

# INTERDISCIPLINARY CENTRE FOR URBAN CULTURE AND PUBLIC SPACE

15 Years of Urban Research, Teaching and Action



# Interdisciplinary Centre for Urban Culture and Public Space

Fifteen Years of Urban Research, Teaching and Action

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# I. Introduction - On fait un tour d'horizon

## I. Introduction

### On fait un tour d'horizon

#### Horizontal institutional innovation

The Interdisciplinary Centre for Urban Culture and Public Space was founded on 1 December 2008 with the mission to develop novel perspectives on everyday life and public space for the spatial planning and architectural curricula at the Faculty of Architecture and Planning at TU Wien. The faculty had just received funding from the City of Vienna to launch a three-years Visiting Professorship Programme. Ensuing debates involving the dean, study deans and further colleagues revolved around the challenges of integrating such a programme within the faculty, as the focus of the Visiting Professorship was placed on a cross-sectional theme which would need to be explored through more than one engaged and innovative scientific perspective. A decision was taken to set up a new organizational structure which was foreseen by the statutes of the then-Department for Spatial Development, Infrastructure and Environmental Planning: The Arbeitsbereich/Interdisciplinary Centre which would horizontally connect four of the main centres at the faculty: The Institute of Local Planning (IFOER), The Institute of Sociology (then-ISRA), the Institute of Urban and Regional Research (then-SRF) and the Institute of Urban Design (Städtebau). In terms of spatial organization, the IFOER hosted the new institution within its own library premises in *Karlsplatz* 13.

#### Starting from scratch

On its first day the office encompassed a desk in a library room and a parcel with a new computer. The whole scene was overseen by an enthusiastic and optimistic young woman on the other side of the desk. Who was she? Was this a joint office? Three months to go to the beginning of teaching, as the official kick-off for the Visiting Professorship Scheme was planned for 1 March 2009. The first three months included: writing tenders to set up a homepage, organizing internal selection rounds for the first pair of Visiting Professors, inviting them to Vienna for a preparatory meeting and experiencing a 48 hours long debate on how teaching five courses in two languages could be organized, as well as engaging in discussions with TU Legal Office about the need for English contracts (*Amtssprache ist Deutsch!*). Simultaneously one had to get to know new colleagues, Austria, TU Wien and the nuanced ballet of subtext and serpentine communication in Vienna. Not least was there a need to convince the dean to become part of the (felt) faculty and therefore being entitled to hiring the first *Studienassistentin*, thus at once doubling the team's size and fully occupying the library room by including the friendly young lady on the other side into the new team. As a *real* Viennese, she had thus become accomplice of the new horizontal endeavour to set up an institution from scratch.



Fig.2 Gemeindebau Debates



Fig.3 Summer School Base



Fig.4 Actors Walks 4th District

### Situating and settling

The official Visiting Professorship Programme (Funding Phase I - Urban Society) started on 1 March 2009 with two members of staff and two visiting professors who jointly elaborated on the theme of "Urban Culture, Public Space and Civil Society: Culture and Conflict" (CoVVP 2009). A group of twelve engaged students took our course to jointly discover the university area around *Karlsplatz* (4th district) and to deliberate potential spatial integration of academic innovation into the inner city. Early during the term, an idea was born, to organize a summer school, and within three months a one-week intensive workshop in *Favoriten* (10th district) was realized. In cooperation with five European universities and a team of external teachers, knowledge transfers were enhanced between the fields of playing, gaming and spatial planning. We could not have imagined that organizing a summer school would mean cycling through *Favoriten* for 12 weeks to meet potential actors, partners, hosts and co-teachers. It was the best way to get to learn about Vienna, in all its shades of grey (and red!).

### Team building

By the time the summer school "Intraurban Cultural Exchange and the Urban Periphery" was realized in September 2009, we were already fixing the placement for the 2010 Visiting Professorship Theme "Urban Culture, Public Space and the State: Politics and Planning" (CoVVP 2010) with public hearings at the faculty. Seeing how a gentle senior scholar was chosen ad hoc, the selection panel discussed potential

proposals for the junior position with a more practical focus: the list of young studio partners was long, yet the list's striking feature was the absence of female candidates. The centre's staff invested some hours into convincing the committee that the involvement of women is necessary, and finally the committee members gave in and allowed to include an extra round for searching four to five female partners from praxis. Ideally studio partners. While walking with 20 students through Berlin's media quarter at -10 degrees, phone calls with prospective female candidates were made. This was two days before Christmas 2009, and four weeks later we successfully hired a female candidate. Timely, as teaching in the new year would start approximately six weeks later.

The year 2010 brought a new team, a teaching assistant and also two large endeavours: the organization of an international conference for the first time (European November Conference, *Kabelwerk Meidling*, 12th district) as well as the setting up of the Thematic Group for Public Spaces and Urban Cultures at the Association of European Schools of Planning (AESOP TG PSUC), which was initiated together with two international colleagues.

### Europeanization

The European November Conference 2009 "Public Space and the Challenges of Urban Transformation in Europe" was both the first conference organized by us and the initial meeting of the newly established thematic group. The help



Fig.5 Playful Vienna

of students and staff of TU Wien as well as of ten students from University of Cyprus made this event possible. This event did not go without small catastrophes: the caterer usually working at Kabelwerk tried to block our staff from entering, police was nearly called in because of an action to visualize borders between public and private spaces took part (and involved staff of the City of Vienna), our keynote speaker broke her leg prior to her journey

to Vienna and half of the venue's technical staff was in a particular mood. The cherry on the cake was presented during the official dinner at Rathaus when rumors spread that the City Councillor who was kindly welcoming the guests would make one of his last addresses in this function on that same evening. Yet despite these issues which made the event unforgettable, for the centre this event was also the first success in-house as we received intellectual support by approximately 30 faculty colleagues who helped to moderate sessions, chair tracks and arrange walks as well as an exhibition where local offices, urban renewal agencies, artists, activists and associations presented their work to 160 international visitors.

Fig.6 ENC Conference Helpers



### Absence of keynote speakers, and hired professors

Luckily, a circumstance which initially seemed to endanger the quality of the conference - the absence of our keynote speaker - greatly determined the fate of the academic year to come. The postponed keynote lecture took place half a

year later and produced a superb structural side effect: the hiring of the new senior professor in urban studies who would engage with a practically versed junior colleague from an ethical business management perspective to work on the theme "Urban Culture, Public Space and Markets: Economy and Innovation" (CoVVP 2011). Soon, the plan to work along the Danube and to intensify the research and teaching endeavours around the theme of street markets in Budapest and Vienna was selected. This choice would also have positive impacts on the successive theme as phone talks with prospective candidates were made from our excursion headquarters in Fogazhás, a former dental clinic now squatted by Budapest artists. In the meantime, the new City Councillor renewed the programme with enthusiasm for another three years (Funding Phase II - Urban Development). This coincided with the shift in the party line of the patronage which shifted from red to green. The years 2011 and 2012 were also marked by two very important staff decisions: the faculty's decision to institutionalize first parts of the team structure by offering a *Laufbahnstelle* (Austrian tenure-track position) to the head of centre, and the hiring of an interim Head of Centre to cover for a year. With the perspective of another three years of funding already confirmed, the team wrote a new agenda for Funding Phase II and argued successively for structural adaptations to facilitate more research at the centre: the position of the first university assistant was introduced! The position was filled and the centre did gain a new colleague and a dog which was straight away *pragmatisiert* (Austrian word for lifelong work integration) into the institution.





Fig.7 Funding Phase Transitions

### Shifting emphasis towards research

The new funding phase began with the annual topic of “Urban Culture, Public Space and Resources - Aesthetics and materiality” (CoVVP 2012) and brought new insights from human geography and landscape choreography. Two international book projects were taking shape in the background, resulting from the first summer school (Tornaghi/Knierbein 2015) and the international conference (Madanipour/Knierbein/Degros 2014). The shift in structure also allowed for reflections

on the innovative learning experience of the past years as the centre got engaged in several funding applications: Two WTZ/OEAD Projects to enhance transnational mobility were acquired to analyse politics of public spaces (and of housing) in Buenos Aires, Vienna and Zagreb. This is how we started to establish new ways to involve local researchers on public space into cross-institutional and cross-university research groups, one working with colleagues from Argentina in Spanish, the other one working with Croatian colleagues in English. In the meantime, the centre’s first baby was born! The Academic Year 2013 “Urban Culture, Public Space and Urban Knowledge. Education and Difference” (CoVVP 2013) finally featured our first participation in the Urbanize! Festival with an open seminar “My place? Their place? Our place!” offered in the premises of the old cinema at *Hundsturm* in *Margareten* (5th district).

Fig.8 Urbanize Festival 2013



### Nanoperspectives on space and performative picnics

The traditional one-year based visiting professorship model was slightly altered in 2014 when we opted for a combined half-half year placement for the topic “Urban Culture, Public Space and Urban Ways of Living - Everyday Life and Scientific Insights” (CoVVPs 2014). The half-year model created space to discuss innovative nano-perspectives on public space, to establish first contacts with the Austrian Academy of Science, and to host a nice workshop with local activists and actors in a temporary used community space in *Hernals* (17th district) which included an appraisal of the 40th Anniversary of Lefebvre’s *Production of Space*. The teaching culminated in a performative picnic on *Mariahilferstraße* (7th district) with 20 students and launched public participation at one of the beaches of the Old Danube to discuss the use of nano-materials on swimming bodies. The end of term signalled a structural shift of the team, as the first generation of study and teaching assistants was leaving.

### Beyond ivory towers

Finally, an application to host a summer school “Designing places of emancipation?” within the Call “Public Spaces in Transition” was granted by the Vienna Science and Technology Funds (WWTF). This extra-curricular budget enabled the centre to host a summer school offered to 60 (junior) scholars during 7 days. A new study assistant literally started as part of the team on the first day of the summer school. Jointly with AESOP European Experts from Istanbul, Naples, Paris and Zagreb, local NGOs, and international keynote speakers, an energetic local scientific team organized





Fig.9 Places of Emancipation

an intensive week of lectures, tours and workshops between the *Mobiles Stadtlabor*, the faculty's container space for educational programmes then placed at *Karlsplatz*, and the church at the edge of *Floridsdorf* nearby the *Marchfeld Kanal*, hence also involving intensive biking tours. The summer school provided a breeding ground for two further international book projects: *City Unsilenced* (Hou/Knierbein 2017) and *Public Space Unbound* (Knierbein/Videman 2018).

### Touching ground

A series of Viennese controversies related to obtaining a permit to access the site of the *Gaswerk Leopoldau* resulted in a wicked planning situation which left the teachers and participants of the summer school group without access to their real place of desire. As a team constantly trained in finding workarounds for locked situations and reflecting on how the struggle for access to places may transform them into more inclusive and emancipatory places of everyday use, we embraced the problem as an opportunity. Hence we spread the word and joined forces with social groups all around the *Gaswerk* to help us activate the socio-political space around the (former) infrastructural site. Others really got 'in touch' with the site and arranged a meaningful tactical encounter with the place of desire. Yet truly emancipatory moments evolved because of the eye-level atmosphere among students, neighbours, teachers and other staff. Close connections among locals were established both through the integration of local associations in the process, and by strengthening new bonds between

international students and local host families. Not only did the students find a roof, a shower and a bed, they also engaged in an everyday dialogue with locals. By the end of the school, whispers spread the news that the centre's second baby would soon arrive. In the successive winter term, we organized an open seminar in Madrid together with the *Vivero de Iniciativas Ciudadanas* (VIC) involving teachers, students and local Spanish NGOs and architecture offices. Productive debates about feminist perspectives on mortgage burdens, austerity, biopolitics, forced evictions and embodied resistance brought learners in touch with the work of many architectural NGOs. Our debates culminated in a doctoral colloquium organized in cooperation with University of Alberta (Canada) and the Academy of Fine Arts.

Fig.10 Excursion to Madrid 2015 (right)

Fig.11 Public Evening Lecture





Fig.12 Table of Plenty I, VoZo



Fig.13 PROSA + TU Students



Fig.14 New Teaching Insights

### Urban Education – Let students decide

By the end of 2014, the team remained somewhat overwhelmed, still struggling for budgetary security and the establishment of Funding Phase III. While eventually funding was confirmed for another three years, the faculty decided to install a 2nd programme tackling public spaces from a more praxis-oriented perspective. The future lab *Öffentlicher Raum* (ÖR) was established to support our centre's scientific urban studies expertise and to locally spread its international recognition. The TU Wien Sounding Board was also amended during this phase to include colleagues of the City of Vienna. This shift eventually produced interesting disputes as regards preferred candidate choices. In order not end up in a political stalemate, we introduced student evaluations of candidate's public hearings which finally became the main influencing tool in the Selection Committee's decisions.

