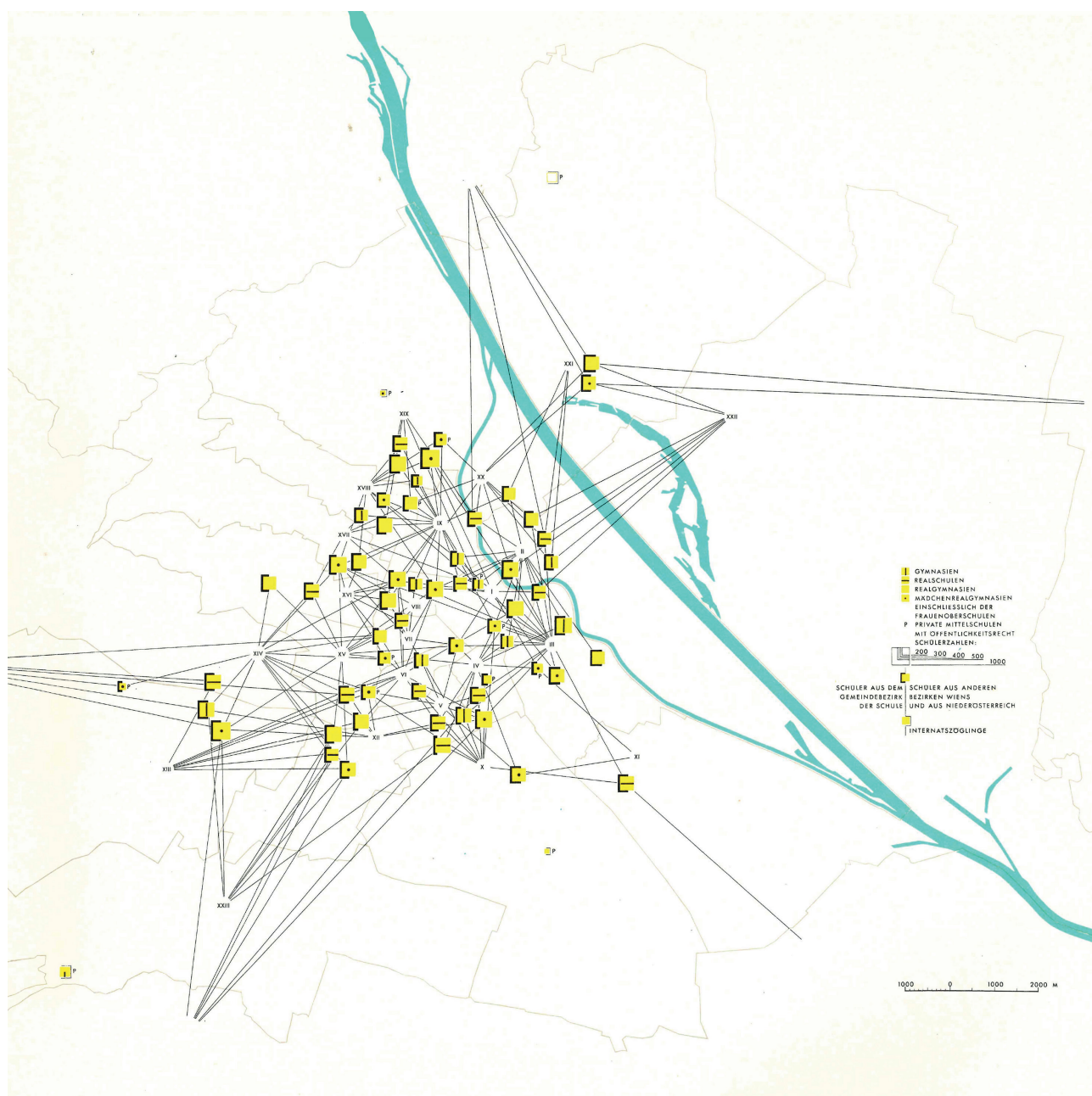
In this regard, an initial reflection on the concept of heritage seems relevant, if not unavoidable. In fact, its twofold, a pervasive, extensive element, and as an intensive element. In other words, as a material or immaterial notion, or as a straightforward design concept. The latter seems to me to exceed its qualification in terms of value – whether understood on the symbolic plane or even on economic and functional ones linked to a judicial adjustment of the reconstruction processes<sup>2</sup>.

