HOW CAN PARTICIPATORY PRACTICES HAVE AN IMPACT ON URBAN DESIGN?

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In the light of questions like “Do cities have choices – in a globalised world”, in searching for an intrinsic logic and the Habitus of a city, and by looking for local, identifying and distinguishing parameters, also architecture and urban design is challenged. What is it that we perceive, what is we can experience, what is the imaginary factor (Henri Lefebvre)?

How can action be taken against side effects of globalization and capitalism like tendencies towards urbanization, loss of urban space, “security mobilization” and a prognosis against increasing social and territorial segregation?

A possible approach is to use participatory practices, shown on the example of Austria’s second biggest city, Graz.

Graz was the cultural capital of Europe in 2003, and played its part in the game of globalization by initiating spectacular developments. Subsequently, also because of the resulting tight budget, counter actions were implemented.

Public participation made already history in Graz: Already in 1974 the city founded the “office for public participation” (Büro für Bürgerinitiativen), now “department of public participation” (Referat für BürgerInnenbeteiligung) as a result of the protest movement against an urban motorway.

There’s a political confession to the participatory practices during the coalition government (Grüne / ÖVP). They installed a “advisory board for public participation” in 2009 (Beirats für BürgerInnenbeteiligung) – one of a kind in Austria.

The city department is working on a particular project referred to as “quality of life indication” (Lebensqualitätsindikatoren) since 2004 – a instrument for measure, planning and controlling to explore and compare “social spaces”.

This project and further eighteen practised architectonic strategies, like “Stedelijk Beheer“, “Planning for Real“, also participation projects such as “First Cityforum (Erstes Stadtforum) Berlin, “Social City” (Soziale Stadt) in Germany and socioculture intervention art (soziokulturelle Interventionskunst), like “Park fiction” or “WochenKlausur” have been explored by us with the
objective of How to improve the quality of life for inhabitants by appropriation, alteration respectively semantic revision of their environment?

Therefore we generated REA-L – a model of open planning – networked, flexible, participatory and interdisciplinary, which we want to introduce. It is a mobile city planning office with a “bottom up” urban planning approach. The outcome of this should be an enduring and structural changeable city development that benefits from the experiences and the potential on site. REA-L enables an all up urban balance and a transparent integration for established urban management planning.

Keywords: participatory practices, Public participation, architectonic strategies, open planning, Graz

Trends in Austria

As the competition between European regions and boroughs increases, relations between neighbouring regions as well as in the economy and technology become more important. While individual motorization is not put on hold (commuter, spare time, need of mobility), the shift of urban functions and the trend of segregation continues.

The institute “Statistik Austria“ (Hanika Alexander, 2010) prognosticated a mismatch in society due to immigration until 2050, leading to dying peripheral areas and further shrinking of already disadvantaged fringes of the alpine region. Reasons held responsible for this development include bad traffic connections and a general economic situation that leads to a lack of job opportunities. Furthermore, the traffic infrastructure in urban agglomerations is predicted to be on the brink of their capacities.

In opposition to the shrinking rural regions, the urban agglomerations are booming with a growth rate of up to 20% in the hubs of Vienna, Graz, and Linz. Vienna’s stockbroker belt, which already includes 50% of Lower Austria, is predicted to soon have a population growth rate of up to 37%. This urban sprawl, which emerged in Austria much later than in Germany, leads to a reduction of growth of the cities, and specifically a stagnation of the city cores compared to their outskirts.

The development in Austria is going to be dominated by the fact that migrants from abroad prefer cities, while inhabitants who lived in the city cores for a longer time, prefer to move to the periphery. This is a result of the rising housing-standards and quality of life (living in the country, lifestyle). The trend leads to a large-scaled social segregation and social and geographic differentiated patterns. As the middle- and upper class still concentrates very much on certain areas in the direct proximity of the city, the less wealthy move out of town, where plots are sold at affordable prices.

