

Socialist Culture and Architecture in Twentieth-Century Vienna

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In the beginning was the eye, not the word.
--Erwin Panowsky

The city of Vienna is one of the largest residential property owners in the world and constructs between 4,000 and 7,000 apartments every year. It established its construction program in response to four major housing shortages in Vienna's history: 1) In the second half of the nineteenth century, increasing industrialization caused a dramatic situation on the housing market, resulting in a wave of private housing construction for profit. 2) After World War I, a new legislature and returning soldiers led the new socialist city government to respond with the housing program of "Red Vienna," which will be the

main focus of this paper.⁽¹⁾ 3) After World War II, the vast damage from wartime bombing created a similar situation, confronting the city with the need to adopt a policy. 4) The last housing shortage was caused in the post-1989 period when Central and Eastern European states opened their borders and large numbers of immigrants and asylum-seekers tried to settle in the city.

The city's decision to establish a large public housing program was politically and ideologically motivated. Architecture as a specific articulation of art and culture reflects the interests of the patron; thus, an examination of the Viennese socialist architecture provides an overview of Austrian socialist architecture, but also makes inferences about the patron--in this case the Austrian Socialist party.⁽²⁾ I will analyze the house-building program as a simple input-output model, with socialist ideology and the party's intention as the input and architecture as the output. The questions guiding my inquiry are: which Socialist party ideological positions can be reflected and analyzed through the architecture, how does the architecture itself reflect changes in the Austrian party development, and in particular what is the impact of the Socialist party?

The development of Austrian Social Democracy falls into four distinct time periods:⁽³⁾

1) After the Socialist party was formed in 1889, their major concern was the struggle for the extension of voting rights. Their first victory in this case was the establishment of the general, equal, and direct voting right for men, allowing (male) working class members to be proportionally represented from 1907 onward.

2) The following cleavages characterized the second phase of Austrian politics after the establishment of the First Republic in 1918:

Religion. This major division split society into clerical and anti-clerical camps; it can be primarily identified with the division between Austrian conservatives--the Christlich Soziale Partei--and Social Democrats.

Region. The predominantly industrial, anti-clerical, and socialist capital in Vienna stood in sharp contrast to the other federal states, which were mainly rural, clerical, and to a large extent supported the Conservative party.

Social class membership. The development of a class consciousness led social classes to identify themselves in relation to political parties and establish party loyalties according to their occupations.

Generally, the probability that an anti-clerical working-class Viennese person (in 1918 women were enfranchised) would vote for the Social Democratic party was much higher than that a Catholic farmer living in one of the federal states would do so. The overlapping and combination of these cleavages led to the Camp Mentality (*Lagermentalität*), which both major parties overemphasized in order to maintain loyal voters. The segmentation of society into two rival camps caused each party to create its

own cultural pattern and articulation, whose range on the socialist side included a Worker Symphony Orchestra and the socialist environment of the *Gemeindebauten*, the Viennese term for public housing.

3) The dramatic events after Chancellor Dollfuß's dismissal of parliament in 1933 and the Civil War in February 1934, where armed forces of both parties fought on the streets, brought an end to Austrian democracy and the existence of the Social Democrats. After the end of the German Nazi regime in 1945, a period started that can be described as an era of "collective forgetfulness." In 1938, after the Civil War and the end of the Austrofascistic regime, conservatives and socialists found each other in Hitler's concentration camps, where they discovered that they shared more of a political belief-system with each other than with the German Fascists. This perception was essentially the base for the conservative-socialist coalition government between 1945 and 1966, and again from 1986 to the present. It is not surprising that in the unique climate of the Second Republic, the responsibility for the Civil War was shared equally among conservatives and socialists to avoid a counterproductive discussion about the events of 1934. The consequences of this coalition government and the accompanying spirit were a tremendous decrease in ideological intensity and the adoption of a pragmatic policy in which ideological positions were less important than in the First Republic.

4) The fourth and last period, not otherwise treated in this essay, can be characterized by postmaterialistic challenges to the traditional socialist dogmas of growth and prosperity (for example, environmental concern) and by the neoconservative and neoliberal discussion of the 1980s. Both positions appeared in party politics through the foundation of the Green party and the attacks against socialist positions by parties of the bourgeois camp, the Freedom party (FPÖ) and Austrian People's party (ÖVP).

This short overview of the essential steps in the Austrian party system might at first glance have nothing to do with the topic at hand. But as I will show, each step of party development was also reflected in the socialist architecture of the housing-construction program, which was influenced predominately by the SDAP and the later SPÖ.

My approach to the topic will be an eclectic-generalistic one, including a mixture of art history and political science methodology. I will, for example, refer to the stylistic approach of the Vienna School (Wiener Schule) as well as to the sociological approach. Both have their disadvantages. The stylistic approach reduces and simplifies art to its *l'art pour l'art* function, while the sociological approach neglects the singularity of the masterpiece and its individual position in the development of the movement. But both approaches in combination provide an optimal analysis of socialist architecture, in which neither the architect's individual solution nor the general political, social, and ideological mainstream is neglected. By including the sociological approach, one is able to understand the artistic output of one of the most impressive construction plans in twentieth-century Viennese history and, by extension, the correlated socialist culture.