This involves rethinking the statute of the project, its “theory”, which must integrate its own internal narrative elements that do not naively assume a “bare” subject, but one already saturated with tensions between the real and the inauthentic, the given and innovation. It is possible to understand that the narration as re-construction – the re-construction as narration – is not supported by any natural chronology, there does not exist any “before” or an “after”, but re-construction through fragments or ruins, and as such it does not beg the question as to an impossible recapturing of the origin, but a catastrophe, i.e., quite literally, a turning point. We reactivate places of mind-memory, “paradigms” of transformation, and this is what allows us to re-discover and re-build places, while re-bolstering critical thinking, crisis thinking.

In the thought of reconstruction, the destruction/construction link should be placed at the centre and investigated, the Cartesian link between *pars destruens* and *pars construens*, but always as two sides of the architectural



**Fig. 1**  
Roland Rainer, Pendelwanderung von und nach Wien / Commuting to and from Vienna, from *Planungskonzept Wien*, 1962.



**Fig. 2**  
 Roland Rainer, Einzugsgebiet  
 der Mittelschulen / Catchment  
 area of middle and high schools,  
 from *Planungskonzept Wien*,  
 1962

structural method (from the incisive Latin verb *struere*). Demolition is a choice that is, so to speak, not trivially conservative: it destroys in line with a project, to re-construct in line with a project. And it is here that the theme of scale is again at stake, in a simultaneous multi-scale dimension that allows the composition of plural and provisional identities that can always be reconstructed.

And reconstruct according to an inventory. It seems to me that the theme of the operational inventory (together with those of atlases and archives) needs to be reread starting from its qualification as a site of available inventions, of inventions for design but without complying with the given order of inventive materials, playing on the simultaneous possibility of inventory units, hence the possibility of differences that become modular, exerting an imaginative capacity that can play on the mobile material of inventive flows.

Giorgio Agamben has traced a critical path of the difference between the paradigm of the work, invention, and structure, as well as the paradigm of creation, writing that “it is from this paradigm that the reckless transposition comes of the theological vocabulary of creation to the activity of the artist, which until then nobody had dreamed of defining creative”<sup>3</sup>. It is significant – notes Agamben – that «it is the practice of the architect which has played a decisive role in the processing of this paradigm [of creation]» and that therefore «those who practise architecture should perhaps be particularly cautious when reflecting on their practice; both the centrality and the problematic nature of the ‘project’ concept should be considered from this perspective»<sup>4</sup>.

The - wrong - language of creativity refers *ex negativo* to an absence of the past a vacuum or oblivion, which is not conserved as such in the individual and collective memory: memory is not a passive conservation of a vacuum but a transformation or change of form, the production of scales, or paradigms of shared values: values of an iconic, meta-historical, and symbolic nature.

Memory is selective, it makes a choice from within a broad spectrum of possible flows. This is why memory is alive, it is living matter, and that is why project timeframes have long lead times that are fragmented and non-linear.

What holds them together is the subjective component of the architect’s civil commitment, his or her ability to “answer...”, to be ultimately responsible in the face of social – collective – use or utility. Being responsible does not mean a generic reference to a moral code for individuals, but to a code of ethics, with respect to which architecture presents itself as a *discipline* in the strongest sense, a set of operational rules or, better, of *principles*. The theme of reconstruction demands a rethink of the disciplinary regulations of architecture today: to be able to ask questions and pose problems, knowing how to interrogate architecture repeatedly. In some way, constantly starting again from the top, a re-founding and changing reconstruction, at the same time appropriate to the principles of the discipline, a relating of the operational dialogical procedures, knowledge, and plural competencies: a reality thought through, a planned utopia.

We make projects, we make drawings, we translate seeking expressive forms. Up to that point a critical awareness is acting, of the limits of “our” language or languages, which often, more than speaking are “spoken”, merely reproducing the spell of the method and the block of the research. To recall Jacques Derrida, «Architecture *is without being* in the project».



We must therefore ask the architect the question of «support or substance... of the *sujet*, of what is cast beneath. But also, of what is cast forward or in advance in the project (projection, programme, prescription, promise, proposition), everything that belongs to the architectural process, to the movement of launching or being launched, of casting or being cast»<sup>5</sup>.

I would like to recall the case of Vienna from the experience of Roland Rainer and his *Planungskonzept Wien* drawn up in the years 1958-1961<sup>6</sup>.

