



Case 1 Vienna, Austria:

Ecological block renewal program¹

Problem to resolve

For quite an extended period already, disposable municipal income tends to decrease while at the same time neoliberal local authorities are less prepared to finance public services and investments. It is also true that private investors are more flexible and less bureaucratic in project administration, at the cost of lacking social accountability and the need to be able to withhold a compatible profit margin. A possible third player in municipal governance is the social sector who represents the resident population. Well managed cooperation of the three sectors: state, private and social sectors, in known as participatory governance,^{2,3,4} where part of the costs can be covered by community itself. →Tool URR 2

A possible response

The Project "Ecological Block Renewal" is a key project of the Viennese URBAN program and is winner of the *UN Habitat best Practice* award 2002⁵. Urban renewal is expensive; but it also creates economic values which accrue to the house owner's assets. Soft renewal means animating landlords to invest without using the instrument of expropriation. Developed by the Vienna Land Procurement and Urban Renewal Fund (WBSF), this project aims at connecting the objectives of soft urban renewal with ecological measures and activities for local business enterprises.

Technically speaking the approach is the so-called "inner urban development" as a more economical alternative compared to urban expansion with much higher infrastructure costs. In this particular case, some of blocks within the program had been originally constructed around the turn of the century (1900) and are situated along the Western Gürtel road in a very densely built up quarter. The technical equipment of most dwellings in these areas is still very poor. There is a significant lack of green spaces and the unemployment rate is higher than the Viennese average.

As part of the project, house based renewal opportunities are being discussed with the individual owners and supported projects may receive a maximum 30 % financial contribution from the EU URBAN fund. →Tool URR 2





Typical Vienna block quarter (K.Mathéy)



Planting of public greenery in Vienna (K. Mathéy)

Three kinds of projects have been proposed for the period 1996 to 1999 and were realised thereafter:

- a) Demolition of buildings in the centre of blocks (*Entkernung*) to lower the density and to help create new green open spaces in connection with the rehabilitation of existing dwellings
- b) New construction of buildings and adaptation of vacant ground floors for small enterprises (mixing land uses) compatible with residential areas in connection with sound insulation and greening of roofs
- c) Improvement of public space

As the name of the project suggests, ecological aspects were prominent in the entire program: the objective of a „city of short ways“ is secured by a mixed land use structure and by the block-wise approach. Also the greening of backyards and roofs are part of the philosophy in the same way as the modernization of the technical equipment within the individual dwellings. Both residents and local businesses (mostly small enterprises: one exception with 80 employees, all others less than 50) benefit from the project „Ecological Block-Renewal“. Local business received logistical assistance and gaps between buildings or minor streets were transformed into attractive public spaces or parks - especially for social groups that were neglected in the past, like older people, children and young people who need room for noisy activities etc. →Tool URR 1; →Tool URR2

Three kinds of project were fixed in the period 1996 to 1999 and are being realised at the moment:

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LESSONS LEARNED /TRANSFERABILITY

Block improvement schemes have proved to be successful instruments to stimulate sustainable renewal projects, including ecological improvements both of private and public spaces, self help activities organized by the inhabitants or by citizens' groups, traffic proposals, energy saving projects, etc. They are therefore to be further encouraged in the future, and they are an acceptable model for different situations both in wealthy and poor region.

Urban renewal helps minimizing the high infrastructural costs compared to new projects at urban periphery. The so-called "inner urban development" is therefore favoured over urban expansion.



Vienna Ecological Urban Block Renewal: making use of inner parts of the street blocks

Credentials

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References

¹ https://www.corp.at/archive/CORP2010_101.pdf

² <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1467-7660.2009.01586.x/abstract> visited 23/08/2015

³ https://books.google.de/books?id=nTQAAGAAQBAJ&dq=richard+stren,+participatory+governance&lr=&source=gbs_navlinks_s visited 23/08/2015

⁴ <file:///C:/Users/Kosta/Downloads/cusp-110108-participatory-gov.pdf> visited 23/08/2015

⁵ http://mirror.unhabitat.org/bp/bp.list.details.aspx?bp_id=2798