The competition among social classes can be detected in the polarization of the housing market and public space. In this space, various user groups and functions are not longer interfering whereas an organized coexistence was replaced by a mono-functional zoning of space: Streets are just reserved for cars, shopping centres on the outskirts instead of the corner shop, schools turn into “school centres”, free plots turn into function-bound parking lots; playgrounds are constructed for a certain age group, etc.; mono-functional housing developed without any working places in their surroundings; elderly homes, etc.

The actual conditions of socialisation convey that we are not living in a consistent surrounding.

Our experienced and used spaces are scattered like islands all over the city and only receive contextual meaning in the course of individual biographical experiences – „island
socialisation“ or “islandisation“\textsuperscript{1} (Löw Martina, 2001). This development is extensively described in Thomas Sieverts’ book “Zwischenstadt“\textsuperscript{2} (1997).

About the complexity of interventions within the urban structure

The main areas of concern, like globalisation, suburbanisation, segregation, etc arrived in Austria in delay and didn’t develop into extreme forms in the small towns of Austria - preventive measures and counteractions appear to be possible and effective.

In cities of medium size, like Graz, Linz etc, these measures could influence the quality of life by maintaining the function of housing in the cities and strengthening their cores e.g. by participatory strategies of urban planning. It is also important that the peripheral areas - the so called rurban (rural/urban) zones, where the structure of villages clashes with urban sprawl respectively urban influences - are incorporated in this process as well. Moreover, measurements in small towns can be considered as experiments to test and evaluate applied measures.

The social shift, which is closely connected with the alteration of urban functions and the change of urban structure, can be counteracted with the means of architecture and specific urban planning. The impact of urban planning and architecture on the structure via its design influences our understanding of order as a visible statement of representation and its social context. Indirectly, architecture influences communication, the opportunities in life and social relations.

In 1996 the London-based city morphologist Bill Hillier, verified this in a scientific study “Space is the machine – A configurational theory of architecture” (Hillier Bill, 1996) that as a result generated the “space-syntax method“\textsuperscript{3} for the daily routine of an architectural

\textsuperscript{1} Translated from Martina Löws term of “verinselte Vergesellschaftung“ (2001).
\textsuperscript{2} In-between cites; Transurban spaces.
\textsuperscript{3} The Space-syntax- method was used in the following projects in cooperation with Norman Foster: South Bank, Trafalga Square und Tate Modern Galery. In Austria, Space Syntax was used developing the project Aspanggründe/Eurogate (1998).
or urban designer. This tackles and points out general basic interdependencies between design and the comportment of its user, like the geometrical and syntactical qualities of space configuration (design of space) and thus how architecture and urban planning can change the individual human and hence social comportment (function of space).

The appearance of our environment contributes to the impact of global spatial configurations, facilitates and restrains in its three defining factors which are orientation, functionality, and patterns of motion. Buildings and their structures are thus defined social objects in the relation of space and time. Architecture is conditioned by a constant dynamic interpretation and a continuous process (chain of events) with intrinsic new interpretations and uses. While contemplating objects, we involuntarily recall association to earlier contexts, adding “sense” to it, which also influences certain groups and persons.

As a result, real objects are in effect a hybrid construction: Their emerging and changing underlies local, social, technical, instrumental and epistemic conditions, whose future mode of action cannot be foreseen. As a reaction, spatial structures are increasingly described as being undefined, unrestricted, and uncertain, without function and are understood as empty shells, which are always meant to be ready and adaptable for all kinds of temporary actions (Hubeli Ernst, 2004).

Unlike architecture, public space doesn’t receive much attention apart from its representative zones – mostly it is crossed without any recognition or action. The public space as such is not perceived, its effect is based on the quality of unconscious actions and sensations.

However, we are always acting in a “social sphere” (Dangschat Jens, 1994, p.350), a space which is characterized by complex mutual relations between the social space (Bourdieu Pierre, 1998) and the physical real space (built and physical spatial configuration, including the functionality and symbolism). Urban space needs to be understood and analyzed as a dynamic, global concept.

