Pocket Mannerhatten - City renewal on the basis of spatial sharing strategies, bottom-up participation and common good-based incentives

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Abstract. Cities worldwide and Vienna as well are facing an increasing pressure on space. Innovative strategies are required to tackle these challenges not only by creating new buildings but also by modernizing existing neighbourhoods. For decades Vienna counts on a gentle urban renewal approach. The question how to tackle new challenges, such as renewal towards energy efficiency, green spaces, alternative mobility or integration of multicultural lifestyles needs to be answered. The project Pocket Mannerhatten pursues the assumption that sharing building space across property outlines can offer an innovative approach for a city renewal. The spatial sharing is combined with a bottom-up-participation process and a compensation-oriented funding system. With the public funding program “Smart Cities Demo” (Austrian Climate and Energy Fund) a realization project will test the concept in Ottakring/Vienna. The multidisciplinary consortium accompanies the inhabitants realizing shared green spaces, community rooms, shared photovoltaic systems, car-sharing and Co-living apartments until the year 2021. In the future, these sharing and cooperation activities should become a city renewal strategy. Due to the slogan “who shares, gets more” and on the basis of a evaluated common good contribution not only monetary but also alternative, non-monetary incentives will be taken into account to foster urban renewal.

1. Introduction to the context and basic concept of the project Pocket Mannerhatten

What if the discourse about sustainability and resource-conscious thinking focus on an organisational approach of problem solving? What if we use our resources consciously in the way that we reorganize existing resources and share them? This essay will follow these questions as underlaying intention to discuss how creating links within an existing urban fabric can offer an approach to use space more efficiently and foster social networks. Urban developments with a growing number of inhabitants, increased land consumption and rising real estate prices clarify the necessity of a discussion about space as a common resource and about new concepts organizing it. The subsequent increased pressure on areas and spaces in cities, rising demand of affordable urban housing, public space and infrastructure as well as social changes and new claims for use and contemporary lifestyles underline this necessity and let municipalities and residents be challenged to find solutions.

As many other European cities, Vienna also faces these challenges. Innovative methods and strategies are required to tackle these challenges not only by creating new buildings but also by modernizing existing quarters in terms of ‘redensification’ or adaption for future needs. For example,
the sharing economy creates innovative impulses in this discourse of resource consciousness and the real estate market already started to absorb concepts like co-living and co-housing especially for newly built urban structures [1]. The development and adaption of existing urban structures still needs to be addressed. Since the seventies Vienna counts on a gentle urban renewal approach which supported the development of numerous sub-standard Gründerzeit buildings [2]. Not only single properties but even clusters on the level of a city block with the aim to improve infrastructure, quality of semipublic spaces or too densely built neighbourhoods have been refurbished [3]. What still offers a potential development is the strategic implementation of specific spatial or functional links between properties creating new spatial qualities, uses and opportunities. The project Pocket Mannerhatten pursues the assumption that sharing building space, not only within but especially across property outlines can offer an innovative approach for a city renewal and create useful opportunities. This means that different building areas and functions are systematically linked to create synergies across property lines. Nonetheless it doesn’t mean that land tenure and property rights has to be altered as it will be explained in the following. The ‘sharing options’ include merged courtyards or rooftops, linked green facades, elevators which are being used by occupants of several properties or collectively organized solar power plants or e-mobility solutions [4]. Furthermore the project concepts includes the assumption that spatial sharing opportunities needs to be developed through a participative planning process to create the necessary social-cultural preconditions for sharing. According to the project concept, the spatial sharing and participation process needs to be combined with a compensation-oriented funding system to foster the development and balance the possible additional effort of mediating and integrating further neighbouring stakeholders. All these issues and aspects are worked through by a multidisciplinary team together with the inhabitants of a city block, named “Block No. 61” (due to its serial number of all 260 examined cities blocks), in the 16th district of Vienna. The team aims to develop a pilot project for spatial sharing, a model for a suitable participation process and a public-benefit oriented system with alternative, non-monetary funding opportunities.

2. Characteristics of the urban fabric in Ottakring/Vienna
A significant portion of the built urban fabric of the Gründerzeit in Ottakring/Vienna is characterized by certain attributes which favour the opportunity to link built structures and its functions across their property outlines.