The reason for focusing this paper on architecture is the socialist preference for this field of art during the First Republic and their underdeveloped interest in other cultural forms.

I will first clarify the preconditions that were essential for the emergence of the house-building program--population growth and city planning, living standards, and stylistic development--before I analyze the three major changes in the housing program in the two post-war periods.

Population Growth and City Planning

Since the mid-nineteenth century, the increasing attractiveness of investing in industry has led to tremendous demographic changes in the capital's population. Industrialization and the development of related jobs--the prospect of economic success--attracted large numbers of people from the empire, especially Bohemia and Moravia. The following table will give an idea of the ever-increasing numbers.

Table 1. Increase of the Civil Population in Vienna, Selected Years between 1850 and 1910 (in absolute numbers and percentages)

Year	Inner Districts	% Increase	Outer Districts	% Increase
1850	431,147		92,543	
1857	516,105	19.7	130,006	40.5
1869	607,514	17.7	235,437	81.1
1880	704,756	16.0	385,363	63.7
1890	817,299	16.0	524,598	36.1
1900	984,762	20.5	663,573	26.5
1910	1,095,260	11.2	832,346	25.4
Total % Increase		154.0		799.0

Source: Peter Feldbauer, *Stadtwachstum und Wohnungsnot. Determinanten unzureichender Wohnungsversorgung. Wien 1848 bis 1914* (Vienna, 1976), p. 35. Numbers for 1850 and 1857 include the soldiers billeted throughout the city, all other years exclude them. Increases in percentage have been calculated by the author.

Although years of high birth rates contributed to the population growth, the separated numbers in table 1 show one fact clearly. Vienna faced a tremendous increase in inhabitants between 1850 and 1910, but certain areas were more affected than others. The increase of 799 percent in the predominately working-class outskirts, in contrast to 154 percent in the mainly bourgeois and aristocratic inner districts is due to two factors: 1) The abovementioned arrival of new residents from all parts of the monarchy, and 2)

social class shifts that changed the class composition of the inner districts. As a result, the proportion of working-class people in the total population increased to 66 percent in 1910.⁽⁴⁾ This demographic development affected not only the city's social structure, but also the struggle for housing opportunities. The forces of the free-market economy reacted immediately, resulting in the construction of vast residential areas for the working class. Figure 1 in the appendix shows how this development took place.

The city planners developed a principle of "class biased" ring architecture. The traditional inner districts, with their predominately aristocratic population, were circled by a ring of surrounding bourgeois districts that symbolically defended the center from the labor-class districts in the outskirts. Consequently, one can say that city planning reflected the underlying capitalistic property relations and liberal economic policy. It is therefore easy to see how workers were concentrated in certain districts. This social class segregation, which clearly defined the character of a district, can now be attributed to the following factors:

Aristocratic-bourgeoisie and working-class districts. When emperor Franz Joseph let the wall around the inner districts be torn down, it prompted the construction of the Ringstrasse, Vienna's main boulevard, containing Austria's most stately buildings of political and artistic culture. The creation of a symbolically imposing, high-status area in the city around the Ringstrasse gave the old aristocracy the incentive to move to the new zone. On the other hand, the majority of the working class moved from the bourgeoisie districts to the new lower-class residential areas on the outskirts, closer to the places of industry and production. The imaginary borders between social classes in Vienna are, roughly speaking, the Ringstrasse separating the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie and the Gürtel--the former outer defense wall--separating the bourgeoisie from the proletariat. These local class shifts resulted from two different tax and renting systems:

Taxes. The Linienwall, the former city border located mainly along today's Gürtel, functioned not only as a border between the city and its suburbs but also as a border between two different taxation systems. Every product imported into the city was taxed with the *Verzehrsteuer*, a tax of 10 percent, causing a proportionally higher cost of living within the city limits.⁽⁵⁾ The low-income population could not afford to live inside the city and were, therefore, forced economically to move to the new proletariat suburbs, where daily life cost approximately 10 percent less.

Different renting law. In addition, different renting laws within and outside the city border forced workers and their households to settle in an area where renting conditions were favorable. In the city, the law required tenants to pay six months ahead for apartments, whereas the tenants in the outskirts only had to prepay by 2 to 4 weeks.⁽⁶⁾ Unstable and low-income employment did not allow the lower class to remain within the city. Thus, the border fulfilled the function of constructing class barriers.

Living Standards

What consequences did class segmentation have on living standards? One effect was that the concentration of social misery in certain districts prompted the Viennese Social Democratic party to react in the 1920s. The housing initiative of Red Vienna started where the bourgeoisie's understanding of social minimal standards left off, increasing the "minimal" level of comfort. This selection mechanism in the law and tax system was reflected in living conditions: when Viennese apartments were categorized in 1917, one report stated that 73.2 percent of all apartments fell into the "small" and "smallest" categories.⁽⁷⁾ A "small" apartment contains one room plus kitchen, with a shared toilet down the hall. The "smallest" ones did not even provide cooking facilities and were approximately 100 square feet (10 m²) in size.