This explains the uniqueness of every place and every city. Urban structures, which are not only defined by their spatial configuration, but by hidden and specific parameters for a certain place, by unconscious "pre-reflexive processes of sense construction” (Doxa) and their physical-cognitive constitution (Habitus) (Löw Martina, 2008, p.42) – also known as the intrinsic logic and proper sense of cities - should be individually respected in any project of architecture and spatial planning. Like a puzzle, all parts should be assembled and brought into relation with each other.

“The reproduction of space happens in a repetitive mode in everyday life. Spaces are changed due to necessity, physical demand, actions and foreignness. When changing institutionalized spaces and spatial structures, they should be looked at in respect to their context regarding rules and resources.” (Löw Martina, 2001, p.272)

Alterations of social and spatial practices seem difficult because they underlie an inertial spatial organization (Friedrichs Jürgen, 1977), which is often reflected by contradictory wishes and goals of the inhabitants, shaped by various interests and as such

4 Describes in this context the reasonable constellation of objects and the investigation of formal relations between signs and their arrangement.
6 Translated from Martina Löws term of “präreflexive Prozesse der Sinnkonstruktion” 2008, p.42.
describing the complexity of a city. Those practices contain social conflicts that become an instrument in the reproduction and increase of one’s own power and position when controlled. Spatial structures and respectively their borders are drawn by power relations within society - this leads to specific “spatial practices“ (Harvey David, 1994).

This means that space is configured by constantly changing relations between the dimensions of structure, action and order, and reproduces social structures through the repetitive practices of everyday life, which in effect influence the configuration of space (synthesis) in a recursive process. Space is for this reason a social product and the configuration of space a social process. Thus space, location and city are in continuous flow.

In order to transform society, social practices must be changed. Changing space and thus also society sustainably means to interfere in social practices, which became established over decades. Structural changes just have effects on a long-term basis.

This complexity in the structure of cities and their spaces is displayed in the difficulties of the cities’ self-image to formulate their individuality for research purposes. In the end, we only get to know one snapshot, one detail, only one “truth” - depending on individual perception, experiences and imagination (Lefebvre Henri, 2004) depending on reachability (distance) its accessibility (approbation and use) and also its dominance (property rights), the power and control over a space (Harvey David 1994).

Alterations in a complex city structure need to be a mix between alterations in the actual built structure and social interventions, to have lasting results on a long term – composed according to the situation.

**A possible answer- participatory urban development**

Instead of comparing cities it is more interesting whether precise measurements can give a direction to current trends, and how architecture and urban planning can contribute to it.

As the process of design in architecture and urban planning also describes a dynamic process and is situated within the dynamic (city-) structure, dynamic and mobile development processes need to be fostered as supporting tools for strategic planning.

It makes sense to develop a flexible planning structure for cities – in the context of “open planning”\(^8\) (Fassbinder Helga, 1996) – which reacts on each situation and problem-zones of cities, concerning their uniqueness, their intrinsic logic and the proper sense.

It is necessary to create an open process of dialogue by using collective possibilities and intelligence in trans-disciplinary collaborations. The task is to mobilize as many human as well as material resources – of the city, the area, the space – to mutually strengthening each other.

Open planning is far reaching It is adding a new quality of social regulations with dialogue, decisions, consensus and networking, self regulated and administrated by local means. Therefore open planning needs to be flexible, democratic and time efficient, and administered differently than previous (planning-) methods.

“In short, it is necessary to swap restrictions and reinforce transparency of processes and widespread participation of all social classes as well as categories of how space is used when defining its function and its control.”\(^9\) (Fassbinder Helga, 1996, p.145)

\(^8\) Translated from Helga Fassbinders term of „Offene Planung“, 1996.
Open planning allows a participatory and democratic vision and offers a precise orientation for future developments in order to realize a vision.

Open planning is a preventive action (preventive against tendencies of decline and an affordable alternative in maintaining neighbourhoods, shaped by compromises. The most important factor, respectively component is the participatory involvement.

Participatory urban development is a possible starting point, a possible active contribution that architecture and urban planning can deliver in the ongoing discourse. Architecture with certain functionality is more – functionality not only in the context of the modernist “form follows function” but also in the context of human relations: function follows social community.