After the war Rainer was called by the Municipality of Vienna to cover the charge of *Wiener Stadtplaner*, director of the Department of Urban Planning<sup>7</sup>. In this position, he undertook to rebuild the Vienna that had been destroyed. Through a new urban plan, he found himself having to cope just after the war with reconstruction of the city as well as a population increase.

Like the rest of Austria, Vienna was occupied by the Allies for ten years after the end of WWII in 1945, and only in 1955 thanks to the *Staatsvertrag* did it become an autonomous neutral republic. The political changes in Europe subsequently brought Vienna to a prime geopolitical position: from a peripheral location near the Iron Curtain to a central one close to the rapid growth of the Eastern Europe markets. The entire metropolitan area is currently growing, and the city needs to respond to social, technical, environmental and geopolitical demands.

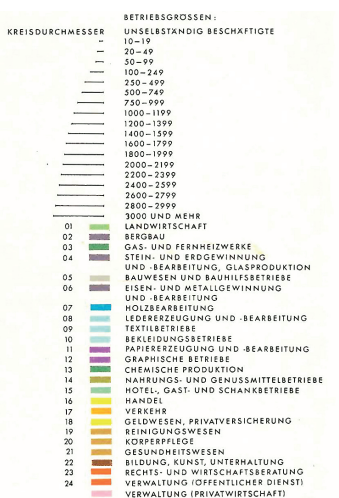
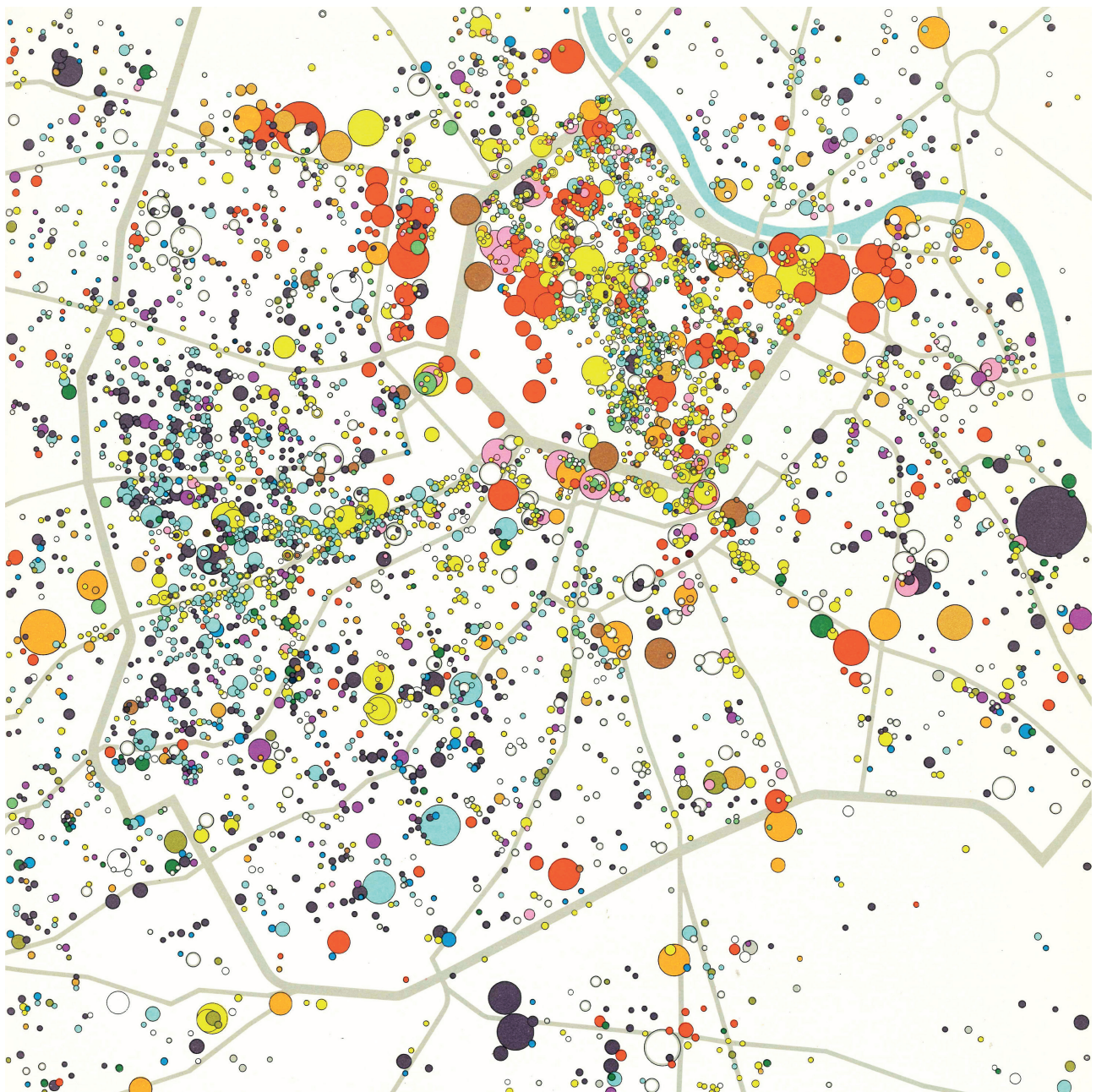
Vienna with its characteristic as a nodal Central European city, has always been one of the first points of contact in the European East-West diaphragm, thanks also to the Danube Corridor between Vienna, Bratislava, and Budapest. Today, Vienna lends itself to being a city that is nomadic and sedentary at the same time, a city of passage due to its location and a well-to-do city, with a strong presence of parks and gardens, an efficient infrastructure network, individual and social services, cultural initiatives and the management and the use of public space, as well as the radiance of the 19th-century spaces.