Figure 2 in the appendix shows the direct effects of the monarchy's building regulations, which allowed a building density of approximately 85 percent. This percentage provided the necessary space for light courts and air shafts, but not for green recreation areas or playgrounds. The same illustration also shows how dramatically the socialist housing program changed this practice in the 1920s. The building density was reduced to approximately 30 percent. This process of the economization of architecture in the late nineteenth century and its accompanying capitalistic rationale created consequently a high building density. But the minimal apartment sizes also reflect capitalistic effectiveness. The floorplan of any working-class apartment building in Vienna demonstrates this point (see Figure 3 in the appendix). Basically two types of apartment plans were used, the one room and kitchen apartment and the *Kabinettwohnung* with only a single room. This design type best reflects the needs and demands of a capitalist-oriented architecture. Any form of living standard is missing. With no internal bathroom, no cooking or washing facilities, this apartment type represents the least comfortable way of living. Approximately 10 to 16 percent of all apartments in working-class districts were in the *Kabinettwohnung* category. The "small" apartments, containing approximately 320 square feet (30 m²) of space, were regarded as having enough room for about ten people, sharing a common toilet in the hallway with other apartments on the same floor. In the case of our given floorplan, this meant a density of forty to sixty people per toilet. The question that now arises is: how could that many people live in one room? Financial hardship brought on the phenomenon of *Bettgeher*. Fifty-eight percent of the working-class population could not afford their own apartments and were, therefore, forced to rent apartments on a shift basis.⁽⁸⁾ Since a bed was not normally used more than eight hours a day, the rest of the time the bed could easily be rented out to *Bettgeher*, persons renting beds on an hourly basis.

To give an impression of the living standards of the entire city, I would like to mention the following numbers reported by the census in 1919. Shortly before the socialist housing program started, they found the following situation: just 2.3 percent of the flats had a personal hallway, 92 percent were forced to share a toilet with another apartment, and 95 percent did not have individual plumbing for sinks.⁽⁹⁾ The third important precondition for an understanding of Red Vienna's architecture was the stylistic crisis that occurred in the late nineteenth century.

The Belle Epoque Architecture

Comparing Figures 4 and 5 in the appendix highlights one of the most obvious symptoms of nineteenth-century architecture. It is easy to recognize that both facades--the working-class apartment building in Wien-Ottakring and the former aristocratic palace of today's Bundeskanzleramt, the office of the Austrian Federal Chancellor--stress a particular floor by using specific decor to highlight the importance of the main floor. The term *Beletage* originally indicated the living floor of the aristocrat or homeowner. In the absolutist period, the usage of symbol forms, in a hierarchical way, expressed and reflected the absolutistic differences in society. The *Beletage* of the nineteenth century was also a reflection of the differences between owners and tenants, between owners and non-owners. The symbolic representation of class distinctions was certainly the intention in palaces like the Bundeskanzleramt; however finding a *Beletage* in a working-class apartment building certainly did not indicate the same. The question now is: why did the architect in the second case use this absolutist and aristocratic architectural element? There was no need for the working-class facade to highlight a special status in society. The only reason was to hide social misery, which the architect of the Vienna Baugesellschaft, Bach, expressed in the following statement: "It is a strange mixture of an external palatial appearance and internal poorness which unfortunately stamped the suburbs with a disconsolate bleakness."⁽¹⁰⁾ What Bach described as disconsolate bleakness can be illustrated by the practices of nineteenth-century construction, as seen in the 1857 catalogue of the Wienerberger company. The collection of facade elements and architectural symbols included a vast variety from Greek and Roman to Gothic and Baroque, depicting allegoric figures as well as saints and gods. The combination of the illustrated product and price tables is what we find today in mail-order catalogues (Figure 6). The architect's role in art was now reduced to choosing between these elements according to size and price. The symbolic element had become exchangeable, easy to reproduce in concrete by using molds, and cheaply priced, drawing polemical critiques from two of Austria's famous architects, Otto Wagner and Adolf Loos. Loos stated about the Viennese "belle epoche" architecture:

Whenever I walk along the Ring, I always have the feeling that a modern Potemkin wants somebody to believe that he finds himself in a city full of noblemen. Whatever the Italian Renaissance brought forth, it was plundered to build up a new Vienna in which people could live who would be able to live in palaces.⁽¹¹⁾

Otto Wagner and especially his student Adolf Loos solved the ornament problem by increasingly avoiding them as architectural elements and by declaring the ornament, theoretically, a crime.⁽¹²⁾

Adolf Loos, who worked in Vienna, influenced two movements: he prepared the way for modern architecture as used by Walter Gropius and Mies van der Rohe of the German Bauhaus movement, which had a huge stylistic impact on facades of Red Vienna, and he introduced a democratization in early twentieth-century architecture. As we have seen in the *Beletage*, the differentialized, hierarchical, symbolic system made the differences in property relations evident; this symbolism strongly reflected the capitalistic structures of

nineteenth-century society. When Otto Wagner refused to use the *Beletage* and Adolf Loos demanded the avoidance of decorative elements, both prepared the way for the democratization of architecture in the 1920s. This parallel to political events appears in the equal status of each tenant on the facade, which no longer distinguishes between the owning and non-owning classes.