2.1. The street-network and parcelling of Gründerzeit quarters in Ottakring/Vienna
For example the street networks cuts out similarly shaped, rectangle building blocks measuring 120-125m in length and 60-65m in width. This comparatively continuous regularity is found also in the logic and size of the parceling subdividing the building blocks – see ‘Figure 1’. The regularity supports the transferability of spatial solutions, for example worked out in a pilot project. The blocks contain mostly 12-16 parcels with the size of 400-500m² with a subdivision of 2 or 3 parcels on the narrow side and 3-5 parcels on the long side. This shows a quite small-sized, intensely structured parceling, for example compared to well-known communal housing complexes of the same time period, and is linked to the ownership structure. Mostly each parcel is owned by one or more private landlords.

It is obvious that the parceling causes a certain proximity of different entities of space, functions or use and question a potential interaction or connection between these different entities. Spatial connections between real estate require vicinity and adjacency. A property crossing rooftop terrace structure or circulation structure needs for example adjacency. A shared parking lot or different community rooms for recreational uses such as fitness, music or workshops and linked across the property outlines by shared access rights require vicinity.

The circulation and access system captures a specific role among all kinds of connections as it forms the precondition for connecting spaces. Austrian building codes demand a maximal length of 40m for the escape path to the exterior or nearest fire staircase. Gründerzeit plots in the examined district are most of the time around 20m to 30m long and only around 15m to 20m long, what shows, that the fire
staircase outside of the regarded plot could be reached and connected circulation systems would be possible.

Figure 1. Aerial image showing the street-network and a closer view on the perimeter block fabric

2.2. Gründerzeit perimeter block and characteristic building types

Historic and present building codes defined the way of the perimeter block – see ‘Figure 1.’ which is characterized by a closed city block with each house adjoining the next one, bordering the street/pavement and forming a courtyard in the middle. The street line and building line unify façades on the side of the street and courtyard. In contrast the heights of the houses vary and also the way the courtyard houses are built as wings or additional single houses. Nevertheless this kind of compact, closed perimeter block offers spatial adjacency as promotive quality for connecting spaces and functions across plots. Although the built urban fabric is characterized by heterogeneity it allows to identify different types of buildings which are either repeated noticeable often or show similarities among them. Types of Gründerzeit buildings which are repeated are for example the corner building, street facing building without courtyard house, street facing building with single courtyard house, L-shaped building and H-shaped building.

Figure 2. Several historical floorplans of Gründerzeit town houses with corridors blue-colored
In order to argue the capacity of the building structure to be linked the design of the circulation system should be highlighted, especially its positioning towards the courtyard – see ‘Figure 2’. This aspect opens up the building to be extended through additional elements such as elevators, staircase, bridges without interfering with existing floor plans of inhabited living units. Historically corridors offered shared facilities like water basins (Bassena) and small bathrooms with closets for the floor. In the course of refurbishment developments bathrooms and water supplies have been integrated into the living units and these small spaces had been repurposed. Today these small spaces are used as storage, space for technical equipment or are even empty. As they play no negligible role as functional addition to the living units they are to a certain degree detached and easier to transform than parts of the inhabited living units. This creates a structural openness to dock on other spatial entities.

3. Opportunities of linking buildings and spatial sharing

Subsequently the question is what kind of connections and links within a built urban fabric can be considered.

3.1. Physical-spatial connections

Basically there can be defined links which have direct spatial impact when built definitions of space are altered in order to connect spaces and create or enlarge common space – see ‘Figure 3’. This could be: changed or new accesses, linked floor plans creating co-living flats, united roof terraces or courtyard gardens with removed fences and walls or newly built neighbourhood garage.

Figure 3. Floorplans with different physical-spatial connections on the basis of a common circulation

3.2. Functional connections based on access rights
Links between buildings can be created also by changing the logic of access rules and users domain while preserving the existing built structure. This establishes a functional bonding of neighbouring real estate. This bonding could be defined unilateral, for example one house offers a community room to the neighbours, or multilateral, for example two or more houses exchange the access rights of their community rooms.

3.3. Technical-functional connections of building services
Another category of connection is a pure technical-functional one, which means that technical building services such as heating, ventilation, air conditioning and energy supply are connected among parts of the city block. So far as it is possible to generalize these technical-functional connections they imply either an increased efficiency with scaled size of the technical facilities, for example photovoltaic systems. Or otherwise the increased diversity of the extended user group leads to an intensified utilisation of the system, for example when a commercial unit with peak energy consumption during daytime is combined with a living-unit with peak energy consumption beside working hours and on weekends.

3.4. Connections based on spatial references
Further on another category can be defined by sharing moveable goods which have a distinct spatial reference, for example cars, cargo bikes or partly temporarily built structures in public space like pocket gardens. Not necessarily space itself is shared but utilities for which space is needed. The shared use of these utilities can enable changed space requirements when for example cars and parking lots per inhabitant can be reduced on the basis of a car sharing pool.