How to cope with population growth and the consequent expansion of the city, while considering the flows that the ambitious new Central Station project, amongst the largest in Europe, could attract?

We can try to answer these questions by following two different routes. If, on the one hand, we look at the work of Roland Rainer<sup>8</sup>, as a tool of departure to answer the urban-architectural issues raised in these years by the city, on the other, through potential case studies of multi-scale design experiences, we can seek to actualize this thinking and apply it to the problems that Vienna needs to cope with today. The economic crisis and the burning issues of the migratory flows crossing Europe force us to question ourselves in this sense.

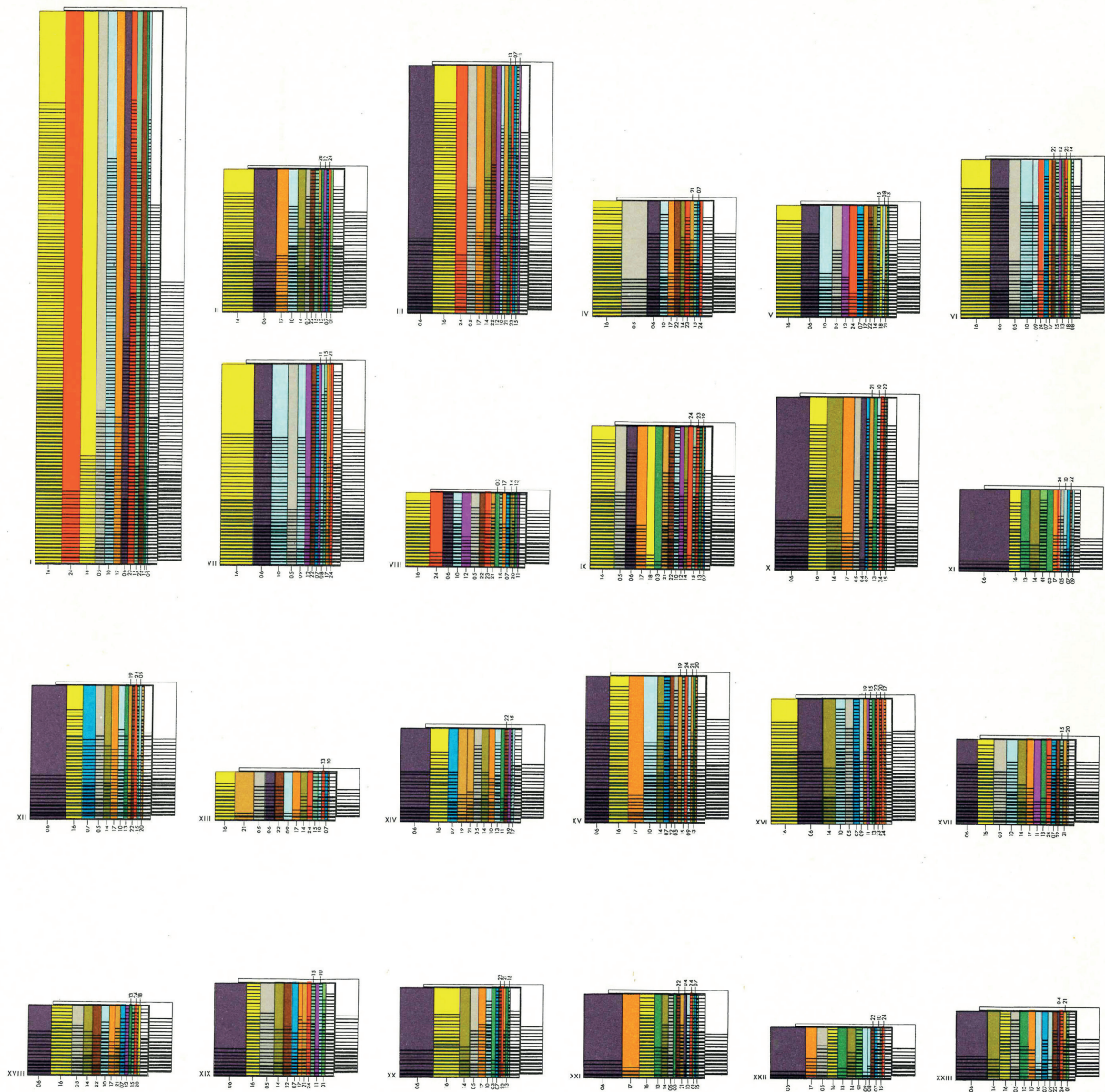
It is interesting to note that Rainer's thought regarding the city of Vienna is incredibly up-to-date, while equally unexpected is the sustainable vocation that the reconstruction plan reveals. Rainer focused particularly on thinking of guidelines for any "green corridors" that penetrate to the heart of the city as well as the maintenance of wooded areas and urban parks. In addition to developing the infrastructure, also the aspect of urban development was thought out in detail. To this end, Rainer identified areas to the north east of the city as potential areas for expansion. His design proposal, his *Planungskonzept*, is based on an accurate and detailed study of the existing conditions, which includes graphic representations with different analytical texts<sup>9</sup>.