The aforementioned characteristics of city planning and architecture in the nineteenth century resulted in conditions that influenced the development the housing program in the 1920s: In order to minimize cost and maximize profit for the owner, construction practice increased social hardship by promoting poor living conditions that social democracy could not leave unanswered. Combating the negative effects of capitalistic architecture and city planning was a challenge for the socialists.

The Red Vienna of the First Republic

The cultural impact of the Socialist party on the city's policies, especially on the housing program, was not insignificant; in fact, as a program, it attracted much attention from socialists all over the world. Vienna's unique status among the major cities of this time in having a social-democratic administration on the municipal level allowed the first major practical introduction of socialist ideas in society. When the Socialist party got 54 percent of the vote in the first municipal election after the breakup of the Habsburg empire, they were able to replace the old city government, which had been composed predominately of property owners. Of the 156 city council delegates, 77 owned more than one apartment building; this situation best explains their unwillingness to initiate structural change or to improve living conditions.⁽¹³⁾ Before addressing the stylistic impact of the housing program on Viennese architecture, I would like to examine the theoretical background and the financial issues that were major preconditions for the development of this particular program.

In theory, many different routes can lead to a socialist society. Orthodox socialism, represented by Rosa Luxemburg in Germany and Lenin and Stalin in Russia, sought to change society through changes in its economic base, property relations, and the distribution of wealth. The Austrian way however, known as Austro-Marxism, was heavily influenced by the evolutionary socialism of Bernstein, who did not promote the breakdown of the capitalistic system. He proposed changing legislation and building up socialist structures by developing political and social reform policies. Norbert Leser described this concept, adopted by the Austro-Marxists, as a movement between Reformism and Bolshevism.⁽¹⁴⁾ The inherent ambiguity in this theoretical concept--halfway between a proletariat identification, with all the cultural consequences that would imply, and the reluctance to change society radically--is reflected in the architecture of the time.

The improvement in living environment was a central concern of the socialist movement and intended to be one step on the way to the "new" (socialist) human being.⁽¹⁵⁾ Norbert Leser stated: "Austro-Marxism was also an educational, even missionary movement with

the tendency to be a substitute religion, to satisfy in a secularized way needs that are normally treated by the church."⁽¹⁶⁾ The party as a center for a total Austro-Marxistic approach to the human being was not only the manifestation of an ideology; it also provided an economic and social context through which the later socialist society they envisioned could be brought into being. The party accompanied members from youth, through organizations like the Red Falcons (*Rote Falken*), to the grave, through the establishment of special socialist burial institutes, which handled all funeral arrangements, but in a secular way. The party covered everything--from adult education to worker symphony orchestras to the creation of the public housing project (*Gemeindebauten*)--as essential parts of the socialization process "on the way to the new human being" (*Auf dem Weg zum Neuen Menschen*). The Austro-Marxistic cultural movement was the primary force in establishing an architecture which was to lead to the new society. It will be our task now to look at the crucial ambiguity in its architectural expression.

Financing: Rent Protection Law

Financing through mortgages with high interest rates would have increased rents and was for this particular reason not desirable.⁽¹⁷⁾ Finance director Hugo Breitner introduced a new tax (named after him) which should have brought new financial resources for the city government. He taxed square meters of space that the owners had not rented out so that he could tax "cottages" in the suburbs and palaces in the center of the city to pay for the realization of this ambitious housing program. This principle of redistributing wealth reappears in other taxes on all kinds of luxury, including servants, horses, cars, and theater tickets.

The socialists were also supported by a tenant protection act (*Mieterschutz*), signed by emperor Karl in 1917. This kind of presocialistic law included bans on raising rent and made it nearly impossible to cancel leases. When emperor Karl introduced this act he had good reasons. During the war, thousands of men left wives and mothers behind who were unable to pay the rent. This potentially revolutionary source exploded that year in Russia and prompted the emperor to immediate action to calm the masses.

The market reactions were drastic. The decision to ban rent increases reduced the incentives for speculators to invest in housing-development projects and led them to search for other more profitable investments. The situation became even worse when tenants, who could now more easily afford the rent, stopped renting out their apartments part time to the *Bettgeher*. This segment of the population then entered the housing market and was confronted with a very small supply. Although no houses were damaged in World War I, the new socialist city government was confronted with a serious housing shortage.

Challenged by this development, the city government had to choose between two options: reintroducing the free market without any regulation, which would precipitously raised prices, or replacing the private house-building market with a public program. The latter, a

nearly utopian program, was favored by several factors. Besides a secured financing system, a long-sighted land policy was necessary. Landowners used the chance to sell their property because, with the construction breakdown, prices for land had fallen and private demand was very small.