There is a large number of concepts and methods which are connected to participation and decision processes: from accessing records, information, hearings, debates, internet, information sessions, surveys, interviews, round tables, workshops, petitions, preparing investigations, “planning for real”, social compensation methods, environmental reviews, etc, to the so called “Stadtforum” (local forum of the city).

We can split them into a group of methods which are launched by the authorities or institutions (top down) or the group which is launched by citizens (bottom up).

Very often, participation is used as a governing strategy to reduce the responsibility for society as a whole, but not for the emancipation of flexible and active individuals, but as a part of neoliberal ideology, or its logic of administration, management and production (Fezer/Heyden, 2004, p.14). However, participation should be used in another context, because “critical participation is to share the common, questioning it and perhaps moving even further. The question of property and access of space, the conditioning of functions following economical, political and social criteria and the representation of national, civil or economic self-value are at disposition.” (Fezer/Heyden, 2004, p.16)

Participation is thus a power constellation of a social policy, which allows to share in even if it would work on its own, but maybe “(…) in a simpler, more satisfying, more beautiful, faster, more equal or even human and more democratic way.” (Fezer and Heyden, 2004, p.14)

Rules, boundaries and structured hierarchies are necessary for it to operate properly. Participation is a process-oriented, discursive technique and is superior to the static-hierarchic organization system economically, because self-correcting measurements, innovation, self-organization, effectiveness.

Participation which bases its decision on a broad basis, causes the user to believe in their high competences in all functional question (according to Helga Fassbinder, 1998), which is also brought in by a qualified right of proposal. By the cooperative planning process and in the negotiations of a planning the designers’ take back themselves. New participatory architecture demands the creation of new alliances, new working methods and new fields of...
work. Working with participatory methods is not based on perfection and can be altered, and is thus open to change and evolution.

This experimental practice of urban planning includes more than just involvement in planning, which is anchored in the existing legacy of Austria on national and federal level. “To achieve a greater success after a series of occasional projects, we must develop a strategic and long term orientation, e.g. by a modular development strategy, which includes the evaluation of its success and allows interventions within the process.”

(Marten Florian, 1997, p. 302)

Urban Participation could strengthen the identification of a city and have effects on the social polarization like segregation, the emerging of ghettos, social tensions, conflicts- and ultimately social hotspots. However, the condition for change is that there is a serious political will to include participation of the users (voters and non-voters), to enhance a win-win situation and clear responsibilities for decision-making.

If the output is discretely pre-sorted by politicians, everybody else involved in the process could get frustrated. This politic of discouragement can also be a tactical move-pseudo-participation, motivated by the fear of losing control.

12 Translated from: „Um über die begrenzten Erfolge netter Einzelprojekte hinauszukommen, bedarf es einer strategischen und langfristigen Ausrichtung, zum Beispiel in Form einer modularen Entwicklungsstrategie, welche Erfolgsüberprüfungen und ein prozessbegleitendes Nachsteuern einschließt.“ (Marten Florian, 1997, p. 302)
Citizen participation in Graz

Most participation processes are initiated in the course of urban development when far-reaching changes (e.g. re-zoning of west- and east Berlin) or highly criticized projects influence and polarize a large number of citizens. At first these processes are very experimental, because the necessary expertise that accompanies the participation process needs to be developed. As soon as a certain tradition is developed in the participation process, people relate to it as a known concept.

Graz, the second biggest city of Austria, has a long tradition of citizen participation compared to e.g. Linz.

In Graz the starting point for this development was a newly planned highway, the line of the Phyrn-motorways. The protest movement and citizens actions caused a change of political power in the city council. In 1974, the office of citizen’s action (Büro für Bürgerinitiative), the now called “department of public participation” (Referat für Bürgerbeteiligung) was established. It’s still subordinated to the municipal authorities of urban planning. Since then, citizen participation is anchored in urban development schemes by law. The tasks of this department are to intervene in a neutral and objective way in planning and construction tasks; recording and transmitting complaints and suggestions as well as the arranging information- and discussion meetings on behalf of the city council and on citizens’ request. Since 1990, the number of citizens’ groups has decreased in Graz, thus a citizen service point was established to ease public administrative procedures.