### Working with and for refugees

For the annual theme "Urban Culture, Public Space and Urban Past(s). Urban Peace and National Welfare" (CoVVP 2015) the new team chose to work on the topic of refuge and how refugees historically became involved in urban development routines as settlers, land owners and builders. In cooperation with colleagues from the faculty's Art Institute, we got in touch with PROSA (Project School for All), an NGO offering language education to young refugees. PROSA was a door opener for us and helped us to include post-colonial perspectives when teaching public space affairs. The tripartite consortium got in touch with the curators of

the Urbanize! festival, outlining the plan to host an open one-week seminar "Displaced!" in the central location of the festival, a former office building of the finance department in *Landstraße* (3rd district). Over the summer break, however, the so called 'refugee crisis' gained momentum and by the time semester started the former finance department had already been turned into a makeshift emergency shelter for approximately 800 refugees. Different groups were formed including PROSA students, many of them refugees who had already lived in Austria, to raise positive attitudes and approach the incoming refugees in their own languages to address their particular needs. The students designed open source maps for new arrivals in Vienna in many relevant languages, engaged with the administrators of the shelter – the Red Cross – to help build showers and furniture and also brought social life into the refugee shelter *Vordere Zollamtstraße* (VoZo). Our teaching team featured a former refugee who influenced a shift in pedagogical and collegial perspectives as she pointed to the fact that refugees have own agency and can take own decisions, and that this can particularly be enhanced if they are not living far away from urban opportunities: mobility, educational services, labour markets, family ties. The year saw two events „Table of Plenty I and II“ emerge in which results were shown to a broader audience including an exhibition of participant's works in the rooms of the *Gebietsbetreuung Stadterneuerung in Alsergrund* (9th district). A group of PROSA, architecture, planning and IT students successively set up their own NGO.



Fig.15 Thames River Cruise



Fig.16 Lavender Inspirations



Fig. 17 Conference Adbusting

### Lived heritage in Thessaloniki and Vienna

The next year was organized around “Urban Culture, Public Space and the Present(s). Urban Solidarity and European Crisis” (CoVVP 2016). It started with an excursion to Thessaloniki in which our students engaged with students of the Aristotle University to develop novel and critical perspectives on urban heritage. The air traffic controllers’ strike did not help students to envisage their journey to Greece as flights were first cancelled shorthand and once the students started to self-organize and book bus tickets from Austria to Greece, the strike was cancelled and students were re-booked on their flights, which meant cancelling bus tickets again. During the kick-off meeting scheduled at Thessaloniki’s waterfront, we were not sure who would be able to make it to Thessaloniki at all. It was nothing short of a miracle that all students entered the seminar room the next morning. The academic year also brought us to the more well-off Viennese districts, in this case *Währing* (18th district) where the new district mayor hosted the student group in the district municipality building for one week, allowing us to explore the surroundings, find hidden spatial treasures like the districts’ Jewish cemetery and also engage with local social institutions like the *Gruft II* offering shelter to homeless people, particularly to young women and children, and elderly people. This stood in sharp contrast with our walks through the district’s splendid *Cottage* area. Students realised that crisis and austerity are not bound to the Southern shores of Europe but can be found at our doorstep. Another lesson was that dark heritage also

does not know of borders! The traces of horrors of the Nazi genocide can be found both in Thessaloniki where thousands of Jews were deported to concentration camps and e.g. in Vienna’s hidden Jewish cemeteries.

### Unsettled urban development

During the next year a new team worked on the theme “Urban Culture, Public Space and the Future(s). Urban Equity and the Global Agenda” (CoVVP 2017). We collaborated with the *Kleine Stadtfarm* in *Donaustadt* (22nd district) and the youth centre in *Hirschstetten*. The year and also Funding Phase III ended with an excursion to South-East London in which our students explored the spatial implications of a country which had introduced austerity mechanisms and had basically deconstructed public planning in favour of market driven urban development. The visit to the new placemaking unit of BNB Paribas was a self-telling revelation of how the market had embraced a liberal version of public space in favour of increasing property and real estate revenues. Students acknowledged that public planning is about protecting the social, cultural and political meaning of public space. Later on, Funding Phase III was also overshadowed by the Brexit poll which marked the preparatory meeting in which the concept for the Unsettled Conference was developed. The conference’s opening day coincided with the submission of the Brexit letter to the European Commission, whereas the book contract was confirmed when the Brexit was bringing EU political life in UK to a halt.



Fig.18 Welcoming Words



Fig.19 Session Opening



Fig.20 Unsettling Views

The Unsettled Conference took place in March 2017 at the TU Sky Lounge and enabled new views; not only the views of Vienna and the Alps, but also of cultural, social and political changes, introducing new analytical tools to research and productively engage with contemporary urban challenges with diligence and depth.

### **New opportunities falling from the sky**

Still in a somewhat insecure situation as regards the future of the Visiting Professorship Programme, the summer of 2017 brought along a nice coincidence which soon turned into a real funding proposal for another three years, offered by the KTH Royal Institute of Technology's Centre for the Future of Places. What was only a vague idea in August 2017 developed into a concrete project of inter-academic collaboration on public space and by June 2018 resulted in signed contracts. We had arranged to bridge half a year with TU Wien funds (Funding Phase IV) in which we discussed "Urban Culture, Public Space and Housing" (TU Wien VP 2018) in a comparative approach tackling recent urban development in Rome and Vienna. The successive new "KTH + TU Wien Visiting Professorship in Urban Studies Program" (Funding Phase V, KTH + TU Wien) was launched in October 2018 and invited two colleagues and the team to jointly develop inspiring thoughts on the theme of "Urban Citizenship. Public Space, Post-Migrational Perspectives and Civic Innovation" (KTH + TUW VP 2019). In this year, we engaged with empirical research results gained from Tel Aviv, Berlin and Vienna and brought our students in touch with the genealogy of debates on migration and postmigration

in urban sociology, urban geography and urban studies. The following years featured teaching experiences on "Urban Productivity. New Public Space, Youth Integration and Labour Market Access" (KTH + TUW VP 2020) in which aspects of care and post-work environments and feminist perspectives in architecture theory and urban studies have been brought centre stage. The final year will host the topic "Urban Generations. Public Space, Ageing Society and New Health Conditions" (KTH + TUW VP 2021). Funding Phase V's summit took place in November 2019 with an International Urban Studies Conference on Care: Cities, Action, Research and Education. In addition, two publications were produced out of two conferences: Care and the City (Gabauer et Al. 2022) and Unsettled Urban Space (Viderman et Al 2023).

### **Approaching the urban field in these unsettled times**

We can say that we enjoy this opportunity of full institutional integration which was completely unexpected 15 years ago. As a now permanent institution, the 15th Anniversary of the Interdisciplinary Centre for Urban Culture and Public Space marks an important moment in our quite busy institutional career: First of all, we are more than grateful to all colleagues, supporters and friends who have joined us on the long way with their enthusiasm, inspiration and critique. New challenges lie ahead as the team is and themes are changing and neatly consolidating. We encountered a new self-designed office after office accommodations in Karlsgasse 13 and at Spittelau. Between 2019 and 2023 we had been institutionally relocated as a (temporary) research centre. We were affiliated with the Future Lab of the faculty



which fostered international visiting professorships and transdisciplinary education, while we continuously remained a part of the institutional structure of the Institute of Spatial Planning as a coopted member between 2019 and 2023.

Since winter term 2021, the staff of the Centre has decided to focus in the forthcoming years on internal faculty integrations. The Visiting Professorship Programme period has then ended after twelve successful and inspiring programmatic years, and teams. First step of internal settling was the habilitation treatise to obtain a *venia* in Urban Studies / Internationale Urbanistik, submitted in April 2020, defended in May 2021 online due to pandemic circumstances and certified in June 2021. In this year, teaching staff of the centre featured among the finalist for TU Wien's Best Teaching Awards. New teaching modules in bachelor, master and doctoral education have been co-developed with other centres and introduced since winter term 2022/23. The centre has relocated in its self-designed premises at the rooftop of Karlsgasse 11. And, finally, since 1st January 2024 we are firmly institutionalized as the 9th centre of the Institute of Spatial Planning. While worldwide projects on the EU level are initiated and a spring school on the topic of YOUTH has just been realized. Also another generation of predoc staff, study assistants and teaching assistants has enthusiastically arrived.

First and foremost, although the team has changed over the time and we have been facing cycles of internal renewal, the social body of the centre has not lost engagement,

dedication and passion for what we are doing. We believe that we need to strive more, to work harder and to engage more thoughtfully with the urban field and changing patterns of lived space and everyday life in these unsettled times. We think that space matters and we are also aware that there is no space without thinking through social relations, power as omnipresent, and a glimpse of altering potential that often lies dormant in our everyday lives. It is our responsibility and position to provoke positive social change in many directions, and this starts first and foremost in the own office and the seminar room, and will eventually find its way to the street, the square, the plaza, the café.

Vice versa, it is in the lived spaces of our cities that we can develop novel approaches as it is here where macro-, meso- and micro patterns of change can be understood in their inseparable connection, and with a focus on their material features. There is no other way to understand cities and urbanization than paying attention to cities' ever-changing ambivalent everyday lives. It is here also where new models of ideal-type urbanization and the good city can be developed with all and for all. Against the backdrop of these new ideas about contemporary ideal-cities and democratic ways of urbanization, we realize through our analysis that we are not yet there and that new questions and dilemmas emerge on the path. Researching lived space thus is not just a personal life-long learning process, but also an institutional. Through this process and by engaging with differentiated parts of the urban societies, we think we can also play something back into the university and provoke change on an everyday basis.



Fig.21 Thessaloniki Excursion

## Ode to everyday magic

VOICES - Johanna Aigner and Tihomir Viderman



*Fig. 22-24 Pioneers of the first hours*

January. Early hours of the morning. At the doorstep of Karlsgasse 13. Three creatures: two human and one four-legged. Looking at the surrounding in disbelief. Struck by surprise. A second passed. A thud. The four-legged creature hit the soft ground. A thick fluffy white carpet covering the entire street. As she was rolling in the snow, the two human creatures kept standing still for a minute longer, scientifically indecisive about the sparkling curtain of white flakes. Confronted with the complexity of a natural phenomenon. And its social and political implications. Overwhelmed by questions pertaining to the matters of commitment and motivation: at no point during the night did the two hard-working creatures turn the look from their computer screens through the window to notice the snow. Even duller weather conditions would render that view worthy of admiration. A morphology of a street lined by polished facades of (red) bourgeoisie tenements and rooftop extensions provided enough material for critical debates, sometimes with a grain of envy. It must be that an extraordinary working environment simply became a new normal to those two humans. Or maybe it was just a stunningly interesting subject they had the privilege to work with. The Subject offered an inexhaustible well of inspiration for confronting opinions. It quickly drew inexperienced souls into infinite (un)structured lamentations, transforming their lives. Their

work had a meaning and gave them an impression that they had the agency to change the world for the better. The Subject certainly served a good purpose when the need arose to show off and impress. The two humans joined the four-legged creature in the micro-scale experiment. By means of a place embedded participatory action they slightly diverted from the Subject to engage in qualitative research of inseparable dimensions of nature, built space and lived experience. All the things written during the night became tangible: Lived experience of a white wonderland would stick with the creatures for years. The experience of the sheer beauty of the landscape of power rendered their space of everyday life a place of particularly positive memory. Despite many man-made structures of dubious taste. The most beautiful night, a magical one in every sense. Emancipatory moment of “they can make it”. They also learnt why it was called a moment. Because it was gone by the time the three of them returned to the office. By the morning the fairy-tale place was turned back to central public space, trailed by thousands of people and their social practices. Covered in slush. Project proposal successfully submitted. Impact as lasting as the creatures’ traces in the snow. Experience nonetheless extraordinary. Bonds remaining strong. As is the motivation to try again and fail better. One more evidence of what Interdisciplinary Centre for Urban Culture and Public Space is about: transcending the physical and the social, the discursive and the lived and - most importantly - bridging geographies and bringing people together to shape caring and productive relationships that nourish positive individual and collective developments.







## II. The Interdisciplinary Centre



## II. The Interdisciplinary Centre

The Interdisciplinary Centre for Urban Culture and Public Space (<https://skuor.tuwien.ac.at/>) was established in 2008 as a horizontally structured institution within the Faculty of Architecture and Planning at TU Wien. It is dedicated at identifying connecting characteristics between the spatial arts (architecture, planning, etc.), the social sciences and humanities in terms of research. It aims at translating between theoretical endeavours and practical experience and explores transdisciplinary teaching approaches. The staff of the centre take a renewed critique of everyday life as a starting point to develop novel and intersectional perspectives on the urban field, a proceeding which is particularly socially relevant in these unsettled times.

### PROFILE

As an urban studies institution based at a Faculty of Architecture and Planning which caters for education as regards the built environment, it is our prime task to bridge social sciences and humanities perspectives on space, cities and society with approaches that seek to analyse lived space against the backdrop of changing (urban) formants of capitalism. Our first reference frame is the critical analysis and interpretation of recent urban development patterns, a focus which we sometimes widen in order to include a

deeper investigation of urban routines in a socio-historic context of the 20th and 21st centuries. As a centre often mistaken in primarily delving solely in theorizing space, we have developed a plethora of transdisciplinary cooperation formats with local associations, public institutions, and third sector actors. All of these carry a particular focus e.g. spatial filming, public broadcasting, incomplete mapping, visual ethnography, participatory action research and more traditional forms of urban empirical research in a tradition of qualitative social and political science enquiry, sustained by quantitative evidence. We do believe that the contact with the urban field is essential for any urban planner, designer or social scientist, in order to foster socially innovative research encounters to touch ground with the many shades of grey that everyday life and lived space convey.

### Position

The purpose and mission of the Visiting Professorship is to develop novel approaches towards an intersectional understanding of lived space and urban everyday life, thus contributing to renew the current teaching and research spectrum at European universities and beyond. Given the obvious relevance of the social, cultural and political significance of public space, along their ecological and economic features, we seek to approach public space as



Fig. 26 Treasure(rer)

deep space in which ambivalences prevail: social inequality, spatial injustice, uneven development. It is our mission to take lived space, and here particularly public space, and everyday life, with a specific emphasis on urban cultures, as a key entry perspective into the study of the urban field in the context of constantly changing patterns of capitalist urbanization.