The city introduced a renting system calculated on political rather than property values. The rent for a public apartment was just one-twelfth of the justifiable rent calculated from construction costs.⁽¹⁸⁾ They renounced recovering the amortization costs and avoided any rentability. This is one of the most essential differences between the private and the public principle of housing development. Weihsmann stated correctly that:

They did not calculate the economic market price for the apartment but a political price, which was set after social calculations. The apartment became a propagandistic means in which the proletarian pathos, the liberation and future of the working class has been manifested which has been aware of its own value.⁽¹⁹⁾

Apartments could now be used as propaganda--in return for their investment in living conditions, the party received loyalty. Party membership was a precondition for renting such an apartment, as can be seen from a list of selection criteria.⁽²⁰⁾ The class party thus also took over the function of a patronage party.

The Architecture of Red Vienna: "Vogelweidhof"

The "Vogelweidhof," named after the medieval minnesinger Walther von der Vogelweide, is located in the Hütteldorferstraße in the fifteenth district, one of the traditional old labor districts in Vienna (Figure 7). The architect was Leopold Bauer--a student of Otto Wagner, member of the Viennese Secession, and architect of the Austrian National Bank (Österreichische Nationalbank). He designed a three-aisled Gemeindebau with a dominant center on arcades and two flanking cours d'honneurs.⁽²¹⁾ The architect constructed a floorplan according to the intentions of the new form of architecture. All problematic areas of the nineteenth-century architecture could be avoided. For example, each stairway leads to no more than five apartments on each floor. But the big difference becomes evident when we study the floorplan of a typical 1920s apartment--designed with the socialist concern for living standards. Each apartment was equipped with its own water closet and a kitchen which could be ventilated by a window to the outside, in contrast to the nineteenth-century kitchen whose window leads to the hallway.

Furthermore, apartments had their own internal water supply, electricity, and in many cases loggias, dramatically increasing the comfort of living in Vienna. Larger complexes especially were equipped with groceries, Socialist party meeting rooms, kindergartens, and even post offices, public libraries, or doctors' offices. The advantages are evident: common facilities helped to integrate the "new human being" into the socialist world and counteract tendencies of individualism and bourgeoization. The whole concept of living aimed at a continuity of political life. As a concession to the thousands of people on waiting lists for Gemeindebau-apartments, the house-building program also tried to keep construction costs low; however, they were on a much higher level than that of

capitalistic construction practice. Because apartments were not fitted with bath tubs (there was a common bathroom in the basement) and did not provide an internal hallway in order not to waste room, a wave of polemical criticism started. The layout of rooms is similar to a pearl chain system or to floorplans such as we find in castles like Schönbrunn. Josef Frank criticized this form of floorplan in the 1920s when he stated:

This is a typical palace room, with doors arranged to march briskly through, allowing a wide perspective through the chambers. At the end of the suite of rooms, we don't find a throne--what we find are two beds in a distance of only a few inches and an empty place above them begging to be decorated with an oleograph. There are just some mirrors missing at the walls--otherwise it would be like in Versailles. ⁽²²⁾

In this polemic, Frank points to an important characteristic of Viennese Socialist architecture, correctly recognizing the imitation of aristocratic palaces as an integral part of it.

Most critics note that the Viennese house-building program and its architects did not get rid of aristocratic traditions--as one can see by analyzing the ground plan, where the relationship to aristocratic prototypes is even more obvious. To illustrate this point, let us consider the historical development of one of the most characteristic features of aristocratic architecture and its adoption by bourgeois and socialist architecture. By "quoting" Versailles and its highly representational symbol system of architecture, each of the later examples tried to draw on the glamour represented by the largest castle in the world. The socialist architect's quotation of forms from feudal absolutistic architecture is not merely a playing with those elements, but rather an attempt to transport the symbolic and ideological meaning of those architectural forms. The *cour d'honneur* played an important part in manifesting power in the absolutistic state of Louis XIV. His famous guideline, *L'etat c'est moi*, I am the state, finds its reflection in the *cour d'honneur* and the centralism of architecture (Figure 8). When the architects of Red Vienna took over this symbolism they were certainly aware of the symbolic intention. The castle as overarching concept and utilization of courts in providing symmetry were used programmatically. Wolfgang Richter and Jürgen Zänker state:

Red Vienna stayed with the usage of the stylistic means of their political rivals. Castles and courts should be symbolically--but probably also in reality--defensive and give protection of the reaction. The palace as a conceptual scheme, the *cour d'honneur*, the central axis . . . have been used in a programmatic political way and have been not at all ironically-playful. The occupation of the forms and instruments of power was the triumph over the old society. ⁽²³⁾

Furthermore, the quotation of pinnacles on the roof can be interpreted as the demonstration of power and willingness of a new social class which came in power and declared to defend this new power with all means. And that is what actually happened in 1934 when social democrats tried to hide themselves in the *Gemeindebauten* and shot to

the attacking armed forces of the Conservative party.