The integration of citizens in the process of planning projects is meant to prevent conflicts and to fulfill the public information request. The department is familiar with the cities structures, knows its main local actors and citizens’ initiatives and the cities’ issues.

Becoming European Capital of Culture in 2003, Graz participated in the so-called “big game of globalization” with many spectacular construction projects\textsuperscript{13}, which resulted in cost-cutting measures in Graz’s tight household budget. As a result, the city returned to this method.

In 2004, Dorothea Klampfl's “indicators of quality of life” (Lebensqualitätsindikatoren)\textsuperscript{14} - project, a cooperation among the youth welfare office (Amt für Jugend und Familie) and the social services department (Sozialamt), was initiated. Since 2006 this measuring-, planning- and controlling tool, which enables to investigate and compares “social spaces”, is located in the urban surveying office.

Thus an internal data-base was generated by objectified data acquisition through statistics, IST space analysis, the data of several city departments and ongoing interviews of the population. The aim is to monitor stressed city areas in order to show the effect of already existing resources that were mobilized by social interventions and to get feedback of how they effected the economy and the urban structure.

\textsuperscript{13} Kunsthaus / Peter Cook and Colin Fournier, Murinsel / Vito Acconci, Helmut-List-Halle/ Markus Pernthaler, Literaturhaus / Riegler Riewe, Stadthalle Graz / Klaus Kada, etc.

\textsuperscript{14} The project is based on the principle of sustainability of Lokale Agenda 21, the “Schweizer Modell Gesundheitsförderung” (Swiss model of health promotion) 2003 and the study “Lebensqualitätsindikatoren” (life quality indicators) by Gisdat 2001.
Another long-term project was the project of “Werkstatt-Graz” (2005-2007). Following their leitmotiv “More time for Graz“ a participation process was initiated, with 17 innovation workshops in all districts of Graz, with a final consensus conference, to elaborate long-term goals for the central region of Graz concerning quality of life, increasing the city’s income and perspectives for the future, as well as to improve the sense of belonging to the city and citizen democracy. As a consequence, a catalogue of measures was developed, including 11 main topics and 51 key projects, not covered financially in its implementation.

This led to the formation of the citizens’ initiative “More time for Graz“ in 2007, to further the implementation of the elaborated main goals. It was due to their persistence that the advisory board for public participation was founded in 2009. However, this political commitment can also be traced back on the actual coalition government of ÖVP/Grüne, who anchored public participation in the coalition contract of their municipal council period 2008-2013.

Urban planning and citizen participation are top priority since 2009 – Mayor Siegfried Nagl, chairman of the advisory board for public participation (Beirat für Bürgerbeteiligung), directs the municipal planning and building control office. This informal advisory city-board accompanies the implementation of the measures resulting “time for Graz” (Zeit für Graz), projects of urban planning for the future development of the city and is meant to be involved in the evolution of citizen participation. Additional it gives statements on selected planning processes, informs about urban development schemes and contributes in preparation of area zoning plans. Its goal is to accompany and question the future development of the city in a constructive way.

Currently, in the course of the project for redesigning the Annenstraße, due the reconstruction of a junction to the main railway station, a participation process takes place all over the Broken Glass District, organized in borough meetings.

Options of implementation

In the course of the study “REA-L – local space development agency (RaumEntwicklungsAgenur-Lokal), which had the aim of developing a system for enhancing public participation in urban planning processes, we discussed the following two questions:

1) How can quality of life of the population improve through spontaneous approbation, changement and semantic revision of their surrounding, and how can architecture and urban planning contribute to it?
2) Which established strategies of public participation do exist? What are the strengths and weaknesses?

