



ÜBER DIE „SCHÖNHEIT“ DER STADT, GESCHICHTE, WAHRNEHMUNG, WANDLUNGEN

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„Ornamental trees shall be positioned in a stable manner and kept in pleasing shape“

Discussing the functional and aesthetic standards of the StadtParterre – which is considered to be the seismographic instrument for the charm and beauty of the city itself

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„Die Zierbäume sind standsicher aufzustellen und in gefälliger Form zu halten.“

Funktional-ästhetische Ansprüche an das Stadt-Parterre – oder – das Parterre als Seismograph für die Schönheit der Stadt?

„In any urban future the urban past will play the major role.“

Shadrach Woods 1975, *The Man in the Street*; p. 35

„[We need] cities, that provide enough space suitable for people, that enables them to approach each other, to get closer and to get along.“ (Roland Rainer 1948, *Städtebauliche Prosa. Praktische Grundlagen für den Aufbau von Städten*; p. 197; translation AP). In an urban context everyday social exchange, whether intentional or incidental essentially depends on a varied use of the ground-floor level – which, in spatial terms, is the plane that physically connects *all* urban levels. It is indeed an inherent quality of the city that all routes intersect and connect, converge and ramify on the ground floor level, and obviously the city's charm and beauty basically depend on the functional and aesthetic condition of that urban sphere.

However, Vienna's *urban parterre* is in a precarious condition: on the one hand, ground floors are not being put to adequate use (problem of vacancies, under- and miss-use), on the other, the street space is basically mono-functional, being for the most part reserved for car parking and as a traffic surface. This fact appears all the more abstruse against the background of Vienna's rapid population growth and the concomitant housing shortage. The need for additional living space cannot be met by drawing on the city's reserves of undeveloped land; therefore, urban space will have to be regained in built-up neighborhoods. To be able to do so, it is necessary to be aware of the nature, quality and use-structure of this sensitive zone.

As the potentials of ground floor use and the structure of the correlating public street space are directly and closely related, the **StadtParterre** concept includes both: built-up and non-built-up areas, covering the *street* as well as the adjacent *houses and courtyards*. Thus street, ground floor and courtyard are treated as entity, so that interrelations are coming to light, problematic

situations can be identified and treated in a broader context.

This is where the here presented study takes its starting point, namely, from giving visibility to the spatial connections of the base zone and their functional engagement. A differentiated 3D representation visualizes the historical status: the at that time spatial relations of ground floor, street and courtyard spaces as well as basement floors—by furthermore comparing it to the actual situation today. The issue here is the sensual and holistic perception of the *StadtParterre*; a reinterpretation on the basis of structures that only become visible in the spatial model, by revealing patterns of everyday life that are as unexpected as they are topical and exemplary for the future.

First and foremost, though, the point here is to acknowledge the significance of the *StadtParterre* for the (aesthetical) functioning of a city—a fact that has somewhat fallen into oblivion lately.