The Rebuilding Period after 1945

Shortly after the breakdown of the German dictatorship, the Austrian Socialist party was founded anew. From the very beginning, they shared in political power and have been part of the social partnership and a coalition partner of the Conservative ÖVP in government. Besides the Swedish socialists, they are the most successful socialist party in the world measured by time in power. To stay in power the Socialist party developed a high level of pragmatism which is reflected in architecture and in its abandoned goal of leading a cultural movement.

The camp mentality of the First Republic was replaced by a consensus policy between the two major parties. A reduced ideology, weakened identification pattern, and development into a catch-all party marked the socialist way in the Second Republic. As Anton Pelinka has stated, "Neither the politicians nor the parties were new, but the politics were renewed. It has been a politics of compromises, of sharing power and of pragmatic proportional representation--proportional representation between the Austrian People's party and the Socialist party."⁽²⁴⁾

A great deal of damage to living space resulted from bombing in World War II; 187,000 apartments were destroyed, enough for a city of 430,000 inhabitants.⁽²⁵⁾ This prompted immediate action from the city government. The city had not been damaged to this extent since the attacks of the Turks in the seventeenth century. The challenge in the postwar period was not the search for formal architectural solutions but the necessity to provide the population with living space. In order to reestablish the program as fast as possible, standardized architecture was introduced. This development reached its highpoint in the 1960s when architectural elements (including entire walls) were prefabricated in specially-designed factories in order to accelerate the construction phase. Buildings with this particular style were commonly known as *Emmentalerbauten*, after the Swiss cheese with holes. That the city was not too particular in choosing architects is apparent in the following example.

The first phase of the reestablished house-building program began in 1947 with the construction of the Per-Albin-Hansson-Siedlung, a project for 15,000 families in Vienna's tenth district named after the Swedish minister-president who helped equip the construction troops with tools and machines. In individual architectural elements one can still observe the influence and style of the interwar period and of the *Heimatstil* (a mixture of anti-modern attitudes in architecture mainly used during the fascistic period). Franz Schuster and other architects designed the project; Schuster was a professor at the Kunstgewerbeschule--today the Academy for Applied Arts--and very ambitious during the period of German Fascism. One of his (unfinished) projects during the Nazi period was to tear down part of the second district, the Jewish area, in order to construct squares and boulevards in the "German spirit." Amazingly enough, he was engaged by the city government only two years after the breakdown of the fascist system to work in their

house-building program. It might not be surprising that Schuster could not stylistically avoid giving indications about his past.⁽²⁶⁾

The development from the 1950s to the late 1970s was characterized by plurality and diversity. The break with the traditions of the 1920s can easily be seen in this architecture, which tries not to attract attention at all. In developing new forms of architecture, architects now rejected the system of courts and instead planned loose complexes with enough space for green recreation areas in between the buildings. The problem they did not anticipate was the increasing amount of traffic--its noise could now easily be heard in these open complexes, in contrast to the older court forms.

High-rise flats and skyscrapers developed later in Europe than in the United States and reached Vienna even later. The first plans for a high rise *Gemeindebau* in 1924 were not realized due to the reluctance of the city government. New impulses on the European architectural scene came from Le Corbusier's project in Marseille, "Unite d'habitation," a construction project for 1,800 tenants. Corbusier's rationale for having the largest possible concentration of tenants in a vertical system was to gain room for green areas. This concept was realized in Vällingby, a satellite town near Stockholm, where Viennese socialists studied it. One can see Sweden's influence not only in the intense Socialist party interest in the concept of city planning but also, as Figure 9 in the appendix shows, in the "Y-shaped" ground plan.

Although the functionalist architecture of the 1950s does not immediately seem to have a symbolic dimension, there is a definite intention in constructing high-rising landmarks, as in the case of the Schüttaustraße area near the United Nations Building. High-rising buildings have always indicated a symbolic demonstration of power, from the Tower of Babel to the competition among European cities to have the highest skyscraper (Frankfurt's nickname is Mainhattan due to the skyline along the Main river). According to Reinhard Gieselmann, "Skyscraping was already present in the idea of the Gothic belltower. The soul on its way to heaven, on the Jacob's ladder of the Old Testament, found its expression in mystic times. . . . Nowadays cities with the largest concentration of power have the most office towers."⁽²⁷⁾ High-rises are landmarks in cities that mirror economic and political power. It is, therefore, not surprising that the emblem of Vienna appears atop the Gemeindebau-Schüttaustraße.

In the 1950s, the only priority was the necessity to create so many apartments while minimizing costs. Without substantially reducing the comfort of the apartment itself, the solution lay in standardizing architecture. It is not surprising that architecture from the 1950s to 1970s is frequently criticized for being inhuman and for not corresponding to tenants' needs. But one must also take into consideration what kind of ideology created the new forms and where they came from. The necessity for quantity overrode the need for quality. Not until the 1960s when the "Wiederaufbau" was finished could the architects and the city government think about improving living conditions in their house-building program. At that time, however, there was a wave of experimentation, from creating self-contained communities, miniature cities within the city, to swimming pools

on the roofs of *Gemeindebauten* (Vienna-Alt Erlaa).