### Basics

Public spaces are dynamic societal processes, and thus relational spaces with built expression, which only analytically can be divided into spatial scales in a very rigid understanding of space. The micro-, the meso- and the macro-patterns of change can be analysed in lived space in which they are mutually entangled. Three areas of learning directly related to architecture and planning strategically intervene in these processes: urban design in the tensions surrounding the material production of space, urban planning in the context of the mental production of space, and urban research as a microcosm for the spatial understanding of societal practice, and in particular of the production of meaning through experience. The areas of learning are deliberately defined broadly in order to pre-empt an undesirable narrowing of certain disciplines and subject areas of the same name. Because nowadays planners design just as much as designers plan; artists do research, and researchers engage in creative activities. The

triad thus corresponds less to disciplinary preconceptions, institutional boundaries, or actor-related self-perceptions, but rather shifts the focus to the actual socio-spatial praxis of individuals and groups in the areas of tension surrounding urban development. It is therefore the special task of the dialogue-oriented academic teams at the Interdisciplinary Centre for Urban Culture and Public Space to combine, in their research and teaching, the particular view on Vienna, or other local contexts, with the exchange of academic knowledge on an international level.

### Philosophy

An initial premise of the programme is to make allowances for the complexity of the subject: public space is, after all, not only a field of different disciplinary perspectives but a social sphere of varied expression as well as the assertion of interests which could not be more diverse. Additionally, analysis of opportunities with regard to the simultaneous difference and distinction of actors in public space, and structural agendas set by planners and architects, illustrate the complexity of the subject of urban culture. This understanding rests on the premise that processes of producing public spaces almost always involve actors from various institutional spheres within society – civil society, the state and the markets. These actors and institutions many times have a direct steering and shaping effect on public space. Thus as city planners, urban designers, and urban researchers, they influence the physical and mental as well as the social and cultural production of space in systematic

ways. Yet they have only a restricted effect on the actual cultural and social public life that unfolds in public space. The extent of their effectiveness in public space is all too often overestimated by some, while others come close to denying it. It is therefore necessary on the analytical level to find a postdisciplinary approach that enables processes of production of urban form to be understood within a relational understanding of **social** space, and thus to bridge an understanding of the built urban fabric with urban life. To this end, perspectives on public space in the sense of the above-described fine line between built outcomes and the social processes of production are to be honed. With the “interdisciplinary, transdisciplinary, postdisciplinary” triad, varying approaches to the systematic use of a plurality of perspectives are addressed across divisions within the university or institutions (interdisciplinary), between scholarship and practice (transdisciplinary), or developed out of the complexity of the object (postdisciplinary). It is essential to condense, sharpen, and intersect knowledge

Fig.27 Photosession Stadtpark



about lived space from different angles, and make thereby the academic knowledge production more inclusive, open, and more democratic.

## STRUCTURE

Between March 2009 and September 2021, a local team at the Faculty of Architecture and Planning worked in cooperation with international colleagues appointed to

## II. The Interdisciplinary Centre

the Visiting Professorship. Between January 2019 and December 2023, the centre became part of TU Wien's formal organizational structure (E285-02). A Venia in Urban Studies is attached to it since June 2021. In early 2024, the centre has been finally re-instituted at the Institute of Spatial Planning (E280-09) as its 9th research centre. In order to link international and cross-cultural perspectives on urban development to an exploration of unique local cultural, social and political practices, the Interdisciplinary Centre for Urban Culture and Public Space forges semester-long alliances with local lecturers. The centre's International Advisory Board consists of former Visiting Professors and former Heads of Centre, and engaged Viennese colleagues interested in intra-academic thematic collaboration. Thereby, the team has introduced its new acronym URBAN alongside the new venia to show wider engagement with urban affairs.

### Local Team

The presence of the permanent team in Vienna guarantees scientific continuity; prepares research proposals with other project partners; offers urban assessments, comments, and review activities; and consults with the study deans regarding the inclusion of new teaching content in architecture and planning curricula. The team represents the interface for communication between the actors at the Interdisciplinary Centre for Urban Culture and Public Space and other institutions in Vienna. At European and international levels, the centre's permanent team is responsible for the creation of new academic networks and for the solidification of existing ones.

16

## 10th Anniversary Team



Fig.28 Angelika Gabauer  
University Assistant,  
Doctoral Candidate



Fig.30 Olivia Kafka  
Study Assistant



Fig.29 Sabine Knierbein  
Director, Associate Professor



Fig.32 Judith Lehner  
Project Assistant



Fig.31 Tihomir Viderman  
Project Assistant,  
Doctoral Candidate



Fig.33 Elina Kränzle  
Doctoral Candidate



Fig.34 Katharina Höftberger,  
Project Administration



Fig.35 Laura Sánchez  
Teaching Assistant



# 17

## 15th Anniversary Team

Fig.36 Alvie Augustin  
Project Assistant



Fig.37 Sabine Knierbein  
Director, Associate Professor



Fig. 38 Antonia Skenderovic  
Study Assistant  
(on educational leave)



Fig. 40 Richard Pfeifer  
University Assistant



Fig. 39 Magdalena Vock  
Study Assistant



Fig.41 Christian Scholze  
Teaching Assistant



Fig.42 Katharina Kirsch-  
Soriano da Silva  
External Lecturer



### Current members of team

Sabine Knierbein directs the Interdisciplinary Centre for Urban Culture and Public Space as Associate Professor for Urban Culture and Public Space at TU Wien. Since December 2008, she has been tasked with the establishment, institutionalization and international positioning of the centre. She also carries out the structural organization and management of the horizontal institution, acquires new funds from partners interested in materially supporting the centre and its programmes, and offers teaching and thesis supervision for bachelors, master and doctoral students.

Richard Pfeifer holds a master's degree in Sociocultural Anthropology and currently works at the Centre as a University Assistant. He is a PhD candidate working on the politics of dwelling and has been involved in a range of tasks including research, day-to-day project management, teaching, and administration.

Antonia Skenderović and Magdalena Vock contribute as study assistants with their background, whereas Alvie Augustin supports the team as project assistant in the CTS funded research project YOUTH. All study spatial planning.

Katharina Kirsch-Soriano da Silva is Head of Neighborhood

Work at Caritas Vienna and lecturer at TU Wien both for the Centre, and the Centre of Sociology. She also teaches at the FH Campus Wien. Her work focuses on community work, neighborhood and district development, social and inclusive housing.

### Former members of team

Johanna Aigner | Pedram Dersch | Christian Erlinger-Schiedlbauer | Angelika Gabauer | Helena Götsch | Katharina Höftberger | Olivia Kafka | Valentina Kofler | Elina Kränzle | Judith Maria Lehner | Dominik Linder | Emilia Linton-Kubelka | Doris Mayer (IFOER) | Nina Cosmea Mayerhofer | Teresa-Elisa Morandini | Dominique Peck | Julia Pyszkowski | Laura Sanchez | Elia Stefan | Anja Steglich | Anna Vukan | Tihomir Videman

### External lecturers

Magdalena Augustin | Claudia Auzinger | Anamarija Batista | Charis Christodoulou | Cornelia Dlabaja | Stefanie Fridrik | Wolfgang Gerlich | Jörg Hofstätter | Katharina Höftberger | Matina Kapsali | Szilvia Kovács | Xenia Kopf | Szilvia Kovács | Philipp Krebs | Roland Krebs | Carina Lesky | Markus Maicher | Monika Mokre | Levente Polyák | Marjo Rauhala | Lale Rodgarkia-Dara | Eva Schwab | Amila Širbegović | Marlene Wagner | Stefanie Wuschitz

# Kudos to the Interdisciplinary Centre for Urban Culture and Public Space

VOICE - Rudolf Scheuven

In the context of a changing understanding of planning, dealing with public spaces also becomes a special challenge. In their function and significant role as places for traffic and stay, communication and distance, representation and





### III. Visiting Professorship



### III. Visiting Professorship Programmes 2009-2021

Public spaces are spaces of social exchange and societal confrontation for which diverse actors and institutions have completely different requirements. They are constantly changing according to changes in society. The variety of social points of contact between urban culture and public space therefore requires a thematically organized spectrum of research on and teaching about public space. At the same time, these diverse perspectives must be brought together systematically.

The role of the academic teams that convene annually in Vienna is to inspire perspectives relating to the broadly conceived annual issues of the Interdisciplinary Centre for Urban Culture and Public Space and to move forward in revisiting, readdressing and rewriting research agendas and teaching curricula at our university, and beyond. It is important to us that we leave the much quoted “ivory tower” of the academy in favour of dialogic learning processes to develop an accurate sense of everyday life, its potentialities and shortcomings, in contemporary cities. The team engages in an open, constructive, and results-oriented manner with the conflicts and uncertainties that occur in the translation of different perspectives on urban everyday life, and discusses findings in a socio-historic perspective on urbanization.



Fig.43 and 44  
European February Workshop

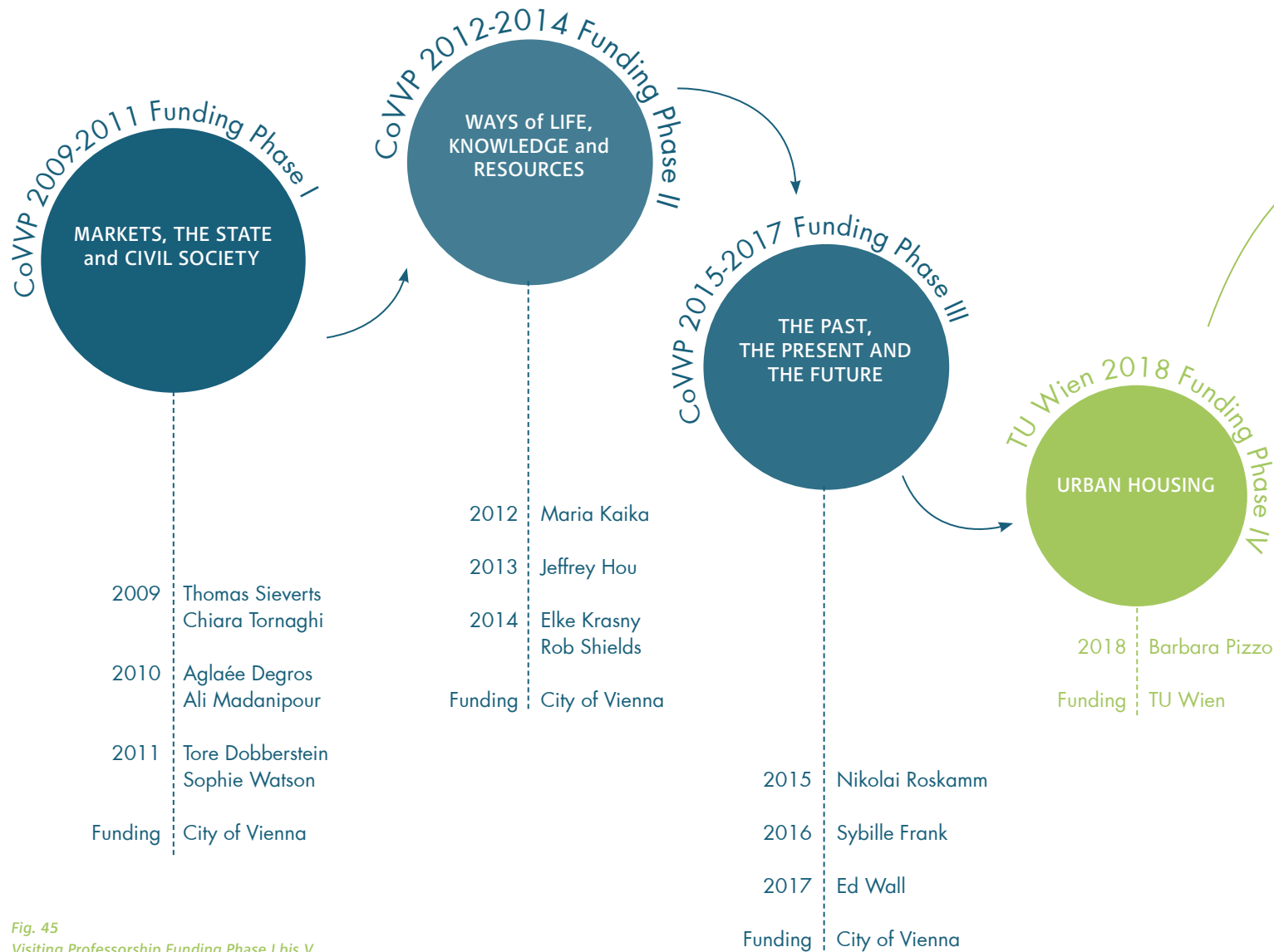
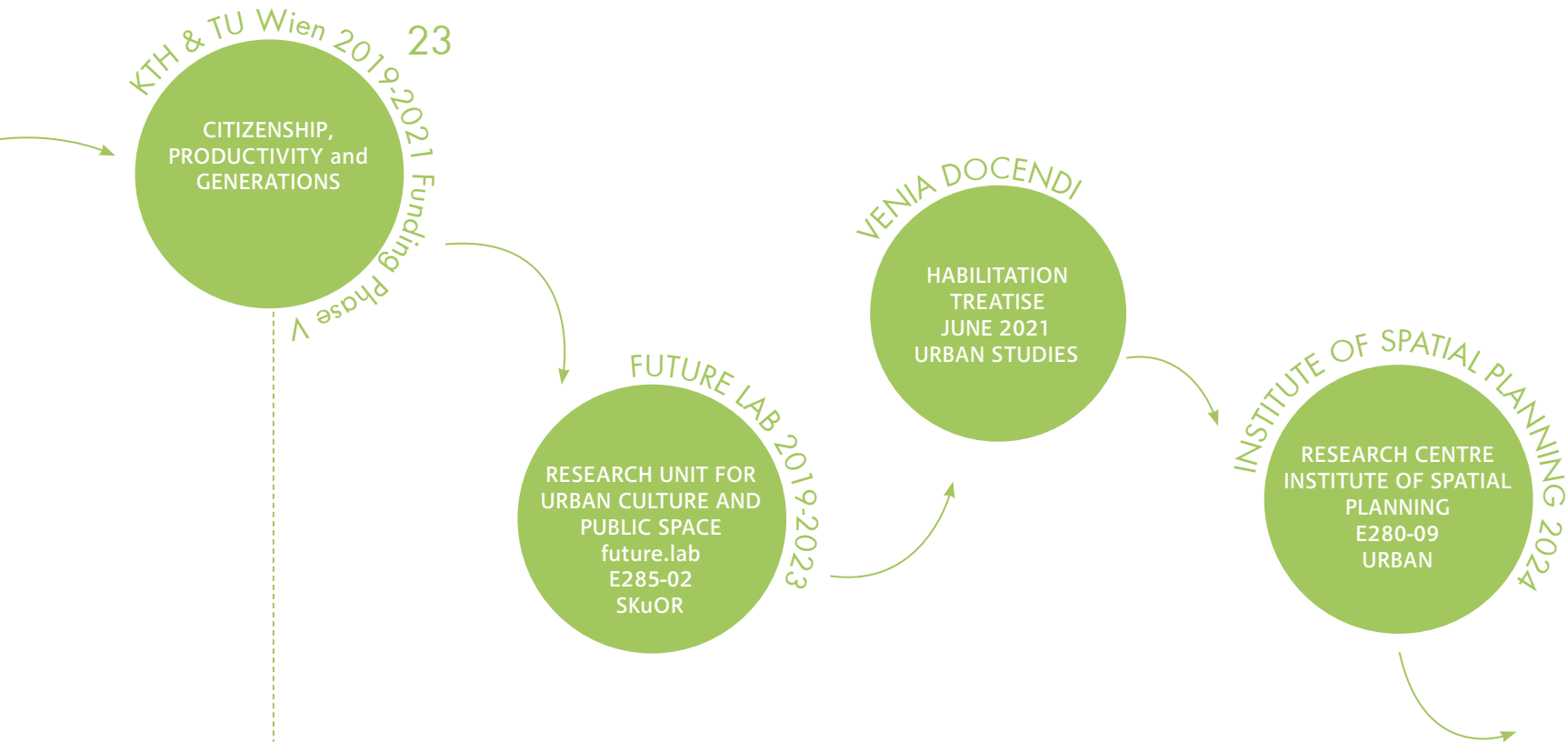