Accordingly we analyzed the advantages and drawbacks of 18 different put-into-practice-projects, between the priorities of architectural strategies, participation and socio-cultural intervention art: Stedelijk Beheer (NL), Planning for Real – Planung aus dem Kiez (D), Modell O’Brien – diverscity (D), Urban II urban development program (EU), Urban_Link – Graz-West (A), advisory council of city design Linz (Beirat für Stadtgestaltung, A), die Gemeinwesensarbeit borough Bassena (A), Erstes Stadtforum Berlin (D), die Soziale Stadt (D), local agenda of managers – LAMA (A), noncon: “Form vor Ort” (A), information series “Stadtdialog” (A), “Werkstatt Graz” (A), department of public participation Graz (Referat für Bürgerbeteiligung, A), “Park Fiction” in Hamburg (D), 3zkb (“3 zimmer küche bad”) – spatial intervention (D), “Trans Areale” (A) and “7Wochenklausur” (A).

15 Based on the model of ecos or better known as model Basel „Werkstatt Basel + Quartier 21 Lausanne“ (1996-99).
Our analysis of these projects showed the chances, but most of all, the problems of the used methods, e.g. long term motivation of all involved parties, short time projects without retry, missing integration of local traders and industry, as well as migrants and social deprived people, a lack of political will for implementing projects, missing realization competences, undefined budget limits, a lack of political independence in cases of opinion-forming, etc. …

As a result we developed a best practice model of our analyses, considering the option of intervention of the fields of architecture and urban planning with the following aims:

1) Promotion of semi-public areas for people with little means by changing spatial variances respectively semantic revision of public structures. Public space is meant to be reactivated and strengthened not only as a recreational- and communicational area, but also as an area of social acting (socialization). It’s supposed to be a process of forming an opposite pole to consumer-oriented semi public and virtual spaces.

2) Planning and realization of integrative, private as well as public places, that effect social communication and social actions in a positive way. It is possible to obtain identification, identity and individuality of places, to enable appropriation and support a sense of responsibility of room users, if neutralization is counteracted.

3) Places should be used with more diversity and intensity (urban heterogeneity). It’s necessary to reduce the “islandisation” of use, because the increasing mobility and flexibility is reciprocal to the small areas of action spaces of people with little means and deprived people.

4) The needs of space users should lead to collective productions of desire, visions and overall concepts, which have to be transcribed by a sustainable, architectural appealing quality of space. Processes of urbanization and thus the urban migration to surrounding communities can be reduced, through an increase of life quality in the inner-city regions, alongside a moderation of capital loss of, perforated, fragmentized or shrinking cities.

5) The concrete planning and realization should be accompanied by participation processes, in order to improve planning in respect to content, use local potentials, accelerate votes and to increase the satisfaction of realized measures. Politically, the improved image can be an advantage, on the one hand city intern – increasing every-day satisfaction and promotion of the people’s trust, and on the other city-external, as an innovative competitive advantage and as a shining example for other cities.

6) New ways of urban development by participation and process-oriented interventions have to be started simultaneous in the entire city. Through this simultaneousness, gentrification and thus the displacement processes can be prevented, thereby moderating the creeping shift of areal problems within the city.

7) It’s essential to have updated an evaluation of interventions and effects through the integration of scientific researches results and architectural discourse in urban everyday-structures/processes. An enhanced information exchange between the parties (universities, city, administrational bodies, politics, businesses, urban actors) is necessary. A “know-how”-transfer is forced by national and international networking.
Further aims and possibilities of intervention, lying beyond the action area of architecture and urban planning are:

1) The maintenance and setup of informal structures as well as networks (neighborhoods), to decelerate the trend of “islandisation”, which leads to the loss of neighborhoods, neighborly help, as well as isolation and anonymization, so that a humane city can come into existence.

2) Promotion and development of territorial structures and communication in order (compromise / consensus / conflict resolution) to support democratic structures, to allow opinion-forming-processes and to create publicity.

3) Strengthening of social, ecological and economical sustainability, to relativize individual interests in favor of public interests. Support of the ecological/economical spatial awareness and empowerment, as self responsibility positively effects public safety.

4) Inclusion of all ethnic groups of population (multilingualism, interpreters).