Conclusion

Architecture, seen from the political and ideological point of view, clearly shows the influence of artistic patrons on culture, especially socialist culture. We have examined nineteenth-century practice--dominated by private construction, lead by capitalistic principles--and the effects on living standards it caused. Not only did capitalistic construction bring horrible conditions for members of the working class at the workplace but also in their direct environments. Furthermore, class power and other forces in nineteenth-century society concentrated working-class hardship in certain geographical areas by applying different laws and tax systems and determined the direction in which the city would develop by raising prices in the inner districts.

The socialist improvement of living conditions for the Viennese population cannot be estimated highly enough. They improved many aspects of architecture and brought working-class apartments to a new level of comfort, but they also were able to change the whole system of construction policy. Capitalistic market forces were now kept in check because of the housing available through the city's program, financed by a highly developed tax system. The financing scheme of the Red Vienna housing program redistributed as well as accumulated wealth. Certainly, the Viennese Socialist party was favored by certain developments in the housing market, but they also had courage enough to establish a program of this magnitude.

We are in a fortunate position to compare two periods of housing shortage, responded to by the same patron and under similar preconditions. The outcome in each case, nevertheless, was completely different. In both cases, prompted by postwar housing shortages the party established a program to provide apartments independent of market forces. The difference, however, is in the self-understanding and self-representation of the party. Experiences in the First Republic and during the Fascist period encouraged them to seek power. In order to secure it, they gave up their former ideological rigidity during the Second Republic and pursued a pragmatic course in order to participate in government together with the Austrian People's party. The Cold War, the diplomatic tactics surrounding the State Treaty in 1955, and the political consensus between the two major parties prevented any serious possibility of a socialist cultural experiment along the lines of Red Vienna. The 1920s promised a new socialist future; in contrast, the late 40s and 50s were not utopian, viewing the future within the bounds of achieving as much as possible. Private property remained the base of the social order and has not been touched or challenged since.

The same can be stated for the resultant socialist architecture. Red Vienna's architecture is without a doubt an exciting and admirable attempt to overcome the architecture of the monarchy, to create buildings with aesthetic value in areas of bleakness. The Viennese Socialist party "quoted" the architecture of periods that they wanted to overcome, but we also see the ambiguity of the theoretical program reflected in the architecture. The party

used architecture to convey socialist ideas and ideals. Both were given up in the 1940s and 1950s. By doing so, the party started on a path that led eventually to weakened party loyalties, decreased voter support, and a decline in socialist politics in the 1980s. When Dahrendorf announced the "End of the Social Democracy," he initiated a controversial discussion, reflected here in the realization that the recent developments challenging social democratic parties partly result from their own policies. One factor contributing to the changed electorate was the socialists' conversion from a mass-integration party to what Kirchheimer calls a "catch-all party." The Austrian Socialist party succeeded in attracting votes in the 1970s by garnering support from the "old" traditional clientele plus the new but uncommitted voters. With increased party competition over the last decade, it became more and more difficult to attract new voters, due to lost cultural ties. The lost cultural leadership is just one aspect of this development, as I have tried to show in my discussion of the Viennese public house-building program and its architecture.

ENDNOTES

1. The term refers to the usage of party colors in Austria. Black stands for the conservatives and red for the socialists.
2. Note that the party changed its name in 1945 from Sozialdemokratische Arbeiterpartei Österreichs (SDAP) to Sozialistische Partei Österreichs (SPÖ).
3. For the development of the Austrian political system and especially Austrian Social Democracy, see Wolfgang C. Müller et al., eds., *Handbuch des politischen Systems Österreichs* (Vienna, 1991), 181 ff.
4. Erich Brahmhas, *Der Wiener Gemeindebau. Vom Karl Marx-Hof zum Hundertwasserhaus* (Basel-Boston-Stuttgart, 1987), 9.
5. Wolfgang Hösl and Gottfried Pirhofer, *Wohnen in Wien 1848-1938. Studien zur Konstitution des Massenwohnens* (Vienna, 1988), 54.
6. Ibid, 55.
7. Peter Feldbauer, *Stadtwachstum und Wohnungsnot. Determinanten unzureichender Wohnungsversorgung. Wien 1848 bis 1914* (Vienna, 1976), 32.
8. Helmut Weihsmann, *Das Rote Wien. Sozialdemokratische Architektur und Kommunalpolitik 1919-1934* (Vienna, 1985), 17.