Fig. 45  
Visiting Professorship Funding Phase I bis V



|         |                            |
|---------|----------------------------|
| 2019    | Nir Cohen<br>Henrik Lebuhn |
| 2020    | Kim Trogal                 |
| 2021    | Marie Antoinette Glaser    |
| Funding | KTH + TU Wien              |

## FUNDING PHASE I - URBAN SOCIETY

In order to gain inspiration from planning theory and practice as well from spatial theory and urban research, the Interdisciplinary Centre for Urban Culture and Public Space appointed annual teams of complementary Visiting Professors (Senior and Junior) between 2009-2011 at TU Wien. These teams dialogically develop the curriculum in collaboration with the local team. The first phase of funding of the Visiting Professorship (2009-2011) is based on a structured view of urban society. An analytical view of processes of governance was applied during the development of content. This is reflected in the tripartite thematic division of the years 2009 to 2011:

- 2009 Urban Culture, Public Space and Civil Society.  
Culture and Conflict
- 2010 Urban Culture, Public Space and the State.  
Politics and Planning
- 2011 Urban Culture, Public Space and Markets.  
Economy and Innovation

### Changing spatial planes of reference 2009-2011

The question of present conditions, especially the cultural production of public spaces and potential governance and design interventions, was dealt with initially at local venues in Vienna in 2009. In 2010 this perspective was extended to the effect that public spaces can be understood as a system of very different social spaces in the Austrian capital, from the airport terminal to the revitalized factory site to cafés in

city squares. Ultimately in 2011 it was about the tensions between concrete and abstract spatial dimensions; it is about the exploration of various facets of economic activity (bottom up) and market mechanisms (top down) in public space in two major cities in the Danube Region: Vienna and Budapest.

## FUNDING PHASE II - URBAN DEVELOPMENT

For the second funding phase of the Visiting Professorship (2012-2014) our view – enhanced by the wealth of experience gained from the basic framework developed in Phase I – was directed toward urban culture and public space in urban development:

- 2012 Urban Culture, Public Space and Resources.  
Aesthetics and Materiality
- 2013 Urban Culture, Public Space and Knowledge.  
Education and Difference
- 2014 Urban Culture, Public Space and Ways of Life.  
Everyday Life and Insight

### Changing approaches across disciplines 2012-2014

This understanding, which presents itself as a plea for a diversity of perspectives and productive linkage points for various spatial viewpoints, followed an in-depth analysis of various bodies of knowledge and cultures in



the “interdisciplinary-transdisciplinary-postdisciplinary” triad. Here, methodological differences in the systematic application of this plurality of perspectives are addressed – within the university, between scholarship and practice, or from within the complexity of the research object. For it is necessary to sharpen the epistemological handling of urban culture and public space for subsequent application in architecture and planning, and to slowly but surely make complex spatial-theoretical positions more manageable in practice. According to fundamental dialectical concepts, theory is likewise informed by experiences in practice. Starting in 2012, this will be accelerated through the involvement of local lecturers in teaching and research.

### FUNDING PHASE III - URBAN EDUCATION

The third funding phase (2015-2017) was on the one hand characterized by a humanistic view of historical, contemporary, and future public spaces and urban cultural approaches; on the other hand, an enhanced role is attributed to the development of suitable methods in socio-spatial planning and architectural practice. Accordingly, Funding Phase III dealt with processes of academic education of urban experts learning in and from a global educational landscape characterized by rapid urban transitions and marked by a combined understanding of urban pasts, presents and futures.

- 2015 Urban Culture, Public Space and the Past.  
Urban Peace and National Welfare
- 2016 Urban Culture, Public Space and the Present.  
Urban Solidarity and European Crisis
- 2017 Urban Culture, Public Space and the Future.  
Urban Equity and the Global Agenda

#### Changing cornerstones 2015-2017

The focus on calling into question the academic education of city experts makes it possible to make fruitful the educational as well as pedagogic characteristics of the scientific objects ‘public space’ and ‘urban culture’, which have in common that they understand these spheres of everyday urban life as places of learning. At the same time, a humanistic focus returns to the theoretical deepening of a material approach to relational social space in the training of planners and designers, which can be understood as a response to the rapidly changing requirements of the education of local and global urban experts. First, we turn our attention to the interaction of city and state with public spaces of the past (2015), then consider the particular relationship between cities and the crisis-ridden European Union in the present time (2016), while in terms of future challenges we address tensions between the urban and global scales. These scalar and historical areas are associated with methodological distinctions, particularly with de-escalatory, anti-discriminatory, and postcolonial approaches.

## Funding Phase I: 2009 - 2011

materially supported by the City of Vienna and TU Wien

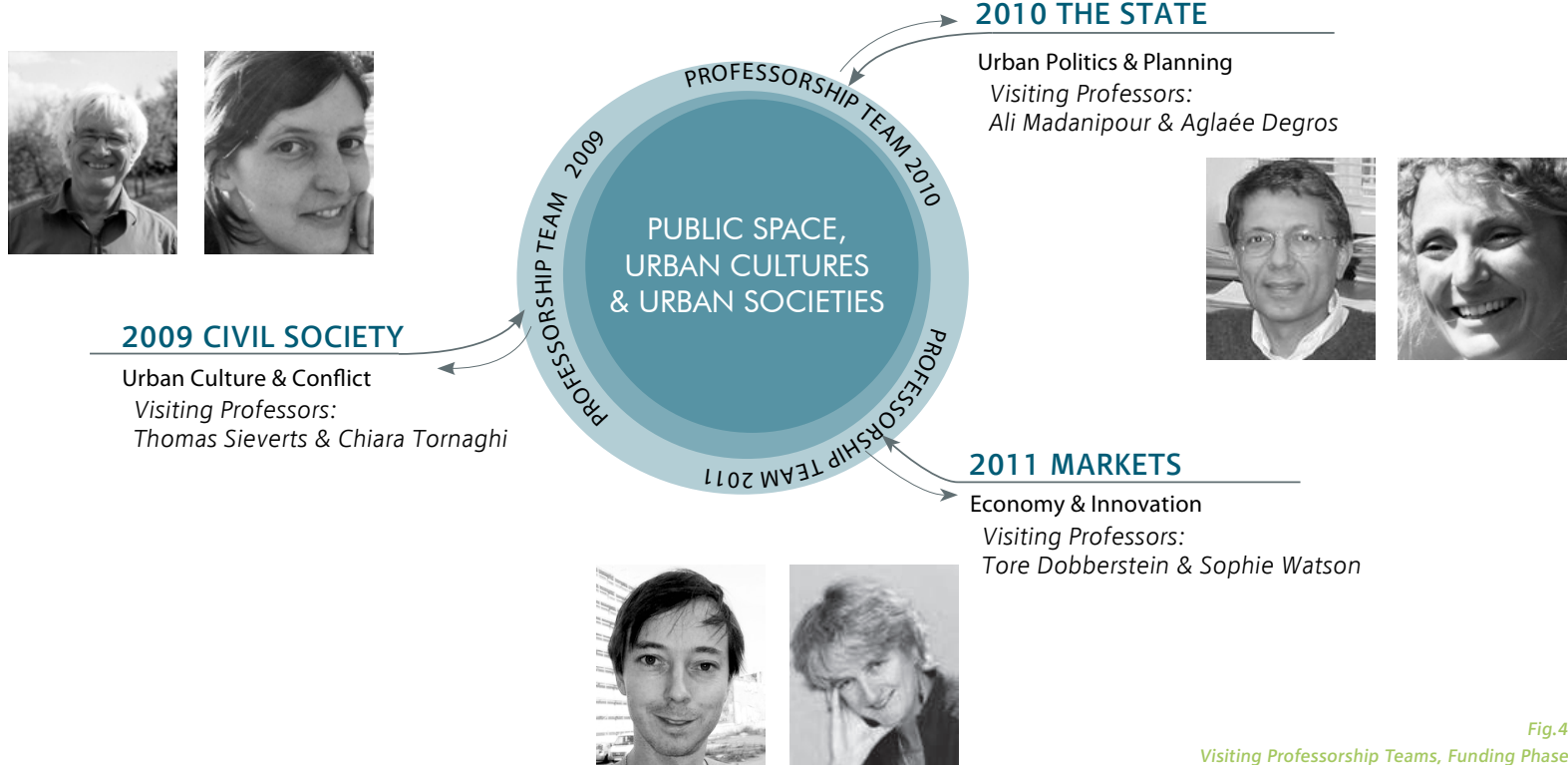


Fig.46  
 Visiting Professorship Teams, Funding Phase I

## Funding Phase II: 2012- 2014

materially supported by the City of Vienna and TU Wien



Fig.47

Visiting Professors, Funding Phase II

## Funding Phase III: 2015 - 2017

materially supported by the City of Vienna and TU Wien



Fig.48

Visiting Professors, Funding Phase III





## FUNDING PHASE IV - URBAN HOUSING

By the end of Funding Phase III news were spreading that the KTH Royal Institute of Technology in Stockholm (Sweden) would become a new partner in running the Visiting Professorship Scheme at TU Wien. Yet the contractual agreement was still in the making and the opportunity arose to find a creative workaround for a “bug” the programme had been facing since the beginning: As it had started in March 2009 with summer term teaching activities organised around a theoretically-driven module, we had to cope since with the fact that theory was taught in the spring/ summer, and praxis in autumn/ winter. This did not facilitate the everyday lives of our young student-scholars as they had to spend cold months outside doing fieldwork, and public life was partly even absent due to harsh climate conditions. Because of these two conditions, TU Wien funded the Visiting Professorship for the summer term 2018 fully by its own means. A third insight facilitated the choice of topic as in recent WTZ research projects we had started to discuss the dialectical relation between public space and housing research, and had established lived space as an analytical frame to bridge. Thereby, the theme for Funding Phase IV

2018    Urban culture, public space and housing

was set. The semestre featured lively debates on dysfunctional urban development in Rome and Vienna.

## Funding Phase IV: 2018

materially supported by TU Wien



Fig.49  
Visiting Professor, Funding Phase IV

## FUNDING PHASE V - CHALLENGES OF URBANIZATION

The KTH & TU Wien Joint Visiting Professorship Program in Urban Studies (2019-2021, Funding Phase V) is organized around key challenges emerging from contemporary processes of urbanization at an international scale:

- 2019 Urban Citizenship. Public Space,  
Post-migrational Perspectives and Civic Innovation
- 2020 Urban Productivity. New Public Space,  
Youth Integration and Labour Market Access
- 2021 Urban Generations Public Space,  
Ageing Society and New Health Conditions

2019: We are dealing with issues around urban citizenship, particularly in post-migrational societies in which an increasing percentage of long-term residents has no or just limited access to electoral systems and political representation due to the legal (national) status.