3.5. Communication networks referred to a specific space
The fifth category which can be mentioned in this argument is the social network and its capacity of interaction, cooperation and communication. Primarily it is not about space, but about inhabitants, users and all other stakeholders referred to space and about their connections and interactions which impact space. An intensely linked neighbourhood will organize and cooperate in a complete different way the inhabitant space then the opposite. This last category underlines how crucial and significant the incorporation of sociocultural aspects is in this context.

4. Sociocultural constraints of linking and sharing space
Beside the mentioned spatial constraints of the urban fabric the sociocultural constraints for sharing are key. In an initial phase of the project Pocket Mannerhatten the analysis of the political administrative system including funding programs, stakeholders in real estate economy and house owners’ motivation and action strategies of administrating their real estate helped to understand these constraints [5].

4.1. Constraints of the political-administrative system
The logic of the political administrative system and connected with it the mostly complex logic of permissions and funding programs considers either a single real estate or a single owning entity. It is obvious that the proprietorship form the basis of these socio-political constraints and consequently the proprietor owns the power of decision how buildings can be linked in terms of physical-spatial links of category 3.1. Especially all provisions which change space physically or the technical building services needs the approval of the landlord or if it is a group of landlords at least the majority of landlords. This doesn’t mean that tenants inhabiting the real estate don’t have opportunities to participate in sharing and linking real estate, but in a different way regarding the previously mentioned categories of sharing opportunities.

4.2. Intention and motivation of landlords as initiators
Therefore it is necessary to understand also what landlords motivates to share space or connect their real estate with each other. Due to the analysis done by Witthöft G and Hölzl D landlords can be
differentiated in their way of managing real estate into twenty types. Among these action types there can be found for example “the Big Player”, large international profit orientated real estate companies without local bonds, “the Traditionals”, which live in their real estate, avoid change and new ideas, and regard the financial return as secondary or “the Motivated”, which inherit recently real estate, are young, decisive and eager to improve their real estate. The analysis shows that there are specific types of landlords which form a group characterized by a probable distinct openness and willingness to commit themselves to an intense dialog and negotiation for synergies or social qualities. In the research area “Block No 61” four landlords of the seventeen houses decided to take part in the current implementation project and work out solutions of sharing space. Three of these four use their property as either principal or secondary residence, which leads to the interpretation that inhabiting the real estate let a landlord be more probable to consider a variety of qualities and be open for alternative possibilities such as sharing space in a neighbourly network.

At the same time two fundamental motivations of sharing can be considered: one which is rooted in voluntariness and lifestyle culture and one which is rooted in economic benefits and necessity. Although sharing can enable economic benefits for the participants it should not deceive that the process of negotiation and communication to reach an agreement among the participants could be time- and consequently money consuming. If the participants organized themselves it requires respective abilities of communication and negotiation to establish a required foundation of trust, understanding, fairness and cooperation. At best there exists already suchlike environment in the neighbourhood. The examined neighbourhood network of “Block No 61” indicated a minor developed contacts across different real estates which is represented by two statements of landlords.

One landlord acknowledged after participating in one of the Pocket Mannerhatten workshops that she always considered the space defined by the walls of her apartment thinking of her apartment. After participating in the workshop she rather considers not only the building containing her apartment but the whole city block or neighbourhood. Another landlord living for years in his house stated that he would accredit the project Pocket Mannerhatten being a success already before something is built because he never got in contact with so many neighbours. The last statement makes also clear that mostly extrinsic impulses and professional support -not only in technical fields- can be needed to enable an initiative.

5. Enabling and fostering a renewal process based on space sharing
As explained in the paragraphs before, although the urban fabric offers preconditions which favour spatial connections of different categories and although there can be found landlords who are willing to develop and realize these spatial connections as decision-makers, some kind of incentives and promotion must catalyse the development. On the one hand more stakeholders makes the development process more complex and expensive and on the other hand there comes along a certain uncertainty of control with more stakeholders, especially in neighbourhoods with a high degree of anonymity. The question arises in which way the development can be catalysed.