However, the proposal to realize Rainer's *Planungskonzept*, while voted



**Fig. 3**  
Roland Rainer, Arbeitsstätten in  
Wien / Workplaces in Vienna, from  
*Planungskonzept Wien*, 1962





#### BETRIEBSSTRUKTUR NACH BEZIRKEN

DIE FLÄCHEN STELLEN DIE ZAHL DER BESCHÄFTIGTEN JE BEZIRK DAR. DIE SENKRECHTEN, VERSCHIEDENFARBIGEN STREIFEN BEZEICHNEN DEN ANTEIL DER EINZELNEN BETRIEBSKLASSEN AN DER ZAHL DER BESCHÄFTIGTEN. ES WERDEN FOLGENDE BETRIEBSKLASSEN UNTERSCHIEDEN:

- 01 LANDWIRTSCHAFT
- 02 BERGBAU
- 03 GAS- UND FERNHEIZWERKE
- 04 STEIN- UND ERDGEWINNUNG UND -BEARBEITUNG, GLASPRODUKTION
- 05 BAUWESEN UND BAUHALFBETRIEBE
- 06 EISEN- UND METALLGEWINNUNG UND -BEARBEITUNG
- 07 HOLZBEARBEITUNG
- 08 LEDERERZEUGUNG UND -BEARBEITUNG
- 09 TEXTILBETRIEBE
- 10 BEKLEIDUNGSBETRIEBE
- 11 PAPIERERZEUGUNG UND -BEARBEITUNG
- 12 GRAFISCHE BETRIEBE
- 13 CHEMISCHE PRODUKTION
- 14 NÄHRUNGS- UND GENUSSMITTELBETRIEBE
- 15 HOTEL-, GAST- UND SCHANKBETRIEBE
- 16 HANDELSBETRIEBE
- 17 VERKEHR
- 18 GELDWESEN, PRIVATVERSICHERUNG
- 19 REINIGUNGSWESEN
- 20 KOSMETIK
- 21 KOSMETIK
- 22 GESUNDHEITSWESEN
- 23 BILDUNG, KUNST, UNTERHALTUNG
- 24 RECHTS- UND WIRTSCHAFTSBERATUNG
- 25 VERWALTUNG (ÖFFENTLICHER DIENST)