2020: At the core of our activities are aspects of urban productivity, especially in urbanized societies characterized by increasing rates of youth unemployment, both in the global South and in the global North. This requires new approaches to youth integration in urban development processes.

2021: This theme highlights how different urban generations experience urbanization, mainly in cities characterized by shifting demographic situations and an ageing society, and thus, by socio-spatial phenomena of shrinkage alongside new growth scenarios and inbound migration.



## Funding Phase V: 2019 - 2021

materially supported by KTH Stockholm and TU Wien

**2019 URBAN CITIZENSHIP**

Public Space, Post-Migrational Perspectives &amp; Civic Innovation

Visiting Professors:  
Nir Cohen & Henrik Lebuhn**2020 URBAN PRODUCTIVITY**

New Public Space, Youth Integration &amp; Labour Market Access

Visiting Professor: Kim Trogal

**2021 URBAN GENERATIONS**

Public Space, Ageing Society &amp; New Health Conditions

Visiting Professor: Marie Antoinette  
Glaser (right)

Fig.50

Visiting Professors, Funding Phase V, Years 2019 and 2020

## FORMER TU WIEN WORKING GROUP

### *Former Board Members:*

*Vera Bühlmann  
 Jens Dangschat  
 Rudolf Giffinger  
 Simon Güntner  
 Tigran Haas  
 Arthur Kanonier  
 Jutta Kleedorfer  
 Sabine Knierbein  
 Andrea Kreppenhofner  
 Christian Kühn  
 Judith Lehner  
 Christoph Luchsinger  
 Thomas Madreiter  
 Erich Raith  
 Andrea Rieger-Jandl  
 Rudolf Scheuven  
 Klaus Semsroth  
 Erich Streichsbier  
 Gine Zabрана  
 Sybilla Zech*

It has been a key task of the centre, to diversify contents and staff, to particularly enhance the situation of young scholars at the Faculty of Architecture and Planning and to contribute to TU Wien's internationalization strategy. To this end, the centre has been set up as a central scientific platform for international cooperation and exchange in urban studies and planning theory and has hosted a dozen of visiting professors with international expertise in approaching the urban field. The process of acquiring visiting professors is supported by an internal TU working group in which colleagues from different centres, the dean, and the study deans of the Faculty of Architecture and Planning, as well as the director of the Interdisciplinary Centre, participate. This committee makes recommendations concerning the centre's activities and advises on the appointment of visiting professors during the selection processes.

Since its inauguration, the Interdisciplinary Centre for Urban Culture and Public Space has used a multilevel selection process for the appointment of the visiting professors. Deciding factors for the appointment of the academic team include, firstly, the substantive reputation of the individuals according to the annual themes. A second determining criterion is the particular suitability of the candidates for

working in innovative and explorative academic teams. Thirdly, further criteria play a central role: excellence in research and teaching dealing with public space and urban cultural issues, relevant academic profile including professional networks, and experience in the areas of know why or know how, international approach, and increasing the proportion of women in senior positions in research and teaching at TU Wien in accordance with the Plan for the Advancement of Women (in German).

In 2009, the TU Wien working group decided to connect the selection rounds directly following internal recommendations to the public expression of interest process: those interested in the Visiting Professorship can express their interest in the course of this process directly according to a profile of requirements, while for the selection of the person for the Visiting Professorship, a mixed method of direct expressions of interest and substantiated recommendations by the working group and the advisory board comes into play. The latter model was then adopted from Phase II onwards as main organising principle. Over the course of twelve years, the members of the working group appoint innovative, thought-provoking and dedicated colleagues. Between 2009 and 2019, eighteen visiting professors have been nominated.

## INTERNATIONAL ADVISORY BOARD\*

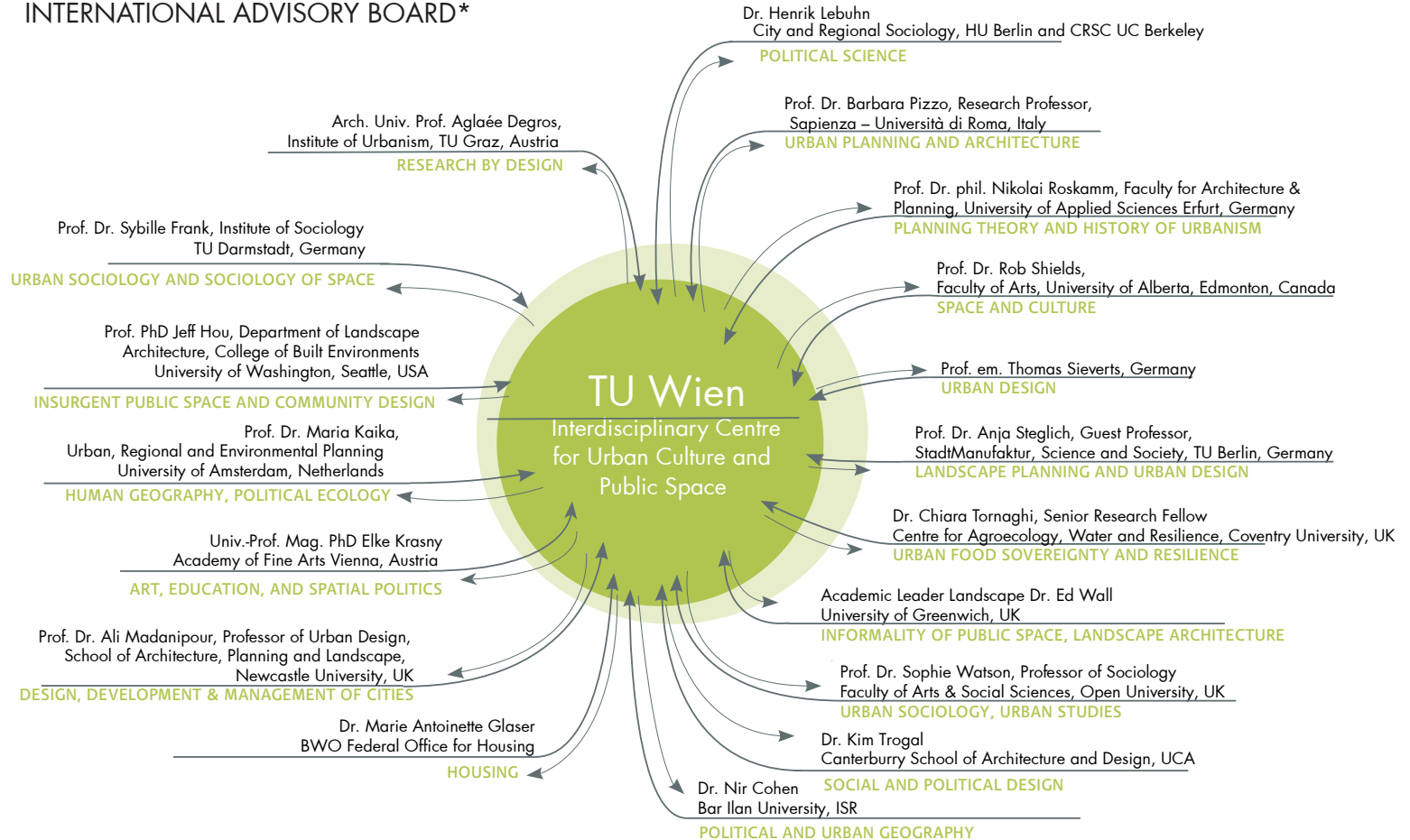


Fig.51 International Advisory Board Members

\*expanded in 2024

## SKuOR\* - my vademecum

VOICE - Eva Schwab

SKuOR celebrates its first 10 years of existence – and rightly so. There are numerous moments to be celebrated, because they are manifestations of a crossing of disciplinary, institutional and national boundaries with the goal to bring the complexity of urban life and the built environment into the education of future planners and architects. I want to highlight two which I find remarkable, in themselves and because of their implications:

One such moment would be the founding moment, the collaboration between the City of Vienna and TU Wien that made SKuOR and its visiting professorship programme „Urban Culture and Public Space“ possible. The creation of an interdisciplinary interface between planning, design and social science disciplines, a close collaboration between the city and the university for mutual benefit show that critical discourse, quality of life and quality of education go hand in hand.

The other moment would be the collaboration with KTH in the “KTH & TU Wien Joint Visiting Professorship in Urban Studies”, which brings together two universities around

a mutual focus and so is an example for the importance of understanding global processes shaping the urban condition as well as their local manifestations.

These are only two moments in 10 years of history which have shown the importance of the crossing of boundaries and of trans- and interdisciplinary collaboration to face current and future challenges. On a less abstract level, the moments have shown the importance of dedicated and knowledgeable people who engage in this crossing, who have the vision and the nerve to do it. And this is what SKuOR is about for me, the people and their different approaches, themes, and forms of expertise. This includes first and foremost Sabine Knierbein and her always fabulous team but also the changing visiting professors who put their personal spin on SKuOR’s annual themes.

My own history with the people and themes of SKuOR spans 10 years and started with SKuOR’s first year of existence. In these 10 years our contact took on diverse forms; I was a student benefiting from the PhD seminar offered. I was a lecturer learning with and from my colleagues and students

*\*Between 2009 and 2023, the centre used the abbreviation SKuOR referring to Stadtkultur und Öffentlicher Raum (Urban Culture and Public Space). Since 2024 we figure as URBAN which is a shortcut for the Venia of Urban Studies / Internationale Urbanistik connected with the centre since June 2021.*

about aspects of public space. I was a collaborator both contributing and expanding my knowledge in a project that brought together Argentinian and Austrian researchers around the politics of public space.

In all these 10 years SKuOR and I have not only shared our interest in Urban Studies, societal developments and their manifestations in public space, we have also shared food and drinks, conversations and laughter, and the experience of parenthood and a tight working schedule.

Reflecting on this history, I realize that over these years SKuOR has become my vademecum, an institution I am always happy to come back to for exchange, collaboration and the plotting of new ideas. The fact that SKuOR can be considered a vademecum over such a long period of time is due to its ever changing nature, the ever new and current themes and coalitions it develops and its wonderful people.

So let us celebrate SKuOR's first 10 years and make a toast to its future!







## IV. Research

## IV. Research

The Interdisciplinary Centre for Urban Culture and Public Space aims at a strategic consolidation of previous research efforts at the interface of Urban Studies, Planning Theory and Architectural Theory. With a special focus on questions of Urban Culture and Public Space and we develop a general interest in how social change can be deciphered through the analysis of changing patterns of space, and relatedly, its social production. Our research activities focus on five scientific fields of action: Urban Society| Urban Culture |Urban Economy| Urban Ecology. In these fields of action, we perform manifold transdisciplinary translational tasks between society, universities and science. By rendering the urban as connective level, we constantly bridge between civil society, technically-oriented disciplines and public institutions, while relying on cultural, social and political theory to ground empirical research on cities and urbanization.

### Praxis philosophy perspectives

An initial premise of the program is to make allowances for the complexity of the subject: the urban is, after all, not only a field of different disciplinary perspectives but a social sphere of varied expression, of manifesting everyday needs and struggles. It is also a realm where the assertion of interests

could not be more diverse. An analysis of opportunities with regard to the simultaneous difference and distinction of actors in public space, and structural agendas set by planners and architects, illustrate the complexity of studying everyday urban cultures. Philosophical linkages to the field of praxis philosophy become evident, as the study of spatial praxis in concrete spaces of everyday use can be linked with theoretical debates that link empirical evidence with wider philosophical traditions in the fields of social, cultural and political theory of the city, and of urbanization.

Our focus here is about shifts in perspective when dealing with the common topoi of these theories, for instance “resistance”, “emancipation”, and “everyday life”. These sociotheoretical endeavours help to contextualize particular everyday cultures and path dependencies in the trajectories of urban history, with wider debates that try to come to terms with societal change. What is particularly evident from the empirical study of public space are new tension fields between an increased individualization, fragmentation and group enclosure which sometimes exists in parallel to new forms of collective urban life and collectivized political struggle. As planning and architecture are disciplines that sit between inhabitants and politics, very often they become key agents in redirecting these conflicts and struggles

into productive negotiations about what a democratic city is about. At the same time, they may engage in linking spatial policies striving for spatial inclusion, recognition and respect with policies of environmental protection, economic transition and cultural change. But their agency also here has clear limits which can be acknowledged by a deep reading of social, cultural and political critique of the shortcomings of commodification of public space and colonization of everyday life. A matrix of different fields of theoretical critique can be accessed below.