In order to adapt the common urban development praxis and to enhance an improved model of participation, following starting points are the most important:

- a mixture of architectural and social interventions;
- a decentralized, durable district representative with consistent contact partners on location;
- integration of city users, residents, institutions and companies, considering the limitation of resources for people with little means;
- the interdisciplinary cooperation in the area of communication and project development;
- the regional boundaries exceeding view on space use;
- a city-wide comparison by a superior, non party commission;
- strengthening of informal social networks for people with little means.

**REA-L a model of open planning**

In addition to the current, rather reactive urban planning, we developed the model “REA-L – a space development agency-local” (RaumEntwicklungsAgentur – Lokal), in 2006. It is based on the complex interrelationships of urban planning and sociological theories, and the analysis of 18 projects, realized in medium-sized European cities.

REA-L is an open planning model, which is participatory, networked, flexible and interdisciplinary, dedicated to cities including their peripheries, and will therefore be an important new tool of spatial perception respectively urban planning.

REA-L has to be understood as a mobile borough support with a participatory "bottom up" urban planning approach. By the use of expertise and the local potential, urban development could sustainably change. In addition an urban balance, as well as a transparent integration of well known urban planning practices would be enabled.

Only the structure of the organization, communication of the time flow and the spatial procedures and the internal administration with the two new introduced levels REA-L and REA are predefined.
As basic level as much REA-L teams as according to the town status are implemented. The level above is REA the “RaumEntwicklungs-Agentur” (spatial development agency), which mediates between the REA-L teams and city administration.

REA-L teams work mobile, interdisciplinary (artists, architects, social workers, urban planning authorities, mediators, etc.), and are equipped with financial resources. They follow regular routes through areas, considering the orientation of the social area, in order to develop and implement actions respectively interventions in the living environment together with the population.

According to the motto “city as a campingsite” – the REA-L teams use caravans, which tour the areas, socioculturally worthy of preservation, as well as urban and peripheric problem areas. The caravans, serve as initial points bases for interventions and as people’s contact points. They establish the contact between team and the local people, but also with artists, local companies and creative-, artistic- and social institutions. They are supported, according to demands, by representatives of administrative bodies, universities, spatial planners, geographers, psychologists, social pedagogues etc.

Public Art, Art in public space, as well as socio-cultural intervention art, thus New Genre Public Art, is thereby playing a key role. (Kwon Miwon 1997)

The art’s role is the mediation between the parties concerned. Temporarily starting-actions can be developed, through informal procedures with playful access and creative input, which provoke public attention and create identity. As spontaneous identifiers they inspire people to collective projections of desires and initiate a media-active implementation. The focus lies on participatory development, however always with the aim of an immediate and concrete implementation.
To enable a local and wider area comparison of interests REA (spatial development agency) mediates between the REA-L teams and city administration. It cooperates also with local educational institutions, such as universities (evaluation and project support).

Beside the administrative tasks (organization, finances, etc), the emphasised areas are: networking, the coordination of communication (politics – administrative bodies – science – REA-L – population), the comparison of city-wide interests regarding initiated changes and measures, public relations and in particular organization and staging of public discussions. The REA commission has to consist of important key persons of politics (city and state) and administrative bodies, to assure it’s functionality and structure.

The integration and networking of active town users and initiatives, as well as the development of issues, projects and priorities, are the intentions, on the premise of the realization of small projects.

The closely related network supports the responsible politicians and administrative bodies and enables an exchange of theory, science and everyday reality, breaks strict hierarchies and applies to the implementation and realization of the populations’ collective projection of desires.

Direct, rapid transfers of small scale projects, financed by special funds prove actionism, enlarge the sphere of action, activate more city users, increase the competence of professionalism and expertise, as well as the credibility of REA-L. Major projects are to be implemented with the help of especially installed interdisciplinary forums via the comparison of interests.

The innovation of this project approach is sustained in the attempt to contain processes of migration, displacement, well known through the keywords urbanization, segregation, gentrification, etc. On the other hand REA-L is able to counteract the lost of public space, the rising need for security, the increase of social polarization and the enhancement of habitat fragmentation and isolation.