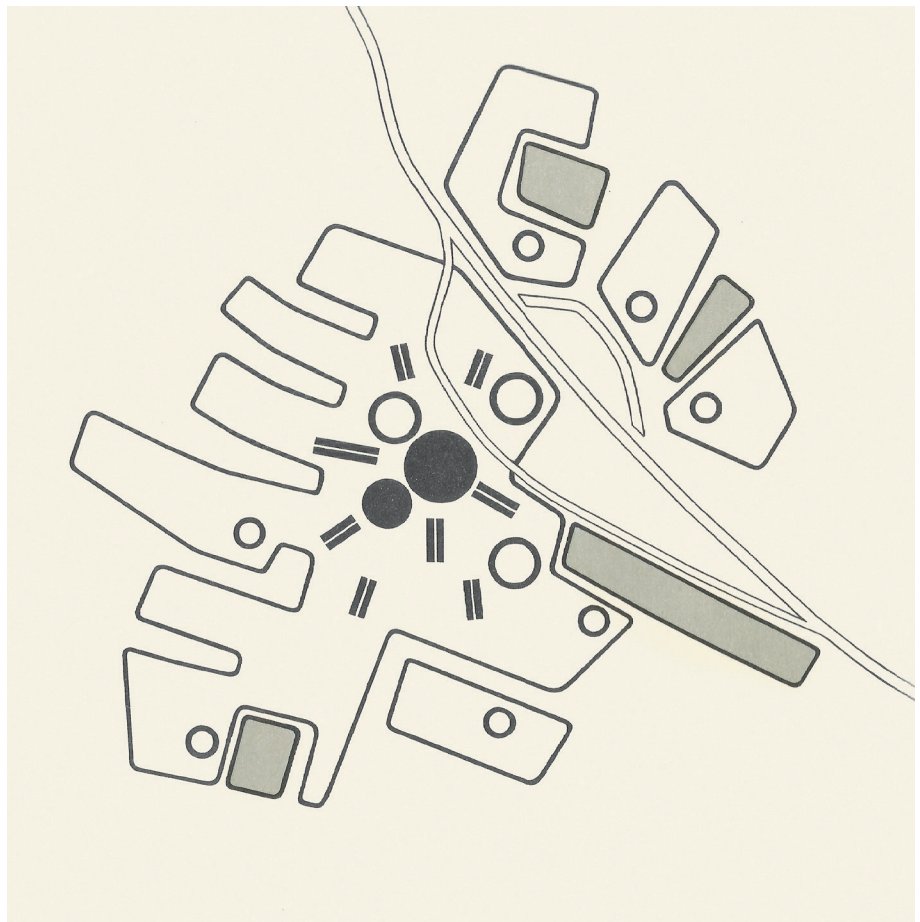
INNEHALB JEDER BETRIEBSKLASSE WIRD DIE GLIEDERUNG IN BETRIEBE VERSCHIEDENER BESCHÄFTIGTENZAHL DARGESTELLT:

- ÜBER 100
- 101-100
- 1-10 UNSELBSTÄNDIG BESCHÄFTIGTE

AM RECHTEN RANDE JEDES DIAGRAMMES WIRD DIE GLIEDERUNG ALLER IM BEZIRK BEFINDLICHEN BETRIEBE NACH DER BESCHÄFTIGTENZAHL DARGESTELLT.

**Fig. 4**

Roland Rainer, Betriebsstruktur nach Bezirken / Corporate structure by district, from *Planungskonzept Wien*, 1962



- City attuale
- City progettata
- Centri esterni
- == Strade commerciali
- Aree industriali essenziali
- Aree residenziali
- Parchi storici importanti
- △△△ Aree boschive del Wienerwald
- Aree boschive dell'Auwald
- ||||| Rimboschimenti
- Cunei verdi essenziali
- Corridoi verdi essenziali
- Aree agricole



**Fig. 5**  
Roland Rainer, Gliederungsschema / Joint diagram, from *Planungskonzept Wien*, 1962.

**Fig. 6**  
Roland Rainer, Grünflächenschema / Green area scheme, from *Planungskonzept Wien*, 1962



## INTENZIONI DI PIANO

- Valorizzazione di aree per lo svago
- Nuovi parchi (2-10 ha)
- ▤ Rete dei corridoi ecologici in progetto, parzialmente realizzati
- ▤ Valorizzazione della rete dei corridoi ecologici (caratterizzanti il paesaggio)
- ▤ Valorizzazione della rete dei corridoi ecologici (urbani)
- ▤ Espansione della rete nei territori circostanti