## FIELDS OF RESEARCH

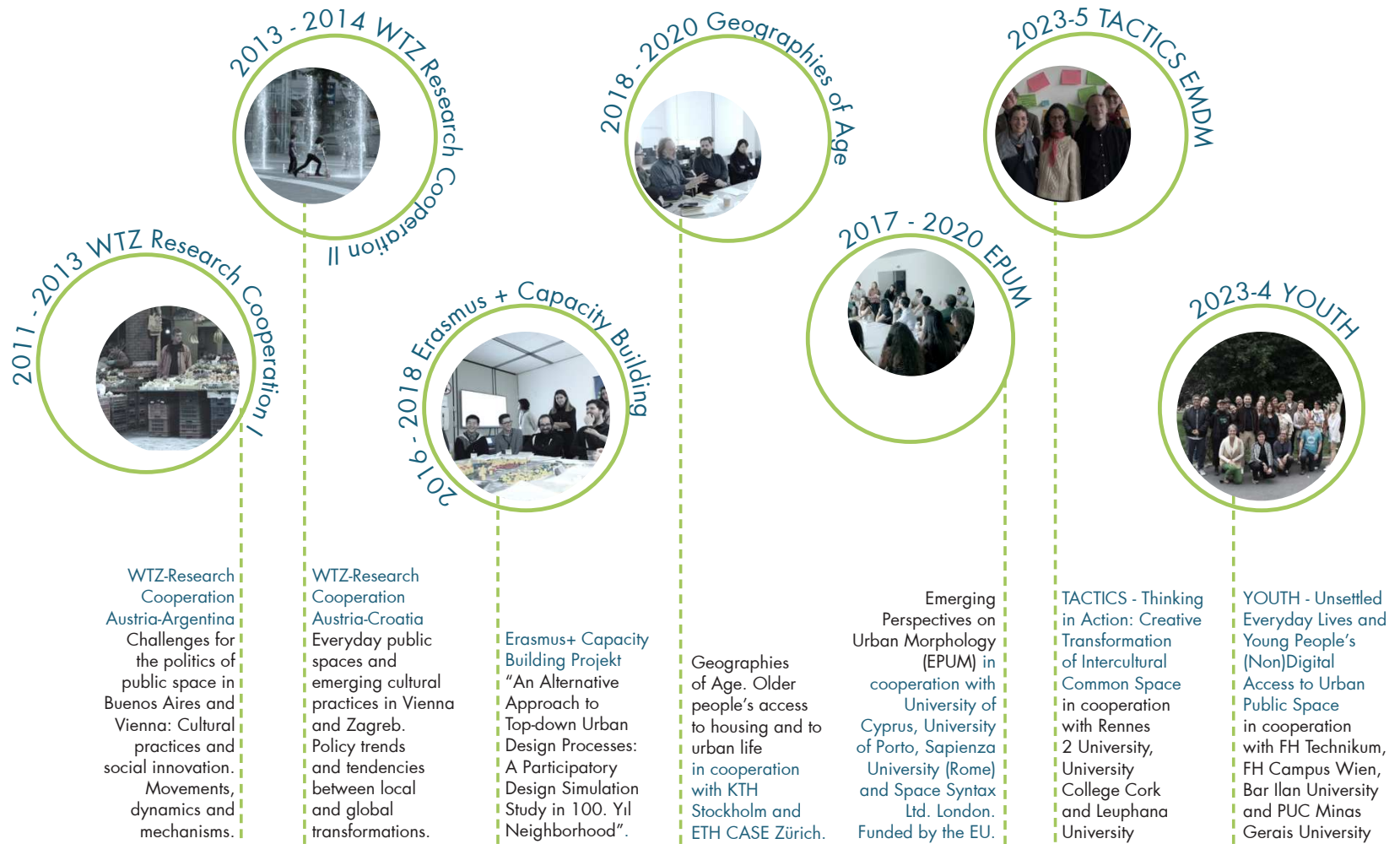


Fig.53 Fields of Research

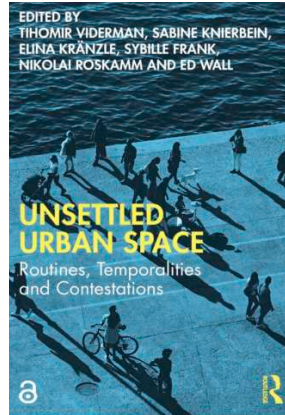
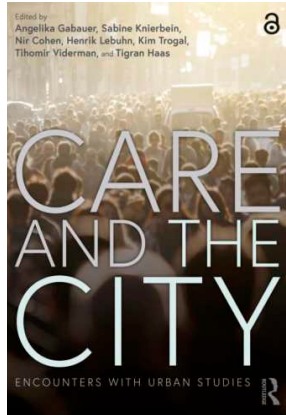
## NETWORKS, PARTNERS & PROJECTS

According to the individual and collective research interests brought to or developed at the Interdisciplinary Centre by the visiting professors, associate professor, visiting researchers, and students, we enter into project-based research collaborations at local, national, European, and international level based on the relevance of the proposal to our research areas of urban culture and public space. We work with partners who both share key research interests and bring about new ways of thought.

In this transdisciplinary and intercultural dialogue, we are discover common challenges connecting practice and theory. The following research projects and research cooperations are examples for successful acquisition of third party funding. We have punctually engaged in establishing first contact with potential research partners through our established networks, but also through Erasmus Teaching Mobility Exchanges which focussed on research-based and community-oriented forms of teaching. Such mobility schemes have been used with colleagues in Ankara, Istanbul, Naples, Paris, Rome, Stockholm, Thessaloniki, Nicosia, Florence, Weimar, Erfurt and Zagreb. These encounters have proven highly useful, both for participating in EU wide research calls but also in Erasmus Strategic Partnership Programme Applications in which a range of programs have been so far realized, and even more research proposals have been submitted.







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GABAUER, A., KNIERBEIN, S., COHEN, N., LEBUHN, H., TROGAL, K., VIDERMAN, T. and HAAS, T. (2022) *Care and the City: Encounters with Urban Studies.* New York, Routledge.

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TORNAGHI, C. and KNIERBEIN, S. (2015) *Public Space and Relational Perspectives. New Challenges for Architecture and Planning.* New York/London, Routledge.

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Fig.55-60 Book Covers Routledge 2014, 2015, 2017, 2018, 2022, 2023

For a full list, see <http://skuor.tuwien.ac.at>





Fig.61-62 Journal Covers 2014

### Peer-Reviewed Journals

#### Special Issues

CHARALAMBOUS, N and KNIERBEIN, S, weitere Details hier: <https://www.journalpublicspace.org/index.php/jps/issue/view/79>

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For a full list, see <http://skuor.tuwien.ac.at>

#### Book Chapters and Miscellaneous

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KNIERBEIN, S and PFEIFER, R (2023) The Role of the Body in Pandemic Geographies of Encounter. Anti-Restriction Protesters between Collective Action and Political Violence. Urban Planning. Volume 8/23, Issue 4

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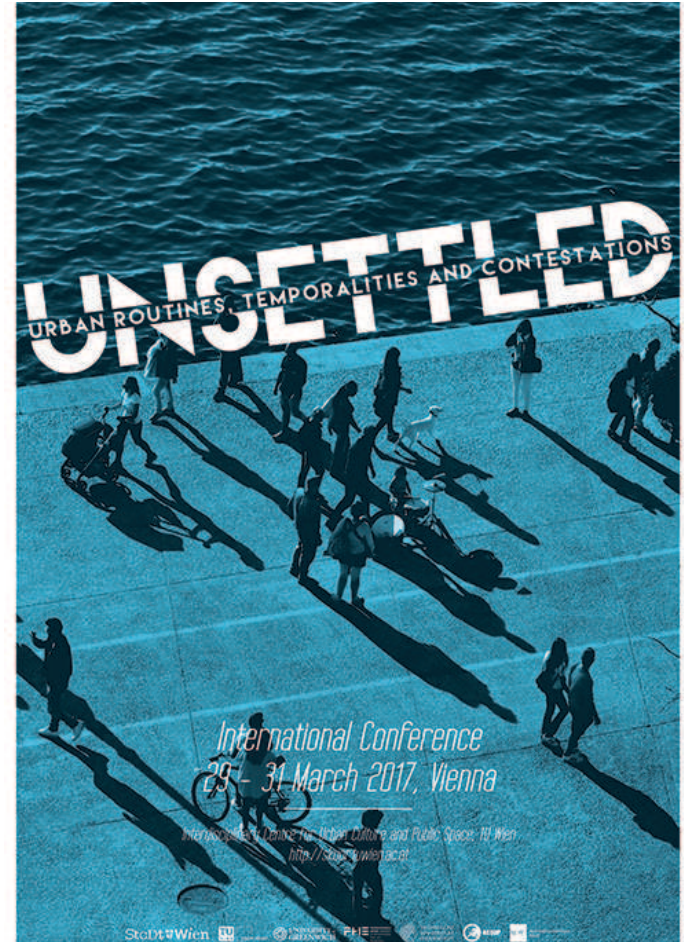


Fig.63-65 Unsettled Conference 2017.

Fig.66-69 Care Conference 2019.

## CONFERENCES

**CARE, \*C\*ities, \*A\*ction, \*R\*esearch \*E\*ducation.  
International Urban Studies Conference, 20 – 22  
November 2019, Vienna, Austria**



Fig. 70 Ted X Vienna 2015

With the focus on action, research and education, the International Urban Studies Conference 2019 will explore mutually formative relations between cities and care. We aim to debate ambivalences inherent to care in regard to achieved progresses and ongoing struggles as well as to reflect on the power of caring practices in shaping solidary urban futures. The conference will pursue a more systematic integration of empirical, methodological, theoretical and ethical approaches to care in urban studies, and invites different disciplinary perspectives. The goal of the conference is to forward thoughts about care in three themes: (I) socio-spatial (in)equalities and the work of care; (II) struggles and contestations around care and (III) new care arrangements and civic innovation.

### Keynote Speakers

Dr. Katharine McKinnon, La Trobe University, Australia  
Prof. Dr. Ali Madanipour, Newcastle University, UK

### Support

Funding offered by the KTH + TU Wien Visiting Professorship in Urban Studies Program's Conference Funds. Facilitated by the Centre for the Future of Places, ABE School, KTH Royal Institute of Technology Sweden in Stockholm.

**UNSETTLED – Urban Routines, Temporalities  
and Contestations. International Urban Studies  
Conference, 29 – 31 March 2017, Vienna, Austria**

The conference aims to explore conditions and conceptions of the unsettled. Urban life is characterized by diverse manifestations of instability which continuously stretch or redefine the social order and community infrastructures of cities: everyday struggles related to the capitalist system of production, revolutions in political life and political system overthrows, quests for dominance and their oppositions in political, social, economic, ecological or cultural domains. These unsettling practices simultaneously challenge and nourish a variety of idea(l)s of the city as an inclusive place of liberation, cooperation, equal opportunities and shared (better) futures.

### Keynote Speakers

Prof. Dr. Mustafa Dikec, Ecole d'Urbanisme de Paris and LATTs, France  
Prof. Dr. Sophie Watson, Open University, UK

### Support

Funding received within City of Vienna Visiting Professorship Programme and the Vice Rectorate for Research and Innovation, TU Wien, the Faculty for Architecture and Planning, TU Wien, the Department of Spatial Planning, TU Wien and the Architekturzentrum Wien AzW.

### European November Conference Public Space and the Challenges of Urban Transformation in Europe. 10 – 11 November 2010, Vienna, Austria

European cities are changing rapidly in partial response to the processes of de-industrialization, European integration and economic globalization. Public spaces of these cities, as essential ingredients of the urban image and experience, are increasingly playing an important part in this transition. A key question concerns the role that public spaces are expected to play in political, economic and cultural transformation of cities, and the impact of these transformations on the nature of public space as a shared resource. How are public authorities addressing the challenges of provision and maintenance of public space both as a catalyst for change and as a common good?

#### Keynote Speakers

Prof. Dr. Uwe Altröck, University of Kassel, Germany  
 Prof. Dr. Sophie Watson, Open University, UK  
 Chris Keulemans, writer, journalist and cultural organiser  
 Prof. Dr. Monika de Frantz, International Visiting Professor in Geography, Charles University, Czech Republic

#### Support

Supported by the City of Vienna and TU Wien.

Fig.71-73 European November Conference 2010







## A Glossary of Urban Culture and Public Space or Unspeakably Good

VOICE - Amila Širbegović

|                               |  |  |
|-------------------------------|--|--|
| SKuOR stands for Diversity    | Diversity of gender, culture, research, topics, languages and people. Thus, it stands for urban culture.   | Working together with people at SKuOR since 2011, I allowed myself to write a short glossary of SKuOR and for what it stands for. I was involved in various projects and three times as part of teaching team (2015, 2016 and 2019). Following explanations arise from the variety of topics that we have been dealing with together such as migration, spaces of refuge, arrival spaces, heritage, remembrance, practice and theory of practice, planning, everyday culture, methods, postmigration and educational institutions with regard to public space where urban culture takes place. |
| SKuOR stands for Chance       | A chance for better future and remembrance of the past, for experimental and untaken paths of approaches, for the disadvantaged and unseen, unresearched and unheard, and for informal. Thus, it stands for public space as space of encounter for everyone. | Please feel free to add more synonyms for what SKuOR stands for.   |
| SKuOR stands for Connection   | A connection between researchers and spaces of research, between the interviewers and interviewees, between architecture, spatial planning and other disciplines. Thus, it stands as a discipline for itself.  | SKuoR stands for .....   |
| SKuOR stands for Contact      | Contacts between theory and practice, and practice and theory, between professionals on one and experts on the other side, between activists and local sellers, between artists and scholars. Thus, it stands for globality and locality.                    | SKuoR stands for .....   |
| SKuOR stands for Relationship | Relationships between people dealing within and with public space(s) and urban culture, emerging out of contact and connection, creating a chance for everyone and producing diversity of all.   | SKuoR stands for .....   |

SKuOR is also a shortcut in German language of “Urban Culture and Public Space”. Not only in English but also in German it is (hardly) unspeakable. This unspeakability stands symbolically for me as a notion of possible practice of resistance. And here we can be honest, it is really not a good marketing word. When you say SKuOR, it is hardly understandable. So you need to repeat it, and also explain for what it stands. The shortcut becomes a tool of and for communication strengthening connection and involvement. By explaining the meaning of Stadt/city and Kultur/culture and Stadtkultur/urban culture and adding the Öffentlicher/public and Raum/space a space of familiarity and trust emerge. The unspeakability of SKuOR makes everyone involved imperfect, which allows a new space of trust to arise. From this point everything becomes possible. Thank you, people of SKuOR, you are unspeakably good.