The main intention is to improve the populations’ quality of life, especially the everyday life quality of the people with little means by appropriation of the environment as well as semantically revision or new realized social or spatial structures.

To achieve this purpose re-urbanisation should be promoted with the aim to reintegrate public spaces as living spaces, to improve disadvantaged city area images and informal
structures of all ethnic groups, as well as to promote an exchange of knowledge, so that equal opportunities will be established. This should not work “top down” initiated by city administration, but work according to the principles of open planning – urban development. By means of suggestions to bottom up-participation and provided with a long-term willingness of participation and self-design it will work.

The method consists of interdisciplinary cooperation initiated by the city administration (architects, urban planners, soziologists, sozial workers etc.) in social spaces (Bourdieu Pierre, 1998), to reach an efficient bundling of artistic actions, architectonical measures and social interventions, to support the co-determination of city-users and urban planning. Such bundling leads to an improvement of communication on all levels of the planning process.

Requirements are…
Coupling of artistic, social area and spatial measures;
The interdisciplinarity and co-determination of the models development;
An early integration and equality of the parties concerned;
To create a continuous awareness for spatial effects on the ground;
Activation of city users by the realization of projects, with the goal of a collective, open-ended production of desires;
Multiterritory analyses and the orientation of projects on social spaces with high everyday relevance;
Realizability of the results and transparent processes and responsibilities;
Projects have to comprehensively cover the urban area;
Simultaneously coordination of interventions of the REA-L teams is necessary.

The REA-L and REA's transparency is granted by comprehensible processes and decisions, straight responsibilities, mode of participation on occasion, public discussions of results and creation of formal planning.
Possibilities of revision, which are commonly developed, and overall concepts based on a democratic process ensure practical projects and transparent planning processes. A quick and transparent realization of projects is essential for the credibility, acceptance, identification and the establishment of trust of these projects.
Realization is the prime requirement for an active involvement of the habitants and city users to help to improve the environment of the wealthy AND the poor in common. Only together it’s possible to develop durable worth living city.

Perspectives of implementation
The diverse and long term advantages for cities are reflected in a reduction of dynamic depopulation in certain areas and urban emigration through identification, rise of purchasing power due to a reintegration of financially weak, increase of quality of life due to active participation and an improvement of image, a increase the enjoyment of life by a reduction of menacing spaces and by development of informal networks, an enhancement of the economic situation by an increased of the location’s attraction, etc.
However, only long-term anchorage assures a permanent structural change. The basic condition for an interest in participation is a certain willingness from political bodies and authorities.
An implementation of these innovational projects would be desirable. However, according to conversations with politicians, officials and town planners, what is needed is the political good-will from decision makers.
Regrettably, a general, legally binding anchorage of open planning in urban respectively spatial planning is not in sight in Austria. The first step was taken in 2006, when the “Austrian report on building culture” was published. Many things have been written about Austria’s building culture, as well as it’s a highly emotional discussion topic, but we have to face, that only an absolutely new architectural policy, anchored by the federal government, is able to interrupt the political calculations as a stipulation of spatial development.

A reversal of the current global trend of social and caring development evades architects scope. We can only help to increase the quality of life in our project area and actively demand an interdisciplinary view on buildings, urban spaces and the environments.

“Only with a systematic knowledge on gender- and class-specific institutionalized areas, in their variety and the entanglement of mutual positions to create cities as moving structures, it is possible to improve concepts of planning for plural urban areas.”16 (Löw Martina, 2001, pp. 260)

Open planning is a good supplement to well known urban development respectively urban planning and strategically planning. It’s should be used as a mediating communication interface of politics, experts and users.

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16 Translated from: „Erst mit einem systematischen Wissen um die geschlechts- und klassenspezifisch institutionalisierten Räume, die in ihrer Vielzahl und gegenseitigen Verschränkung Städte als bewegte Gefüge hervorbringen, ist es möglich, Planungskonzepte für die pluralen städtischen Räume zu entwickeln.” (Löw Martina, 2001, pp. 260)
References