## STATO DI FATTO

- Paesaggio a matrice forestale (boschi, vigneti, prati)
- Paesaggio a matrice agricola
- Grandi spazi verdi urbani (es. Schönbrunn, Zentralfriedhof)
- Parchi (estensione 2-10 ha)
- Parchi (estensione 2-10 ha)
- ▤ Cunei di correnti d'aria

## CONTESTO

- Aree edificate (2013)
- Aree boscate nei dintorni di Vienna
- Danubio e affluenti
- Aree umide
- Limite della città
- ▤ Infrastrutture di superficie (strade e linee ferrate)
- ▤ Infrastrutture di superficie in progetto (strade e linee ferrate)

**Fig. 7**

Step 2025, Leitbild Grünräume / Leitbild green areas, from *Stadtentwicklungsplan Wien*, Magistratsabteilung MA 18, 21, 22, 41, ZAMG, Urban Atlas, 2014

for unanimously by the members of the Municipal Council in November 1961, was immediately dropped, and this compelled the architect to resign as department director in 1962, causing tensions between him and the Municipality of Vienna for years to come.

What “promise” contained Rainer’s plan? In fact, in 2016, the ongoing changes led Vienna, in particular its Department of Urban Planning, to start analysing future scenarios and trying out design methodologies to draw up a development plan for the city: the *STEP 2025 Urban Development Plan* of Vienna.

On the one hand, this plan takes into account the urban growth that from today until 2025 will lead Vienna to become a city with more than two million inhabitants, and on the other, considers the sustainable development aspect. The plan is therefore proposed as a valid tool to cope with these new challenges for the city. Politicians, planners, scientists, and citizens have worked on it jointly in a constant dialogue that continues today. STEP 2025 addresses the main themes that will be at the foreground in the coming years to realize the growth potential of Vienna. The spectrum ranges from further development of the “existing city” to issues of territorial mobilization and business location, to networking in the metropolitan region, to the open space design or to the mobility system. This variety of topics illustrates Vienna’s holistic and integrated approach to the further development of the city. From the point of view of urban development, the new plan from 2016 shows many similarities to that of Rainer’s from 1958. Not only are the areas taken into consideration are the same as those hypothesized by Rainer – the areas to the north-east and south-west of the city centre – but it is Rainer’s idea to link various parts of the city with “green corridors”, as well as connecting the area of new expansion to the north-east by a system of urban parks whose fulcrum is the island on the Danube, to then develop in this direction, joining agricultural and woodland areas. This is the fundamental question: in the light of the transformations of the city, what architectural and urban dynamics would have been brought into

play if Rainer's plan had been realized? Or again: why is that the *Stadtentwicklungsplan Wien STEP 2025* seems to return to some key points of Rainer's *Planungskonzept*? In other words: why are we starting today from Rainer's post-war plan for the reconstruction of Vienna to design its future urban development? What choices are we making? In the perspective of a growth of the urban population of Vienna well over two million people, and therefore of the radical and inevitable transformations that this entails, it is inevitable to ask whether Rainer's design choices can still be considered effective.

Rainer had developed a practical and theoretical project to reconstruct the city from its ruins: the theory was neatly interwoven with the practice, with the doing. The important thing to note is that Rainer took as his starting point a topological morphological study that encroached on the geographic dimension. In his plan to reconstruct the city its morphology played a key role, was a priority. Here the architect *translates* more than *expresses*, uses – we could say with a term to be added to the lexicon of the inventory – *scalar morphologies*, in an incessant bobbin movement, backwards and forwards: an unfinished work like the material being worked.

This observation leads us to the radical question of the actions to be taken in terms of reconstruction. This question requires that reflection be displaced from the investigation around the objects of our studies to the problem of the *object* of architecture itself, in order to reconstruct a critical distance, without automatically obeying the order, the sequence of discourse, but focusing on relationships, on the possible links.

In other words, we are faced with the unavoidable need to think again the *Zwischenraum*, the space in-between things capable of uniting or suspending, removing the rhetoric of objectuality that architectural debate focuses on today<sup>10</sup>. By composing the thought of the “space in-between”, *Zwischenraum*, with the thought of the “time in the middle,” of the “intra/time” of *Zwischenzeit*, we can demolish by designing the temporal fixity of the objects which in their singularity are the protagonists in our cities.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> See G. RAKOWITZ, C. TORRICELLI, edited by, *Ricostruzione Inventario progetto / Reconstruction Inventory Project*, Poligrafo, Padova, 2018, in particular pp. 110-131.