**Stadtkultur und öffentlicher Raum (SKuOR) | Urbana Kultura i Javni Prostor (UKiJP) | Culture Urbaine et Espace Public (CUeEP) | Cultură Urbană si Spațiu Public (CUsSP) | Градска Култура и Обществено Пространство (ГКиОП) | Şehir Kültürü ve Kamusal Alan (ŞKvKA) | Városi Kultúra és Nyilvános Tér (VKéNT) | Городская культура и общественное пространство**

*\*Between 2009 and 2023, the centre used the abbreviation SKuOR referring to Stadtkultur und Öffentlicher Raum (Urban Culture and Public Space). Since 2024 we figure as URBAN which is a shortcut for the Venia of Urban Studies / Internationale Urbanistik connected with the centre since June 2021.*



Karatassou  
~~former~~  
~~military~~  
~~camp~~

PARK

FIND OUT ON FRIDAY 14/10 ...  
V. Contested heritage and solidarity

V. Teaching



## V. Teaching

The centre's decades of experience in the detailed conception, coordination, and delivery of international educational programs spans every educational level (bachelors, masters, and doctoral) of the study of architecture and spatial planning, in both theoretical and practice-oriented formats. Courses are taught in English, German, and could be offered in Spanish as well as currently French. Our curriculum is distinguished by:

### **Interdisciplinary connections**

Collaboration among different disciplines and departments, faculties, and universities

### **Transdisciplinary approaches**

Cooperation with local NGOs, civil society, municipal administrations, district offices, and business actors

### **Crosscultural character**

Work with international students of different nationalities, cultural backgrounds, and religions; work with refugees

## TEACHING PRINCIPLES



Fig.76

Teaching Principles



*Fig.77-81 Field Work, Final  
Presentations and Excursion  
Impressions*







*Fig.82-87  
Field Work, Final  
Presentations and  
Excursion Impressions*



## A roast to you!<sup>1</sup>

VOICE - Johannes Suitner

Dear SKuOR,

so you just turned ten, huh? Wow, your parents must be super proud you almost finished elementary school. What an achievement ... I guess your teachers can't wait to see you leave, you little know-it-all. Honestly, if you were in politics I'd applaud you for surviving a full decade while talking about inequality and feminism all the time. But in academia? Come on! Ten years is the average waiting time for a reviewer to reject your paper. That's absolutely nothing to be proud of. Take TU Wien as an example. The university just celebrated its 200th anniversary. Now that's something! I heard that people had already made plans for its 100th anniversary, but they tried to finish your recent book first.

That's true. You really overcharge people with your complex topics sometimes, SKuOR. Your paper titles sound as if only Sherlock Holmes could solve that case. I guess that's also why you once appointed a guest professor named Watson. Clever move! Really, you're into such complex topics: post-modernism, post-politics, post-disciplinarity, post-migration. I wonder how much Austrian Post pays you for prefixing all your topics with their name. And, yes, I know you are a fan of Henri Lefebvre and that much of your work is based on his writings. But you are doing so many events, evening

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lectures, conferences and talks that I wish Lefebvre hadn't written a Critique of Everyday Life but a "Critique of going live every day" for you. Honestly, you are doing way too many events.

However, your courses are great! There are always so many international exchange students attending. I guess it's because local students have already been to one of your courses and, come on, who wants to make the same mistake twice!? Or maybe they are just critical because they found what I found: You claim one of your objectives is "Knowing why and knowing how". And I have to admit, it was darn clever to invite Jeff to join the team so you could get to know Hou. But I've been keeping an eye on this issue and by now you don't know anyone named Why. So you're still 50% shy of your academic goals, SKuOR. Even the fact that you put Sabine's initials in your name won't help you shake off that bad reputation – I'm sorry.

It's such a pity. You started off well at TU. You had a bright future, really! Then you decided to let me write my thesis with you and it all went downhill after that. So, in all honesty, I hope you never ever learn from your mistakes and keep on inviting everyone in to do SKuOR things with you. Me personally, I am definitely looking forward to the next ten years with you.

Happy anniversary, SKuOR!

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<sup>1</sup> Roast (noun): a good-natured ridicule.



## THESIS SUPERVISIONS

### Master Thesis supervision

More than 30 completed diploma/master theses in the study programs spatial planning (12), architecture (8) and international development studies (1), 8 currently supervised master projects.

### 2024

JULIA WÖRMANSEDER Ohrenöffner für Ungleichheit – Soundscapes als Echo sozialer Unterschiede im öffentlichen Raum (in German).

NOAH E. PFANDER Freie Kultur braucht Raum. Eine Fallstudie zu Raumaneignungen der freien Szene in der Stadt Wien (in German).

### 2023

SARAH BERNHARD Große Veränderung im kleinen Garten: eine Einzelfallstudie im Wiener Kleingartenverein Frohsinn über die Auswirkungen von ganzjährigem Wohnen und neuen Eigentumsverhältnissen auf das soziale Zusammenleben (in German).

NATANA CHAR DA SILVA Influences from governmentalities on the rights of livelihood.

SOPHIE HÖLLER Raum fürs Quartier! Eine vergleichende Fallstudie über bauplatzübergreifende Gemeinschaftsräume in ausgewählten Wiener Stadtentwicklungsgebieten (in German).

KATHRIN HOFER Raumzeitgerechtigkeit für alle? Eine zeitpolitische Analyse aktueller Zielsetzungen in der Wiener Stadtplanung mit dem Fokus auf Alltagsstrukturen und Alltagsräume von Früh- und Spätschichtarbeiterinnen (in German).

ALEXANDRA ULLMANN Museumsstadträume. Stadträumliche Verbindungen der Museumsräume als gesellschaftlich relevantes Phänomen der sozialräumlichen Transformation von Museen (in German).

### 2022

CAROLINA CRIJNS Reconceptualising Utopianism, Crisis, and Architecture: Contested Pursuits of the Good Life in a Society Inherently Marked by Crisis.

JOEL ARON HERRNSTADT Barcelona en Comú. A new municipalist approach for a more cohesive society and an open public space.

Fig.88 Eyes on Books





Fig.89  
Urban Studies Colloquium 2018

## 2021

TOBIAS GUNNAR GRANDEL "We are here for everyone". Aspirations, tensions, and dilemmas in Vienna's neighbourhood management.

MARKUS ZORN Let's roll the dice! Exploring games and play as an inclusive design method.

RAFAEL ESSL Urban crisis and multiple disruption : the invisible workers and dwellers of Silicon Valley.

FELIX LEININGER Die Radentscheid-Bewegung in Deutschland - Aushandlung und Umsetzung zwischen Bürger:innenengagement und kommunaler Praxis

MARTINA SOI GUNELAS Garbage markets | Agoras of waste urban space appropriation in the context of Eleonas' wastepicker markets.

KATHARINA HÖFTBERGER Managing change in heritage cities : evolving understanding of the historic urban landscape in Khiva, Uzbekistan.

## 2020

TERESA KÖNIG Venezuelan forced migrants in Bogotá : digital platform labor and its implications for everyday urban life.

YANNICK EVERAD Inklusion, öffentlicher Raum und Planung - die „Omas gegen Rechts“, eine gerontologisch bedeutsame Gegenöffentlichkeit(in German).

BERNADETTE DANNERER Privatization of public housing in Botkyrka Municipality, Sweden.

## 2019

MICHAEL KERSCHBAUMER Die umstrittene Planung öffentlicher Räume. Das Fallbeispiel Kings Cross, London.

MICHAEL MASCHING The play-Element of city-making – a cultural perspective on participation.

JUDITH MARIA WILLNAUER Exklusion im Linzraum – Exklusionsmechanismen wohnungsloser Menschen im öffentlichen Raum.

ILEANA ION Around the block - "În jurul blocului" : The transformation of value in neighbourhood public space in a post-socialist city.

ELISABETH ARNOLD The rationalities of social housing construction in Santiago del Estero, Argentina.

BERNHARD GUGG Municipal Housing Policies for Newcomers in Greece. A Multi-Level Perspective on Thessaloniki's REACT Program.



RAINHARD SÜSS Small scale, big scale. Viennese kiosks reflecting socioeconomic transformation processes in the course of 19th and 20th century capitalist development.

### 2018

DOMINIK LINDER (planning) Urban Soundscapes and how to Map them. (Austria)

LENA JUNGER (planning) Contested. Public. Shared. Peacelines and Public Space in Belfast. (Ireland)

VANESSA SODL (planning) Spatial Planners at Work. Body, Affect and Space (in German). (Austria)

### 2017

ELENA MITRENOVA (architecture) Urban Resilience. The Power of Knowledge in Urban Policy-Making Processes (in German). (Austria, Spain)

ANDREA STICKLER (planning) Political Equity in Communicative Planning Processes. The Emancipatory Limits of Participation. Case Study Donaufeld Wien (in German). (Austria)

GERLINDE MÜCKSTEIN (planning) To what Extent is Smart City Vienna Political? The Political in Urban Development Planning. The Case of the Framing Programme Smart City Vienna. (Austria)

### 2016

KAROLINA PETZ (architecture) Activities of Informal Economy and its Spatial Dimensions. Inside 'Urbanized Villages' of Shenzhen. (China)

LISA MÜLLER (architecture) Public Space at Shanghai's Waterfront. (China)

### 2015

BIANCA KORNATOWSKI (planning) Space as a Consumer Good? Area Recycling in Bremen, Leipzig, and Nuremburg compared (in German). (Germany)

JÖRG WIMMER (architecture) The production of Inclusive Spaces of Consumption. Solidarity-in-use as a New Category of the Master Plan and Test Designs using the Example of a Development Area in Vienna-Favoriten (in German). (Austria)

JOSCHA VIRTAUER (architecture) Playful Architecture in Public Space. Processes of Change in Relational Structures with Reference to Low-threshold Methods of Design (in German). (Austria)

### 2014

EREN ERGIN (planning) Social Housing in Turkey and TOKI Settlements. (Turkey)

JULIA WILDEIS (architecture) Common Space "Novi Beograd's Local Communities. Between Conception and Everyday Life". (Serbia)

### 2013

KATRIN HOPFGARTNER (international development studies, University of Vienna) The Right to Public Space? Informal Trade in the Context of Urbanistic Interventions. The Example of Quito (in German). (Ecuador)

JOHANNA AIGNER (planning) A Grätzel as Signifier of a Viennese Microcosm. Relations between Local Economic Practices and the Strategic Construction of Added Meaning. (Austria)

### 2012

NICOLE RINGER (planning) Between Cultural Expression and the Representation of Power. Street Names in Vienna, their Influence on the Production of Public Space, and their Meaning for Gender Issues (in German). (Austria)

### 2011

ULRIKE BRONNER and CLARISSA REIKERSDORFER (architecture) Urban Nomads. Building Shanghai. Migrant Workers and the Construction Process, awarded the Social Impact Award Vienna 2011 as well as the ArchDiploma Award 2013 in the category of Best Theoretical Work. Published as a book in 2016. (China)

### 2010

FELICITAS WETTSTEIN (architecture) Between Imagined, Lived, and Built Reality. The Potential of Public Spaces in the Periphery of Paris in terms of a Violence-free Community (in German). (France)

### 2009

JOHANNES SUITNER (planning) local.art. global.image. On the Role of Planning between Local, Art-based Processes of Adding Value and Global Urban Image Production (in German). Published as a book. (Austria)

## THESIS SUPERVISIONS

### Doctoral Thesis Supervision

SANDRINE KLOT (architecture) Youth & City. Urban spatial practice of adolescents as means for research on development in the context of the post-political city. (working title)

JORGE MOSQUERA SUÀREZ (architecture, urban studies) Commoning and city governance. New forms of governance of the urban commons and the effects of technologies of power relation. (working title)

MARIA REITANO (architecture, planning) dissenting urbanities: insurgencies, interdependences, and spaces of the political in Naples. (working title)

#### Since 2019

LAURA SOBRAL (urban studies, architecture) Can Cooperation Policies be Transferred? Studying Transnational Knowledge Circulation through the Lisbon Case of BIP/ZIP (working title).

BURCU ATES (architecture) Bodies of Political Space or Bodies as Space of Politics. Challenges of Public(ness) for Women in Turkey (working title).

ANGELIKA GABAUER (urban studies, political theory) Revisiting the Just City. Understanding Urban Everyday Realities of Elderly People (working title).

#### Since 2018

PREDRAG MILIC (architecture, urban studies) The Self-provided City. On the Importance of Informal Processes for the Re-conceptualisation of the Idea of Public Good on the Urban Periphery (working title).

#### Since 2017

MAGDALENA AUGUSTIN (art history, architecture) Historical Architecture and Collectivism. Self-managed Building Activities and Counterculture in Techno-Clubs of German-speaking Countries (working title).

ELINA KRÄNZLE (urban studies) Nation, Culture, Public Space. How Nationalist Practices, Discourses and Representations Redraw National Boundaries in Cologne and Vienna between 2008 and 2018 (working title).

#### Since 2016

TIHOMIR VIDERMAN (planning) Appropriating Places of Concern. Engaged Critical Practices in Vienna's Social Democracy (working title).