In order to activate and address possibly interested landlords the project consortium Pocket Mannerhatten developed a certain concept of participation to be multiplied. This concept includes several steps of involvement in interviews, site inspections and workshops containing also a role game in form of a board game to experience or learn about spatial sharing strategies on the basis of a Gründerzeit city block.
Figure 4. Impressions of a workshop with landlords playing a board game for spatial sharing

5.1. The role of Viennese institutions fostering city renewal processes
Traditionally the Viennese quarter management “Gebietsbetreuung Stadterneuerung” as key element for the gentle way of city renewal had been in charge of fostering different bottom-up city development initiatives and the question would be if this process could be multiplied through this institution. As public institution it is open to all residents and offers professional services of architects, city planners, lawyers and social workers. The local city quarter offices provide consultation and information regarding tenancy and building law, subsidies, refurbishment, initiatives in public space and coordinate participation processes as well [6]. Since the nineties the initial thirteen local offices, each responsible for certain districts, had been reduced continuously. Since January 2018 the remaining eight local city offices had been reduced to five local offices being in charge still for the whole area of the city of Vienna [7]. Against this background of economized, down-scaled public institutions it seems doubtful that existing public institutions such as “Gebietsbetreuung Stadterneuerung” might involve in additional areas of responsibility.

Another - partly public- institution is the non-profit organisation “Wiener Wohnfonds”, which is in charge of the city refurbishment as well and coordinates residents, property developers and city administration units. In contrast to the “Gebietsbetreuung Stadterneuerung” the “Wiener Wohnfonds” executes different funding programs for refurbishment and is less involved in local neighbourhoods. Interestingly these refurbishment funding programs know a across properties coordinated strategy for deconstruction of too densely built building structures as a special case to fund, but not as core strategy differentiate into different possible provisions. Both institutions represent required catalysts for the development: initiative, know-how and financial resources.

5.2. Alternative approaches and concepts for fostering city renewal
The project Pocket Mannerhatten follows two research questions in this context: is it possible to develop a non-profit or social business which complement the services of the “Gebietsbetreuung Stadterneuerung” in order to implement space sharing strategies beyond the pilot project and can there be found alternative resources other than financial one which help to foster the development as well.

The Viennese practice of urban contracts in the field of newly built housing and commercial complexes gives the opportunity to negotiate different special permission and to certain obligations benefiting the public. It is interesting to analyse that not only financial incentives are key to foster urban development, but also incentives which belong to the field of permissions, regulations or other provisions organized by public authorities. For somebody who would like to start a commercial unit it might be more important to be allowed to locate it at a certain place and if it is proved that existing restrictions count also for the individual situations. For somebody who builds housing units it might be interesting to be allowed to built one floor more or balconies facing the street to make a refurbishment attractive and profitable due to rising land prices. For someone who wants to establish a retail unit in a densely built area it might be valuable, if the public space around the unit offers parking lots for customers. For a group of residents who wants to organize electric car sharing it might be interesting to have a public recharging station and so on. For the city council and urban planning this approach would not only amplify possibilities of incentives for developments and let financial resources be spared but establish a steering mechanism as well.

Critical is to find a transparent, just and accredited method to evaluate, rate and assign these alternative incentives as there is no legal foundation or law in Austria which declares to assign certain
alternative incentives for space sharing. The project Pocket Mannerhatten assumes that each provision for space sharing generates value or positive impact not only for its single real estate but also for an extended area or group of people. Of course this might differ depending on the kind, on the scale and duration of provisions.

The ongoing project Pocket Mannerhatten proposes the term “common good potential” to discuss the additional value of linked real estates and space sharing addressing an area and a group of people beyond a single real estate and addressing the most extensive possible consensus what might be the “common good”. The logic of the term implies that not only any provision for space sharing which causes a wider area or group of residents to benefit or any provision which enables a more extensive consensus about the common benefit is ranked higher in a possible evaluation. But it considers the aspect of community itself with all its constraints such as justice and solidarity. It does so by defining how or what is understood as common and to what kind of community it refers, might it be the neighbourhood, the quarter or the whole city. By doing so the process of definition creates community and correspond to the spatial provision of linked buildings fostering interaction and cooperation of residents.

Is it used as basis for assigning incentives or funds this logic would lead to a kind of self-organizing domino-dynamic. The more areas and people participate, the more their provisions orientate towards contributing to the common good, the more intense will be the incentive. It is subject of the ongoing project Pocket Mannerhatten to research and develop a concept how space sharing provisions will be evaluated and opposed to possible incentives. Through different workshops, interviews and negotiations together with stakeholders of the city administration and participating landlords this common good based incentive system should be tested in the course of the project. According to the development of the project Pocket Mannerhatten as pilot project the concept with all its aspects should be integrated into the city renewal strategies of Vienne or multiplied to other cities.

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