<sup>2</sup> See C. MAGNANI, *Introduction. Reconstruction: a mental space?*, in G. RAKOWITZ, C. TORRICELLI, edited by, *Ricostruzione Inventario progetto*, cit., pp. 10-17.

<sup>3</sup> Agamben has shown that the idea that art does not reside in the work but in the mind of the artist and has a theological matrix that finds its proper formulation in Thomas' analogy between the house that pre-exists in the architect's mind, and the divine creation of the world according to the model or idea in his or her mind. See G. AGAMBEN, *Creazione e anarchia. L'opera nell'età della religione capitalista*, Vicenza, Neri Pozza, 2017, p. 19.

<sup>4</sup> G. AGAMBEN, *Creazione e anarchia*, op. cit., ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Thus J. DERRIDA, *Psyché. Invention de l'Autre*, Paris, Éditions Galilée, 1987:

<sup>6</sup> The work of Roland Rainer in profoundly rethinking the city of Vienna can be found in the volume: R. RAINER, *Planungskonzept Wien*, Wien, Jugend & Volk, 1962.

<sup>7</sup> And nevertheless Rainer being a member of the NSDAP during the Nazi period: see the exhibition titled *Roland Rainer - (Un)Umstritten: Neue Erkenntnisse zum Werk (1936-1963)*, edited by I. Holzschuh, M. Platzer e W. Indrist, 20 October - 10 December 2018, Architekturzentrum Wien AzW. The exhibition is the result of a research project that began with the acquisition of the Roland Rainer fund by AzW in 2015 to

gain for the first time a more specific view of Rainer's work during National Socialism. Rainer himself did not want this period to be remembered, as he himself dropped works and texts from this stage in his life.

<sup>8</sup> See R. RAINER, *An den Rand geschrieben. Wohnkultur - Stadtkultur*, Wien Köln Weimar, Böhlau, 2000.

<sup>9</sup> Recalling some graphic representations and texts: from *Bevölkerungsentwicklung im Raume Wien 1869-1951*, to *Pendelwanderung, Bevölkerungsdichte, Wohnbevölkerung und Berufstätige, Arbeitsstätten, Betriebsstruktur nach Bezirken, Zentrale Einrichtungen, Einzugsbereiche der Mittelschulen, Versorgungsleitungen Wien-Umland, Flächennutzung, Flächenwidmung, Verkehr, Bebauung, Stadtbild und Denkmalschutz* ecc.

<sup>10</sup> Regarding the link between *Zwischenraum* and *Zwischenzeit*, see: G. SIMMEL, *Brücke und Tür*, in "Der Tag. Modern illustrierte Zeitung", 683, Berlin 1909, pp. 1-3, now in Idem, *Brücke und Tür. Essays des Philosophen zur Geschichte, Religion, Kunst und Gesellschaft*, im Verein mit M. Susman, edited by M. Landmann, Stuttgart, Koehler, 1957. See also R. KOSELLECK, *Vergangene Zukunft. Zur Semantik geschichtlicher Zeiten*, Frankfurt, a.M., Suhrkamp, 1979. See also the third volume of the series *Wege der Kulturforschung*, edited by U. WIRTH and V. SELLIER, *Bewegen im Zwischenraum*, Berlin, Kulturverlag Kadmos, 2012.

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Gundula Rakowitz, architect, PhD in Architectural Composition, professor in Architectural and Urban Composition at the Luav University of Venice, member of the Luav PhD School. Recent publications: Gianugo Polesello. *Dai Quaderni* (2015); *Tradizione Traduzione Tradimento in Johann Bernhard Fischer von Erlach* (2016); *Entwurf einer historischen Architektur - Progetto di un'Architettura istorica. Johann Bernhard Fischer von Erlach* (2016); con C. Torricelli cura *Ricostruzione Inventario Progetto. Reconstruction Inventory Project* (2018); *Architetture per metropoli / Architectures for metropolis. Ivan Leonidov - Gianugo Polesello* (con L. Lanini, 2019); *Mise en abîme. Sistema Wunderkammer* (2020). She lives and works between Venice, Vicenza and Vienna.