## READER

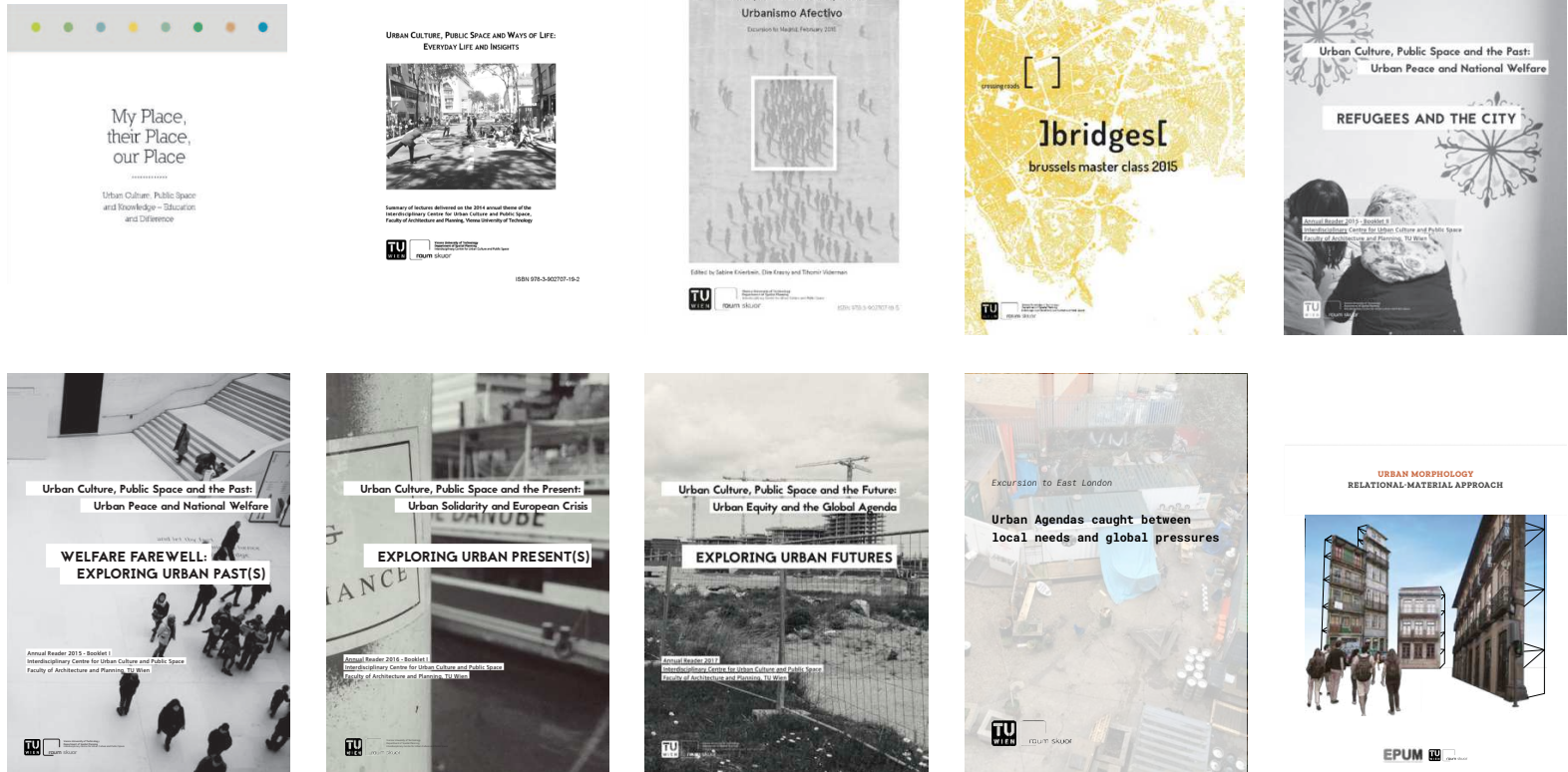


Fig.90 Reader Collection

## SKuOR as Door Opener

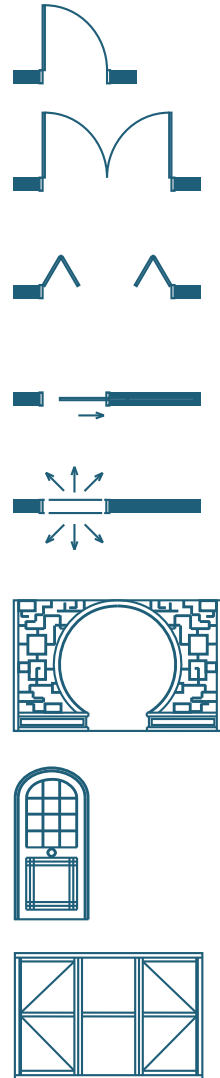
VOICES - Ulrike Schönbrunner & Clarissa Rhomberg

The time at SKuOR opened a variety of different 'doors', which we went through for the first time during our architecture studies at the TU Vienna. As students we were trained to design doors, however through SKuOR we learned to explore what is behind them. Therefore SKuOR was a door opener in many ways and aspects

We are deeply thankful for all the skills we gained, the unique experience we had, the people we met at SKuOR and are particularly grateful for Sabine's ambitious, excellent and inspiring mentoring. Thank you for empowering us as young professionals.

Happy 10th anniversary!

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|                             |  |
|-----------------------------|--|
| SCIENTIFIC DOOR             | For the first time we worked scientifically.   |
| INTERDISCIPLINARY DOOR      | For the first time we worked together with students and lecturers from different disciplines.  |
| DISCOURSIVE DOOR            | We learned how to initiate an engaged and passionate discourse on public spaces.   |
| DIALECTICAL DOOR            | We got deeply involved with Lefebvre's theories (however this remains a challenging door).   |
| SOCIO-CRITICAL DOOR         | We learned to see more than one side of a story.   |
| INTERCULTURAL DOOR          | For our thesis 'URBAN NOMADS. Building Shanghai: Migrant Workers and the Construction Process.' we organised a field research in China for three months. |
| PROFESSIONAL DOOR           | For our thesis we received the jury award for the best theory-based diploma thesis at the archdiploma <sup>13</sup> .                                    |
| SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURIAL DOOR | Winning the 'Social Impact Award 2011' for the idea 'Lüxing Laoshi' based on the thesis and suddenly we became social entrepreneurs.                     |





Epilogue? - Dialogue!

## Epilogue? - Dialogue!

*Technik für Menschen* - Technology for humans reads the heraldic motto of the Technische Universität Wien to which the Interdisciplinary Centre for Urban Culture and Public Space belongs.

This mission statement sums up the basic premise underlying our work: The technical, social and cultural innovations that humans develop through both their own praxis and a constant critical reflection of that praxis, that is theory, as well as the urban forms they envision and build, in our understanding, need to be contextualized in relation to social change, cultural experience and political expression. Urban studies engage with this tangible and intangible relations through an empirical, analytical and interpretative focus on the study of lived space and everyday life. This field of work, however, generally does not endeavor to propose adhoc solutions. Urban scholars rather seek to detect, explain and reflect on a range of ambivalences which span the notions of progress, modernisation and liberal democracy, their promising streams as well as their shortcomings. These ambivalences are inscribed in an uneven nature of urban space, the (in)formal injustices mirrored in spatial patterns of division, segregation and enclosure as through socio-economic divides, whose most evident manifestations are

urban poverty and precarisation. At this point, public space becomes habitat with key social, political and cultural roles. It also bears great material and ecological potential. Our interest in public space is driven by the desire to embed the recognition of basic human needs of *omnes et singulatim* - of all and each - into any effort to thrive for better technology, for better cities and better societies. As the role of academics in this endeavor constantly changes, a need has been publicly formulated to connect more closely to ordinary life and popular experience, which may imply the demand to include theorizations of everyday life into research and teaching. The arena in which we are seeking to establish these needed dialogues is the postdisciplinary field of urban studies in which new knowings from the spatial arts and engineering disciplines often meet and sometimes collide with new forms of scientific insights created in the social sciences and humanities. To promote a context-sensitive and complexity-based approach to urban studies, we need to limit our object of investigation. This allows not just digging in the depth of knowledge bodies of disciplinary fields, but particularly to discover the width of the niches that lies between them. While bridging these gaps, we also identify and inspect aporia, shortcomings and limits of narrow approaches to understanding cities, urbanization and urban life.



## Epilogue? - Dialogue!

Over the last 15 years we have published a range of books, have organised and participated in more than 100 lectures, supervised more than 30 master thesis projects and 10 PhD projects, and, most importantly, we have shaped an inclusive learning environment which embraces students, their capacities and expertise regardless of their origin and background: For us, all students are international. We chose this as the most inclusive category, as opposed to dissecting categories of students that draw boundaries among them.

Yes, we have also engaged in what can be called a medial economy of attention at universities due to an ever-precarious situation of three-years funding cycles and the resulting need to find means to institutionally “survive”. Happy to spend our energy less on events and loud academic media making, and redirect it there where it may be of better use: For instance, to engage in a qualitatively recognized doctoral education at the Faculty of Architecture and Planning of Technische Universität Wien and in empirical fieldwork, methodological innovation and international peace building. Or instead of spending resources to design posters, leaflets and other promotional materials, to engage in a more continuous and deep dialogue with social, cultural and political institutions that are working with vulnerable groups in the urban society.

We are for sure glad to work in a more silent and productive routine. What we need for this, however, is the equipment of the centre with continuing staff, both as regard post-doc research affairs and regards accounting and administration.

The last 10 years have also been about respect and appreciation of the dedicated work of each and all who have been contributing to institutionally build this up: We have received support from rectors, vice rectors, deans and study deans and heads of institute throughout an uncertain, yet perseverant path. Merci for allowing new institutional formations to thrive as part of the 200-years long history of the Technische Universität Wien. We have already shared and co-created 5% of this history, with an afferent tendency. Many organisations have been interested to get involved with us to explore new transdisciplinary teaching formats. Particularly the summer schools proved to be productive environments for this exchange, which has greatly influenced our ways to theorize.

External lecturers with local and methodological savoir helped to remind us that university needs to have one leg in the seminar room and lecture hall, whereas the other leg should stretch out to the places of urban life, particularly to those institutions and associations that have an inclusive

## Epilogue? - Dialogue!

and egalitarian approach. We can also do business, and get in touch with market players if the preconditions are met for a dialogue to be open to all sides and for innovation to happen at all fronts. Open innovation is of key relevance to us, but only if it is radically open in all stages of the innovation cycle or chain: That is why we introduce and discuss concepts such as open culture, public and civic innovation, and remind ourselves constantly of Schumpeter's finding that innovation needs to be understood as creative destruction. We care about the "social costs" of disruptive proceedings, and we critically analyse how (dys)functional routines become unsettled by innovative disruption. A question we do not hesitate to repeat is: For whom? Who is (not) included in the benefits of progress, modernisation, and innovation? Can we indeed design or plan egalitarian places of emancipation and caring arenas of democratic life?

We think that to be smart means, first of all, to promote a new reflexive humanism and to not envision an avatar-like human puppet whose behavior is to be optimized by rational, economic or algorithmic calculus. The type of renewed humanism we foster actively addresses a contemporary critique of antropocentric science and a critique of behavioralist determinism. This humanism, to us, is not only about being a feminist, promoting worlded ways

to theorize, or about arguing loud for and from the margins. We consider this humanism necessary in our field to bridge studies on urban form with those on urban life; approaches that focus on combining encounters of research subjects with ways of rethinking research objects.

We thank particularly our international visiting scholars and Advisory Board members for issueing caution about (lost) modernist dreams and (romantic) humanist idealization: You have taught us that this humanism may be liberating and emancipatory, but at the same time in being self-centered, it can quickly become shallow and narcissist. Also, you have warned against abstractions inherent in metanarratives of our times and have encouraged us to always zoom back into the study of everyday life. You have advocated for searching for the unexpected in the known by denormalizing and defamiliarizing what seemed to be natural and given routine. You have inspired us to rethink how planning, design and technology may honestly engage with open cultures, new learning environments and philosophical debates about a needed democratisation.

The first set of questions to ask here is: How does new technology address caring relations in support of basic human needs, particularly of the most vulnerable parts of



## Epilogue? - Dialogue!

the society? Who benefits from technological innovations, and can we be more radical when it comes to including those who are left behind? What about vulnerability: Who is considered - according to international standards - as vulnerable and does it include each and all who think that their socio-economic living conditions should be acknowledged as vulnerable? How can academics rethink the social relevance of what they are doing, and do they already find ways to engage with society? What about social inequality? Does it include indicators of wage difference, or is property ownership included in analyzing increasing social divides? What about place makers' roles in increasing property value? You have shown us that big questions need to be discussed in respect of the concrete minutiae of daily life, at school, in the street, on the beach.

If TU Wien was an ocean and the team of the Interdisciplinary Centre for Urban Culture and Public Space a group of aquatics engaging in stormy waves and peaceful surfaces, I would

like to thank the teams past and present for manoeuvring through these waters with depth, diligence and dedication. You are exceptional! All of you. You are surfers, sailors, divers, scullers, snorkelers, wakeboarders and swimmers. You know how to quickly switch between these roles, depending on what is needed. Yet first and foremost, you are buddies: You take care of one another. You care about social bonds. Inside and outside the university, and inbetween them. You show that **Menschen** are needed for **Technik** to develop **Technik für Menschen**.

*Sabine Knierbein, May 2019, updated June 2024*

PS: Written in the hopes that the epilogue of the 20th-Anniversary Book in 2029 will be drafted by someone else with fresh ideas, and will take forms beyond a monologue about needed dialogues.



## List of Figures

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Nobody can get beyond everyday life,  
which literally internalizes global capitalism,  
just as global capitalism is nothing  
without many everyday lives,  
lives of real people in real time and space.

Merrifield 2006, 10