9. Peter Marchart, *Wohnbau in Wien 1923-1983* (Vienna, 1984), 22.
10. Bach, qtd. in Felix von Oppenheimer, "Die Wohnungspolitik der Gemeindeverwaltungen in Österreich," *Bericht über den IX. internationalen Wohnungskongress. Wien 30. Mai bis 3. Juni 1910*, Vol. 1 (Vienna, 1911), 145. Original German reads: "Es ist eine eigentümliche Mischung von äußerer Palasterscheinung und innerer Dürftigkeit, die den Vororten den Stempel trostloser Ödigkeit und anspruchsvollster Schäßigkeit leider für Jahrzehnte aufgedrückt haben."
11. Adolf Loos, "Die Potemkin'sche Stadt," qtd. in Peter Haiko, "Otto Wagner, Adolf Loos und der Wiener Historismus," in *Wien um 1900*, (Vienna-Munich, 1985), 297. Original German reads: "Wenn ich den Ring entlang schlendere, so ist es mir immer, als hätte ein moderner Potemkin die Aufgabe erfüllen wollen, jemandem den Glauben beizubringen, als würde er in eine Stadt von lauter Nobili versetzt. Was immer auch das (Renaissance-) Italien an Herren-Palästen hervorgebracht hat, wurde geplündert, um . . . ein Neu-Wien hervorzuzaubern, das . . . von Leuten bewohnt werden könnte, die imstande wären, einen ganzen Palast . . . innezuhaben."
12. Adolf Loos, "Ornament und Verbrechen, Vienna 1908," in Franz Glück, *Adolf Loos. Sämtliche Schriften*, 2 vols., (Vienna-Munich, 1962).
13. Franz Patzer, *Streiflichter auf die Wiener Kommunalpolitik (1919-1934)* (Vienna-Munich, 1978), 38.
14. Norbert Leser, *Zwischen Reformismus und Bolschewismus. Der Austromarxismus als Theorie und Praxis* (Vienna-Frankfurt-Zurich, 1968).
15. Josef Weidenholzer, *Auf dem Weg zum 'Neuen Menschen'. Bildungs- und Kulturarbeit der österreichischen Sozialdemokratie in der Ersten Republik* (Vienna-Munich-Zurich, 1981).
16. Norbert Leser, *Das Salz der Gesellschaft. Wesen und Wandel des österreichischen Sozialismus*(Vienna, 1988), 19.
17. See Weihsmann, *Rote Wien*, 25ff. Original German reads: "Der Austromarxismus war also auch eine pädagogische, ja missionarische Bewegung mit den Zügen einer Ersatzreligion, die in säkularisierter Form für Bedürfnisse aufkommen sollte, die im traditionellen Rahmen die Kirche befriedigte."
18. Felix Czeike, *Wirtschafts- und Sozialgeschichte der Gemeinde Wien 1919-1934*, Vol. 2 (Vienna, 1959), 78ff.
19. Weihsmann, *Rote Wien*, 41. Original German reads: "Es wurde nicht der tatsächliche, ökonomische ermittelte Marktpreis für die Wohnung verrechnet, sondern ein politischer Preis, der nach gesamtgesellschaftlichen Berechnungen ermittelt wurde. Die Wohnung wurde zu einem propagandistischen Mittel, in dem sich der 'proletarische' Pathos, die

Emanzipations- und Zukunftsgehalte der aufsteigenden und ihres Wertes bewußt gewordenen Arbeiterklasse manifestierte."

20. Ibid, 39.

21. The French term describes the typical ground plan of most castles and palaces: a dominant center with lower, flanking aisles forming a closed courtyard on three sides with one open side.

22. Josef Frank, "Der Volkswohnungspalast," in *Der Aufbau*, No. 1, (Vienna, 1926), 108. Original German reads: "Das ist die typische Palast Wohnung mit den für einen Zug durchmarschierenden Burggendarmen stramm ausgerichteten Türen, die eine weite Perspektive durch die Gemächer eröffnet. Hier steht zwar am Ende dieser Zimmerflucht kein Thron, wohl aber zwei symmetrische Prachtbetten in einem Abstand von 35 Zentimeter von der Tür und darüber ein nach Öldruck schreiender leerer Fleck. Es fehlen nur die Spiegel an den Wänden--sonst wäre es wie in Versailles."

23. Wolfgang Richter and Jürgen Zänker, *Der Bürgertraum vom Adelsschloß. Aristokratische Bauformen im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Reinbeck near Hamburg, 1988), 159. Original German reads: "Das 'rote Wien' blieb bei der Verwendung der Stilmittel des politischen Gegners. Die Burg und die Höfe sollten bildhaft, womöglich auch real wehrhaft sein und Schutz bieten vor der Reaktion. Das Schloß als Grundform, der Ehrenhof, die große Achse . . . sollten programmatisch-politisch genutzt werden und waren keineswegs etwa ironisierend-verspielt gemeint. Die Inbesitznahme des alten Formenkanons und Herrschaftsinstrumentariums war der Triumph über die alte Gesellschaft."

24. Anton Pelinka, "Zur Gründung der Zweiten Republik. Neue Ereignisse trotz personeller und struktureller Kontinuität," in *Wien 1945 davor/danach*, ed. Lisbeth Wächter-Böhm (Vienna, 1985), 21. Original German reads: "Neu waren nicht die Politiker, neu waren nicht die entscheidenden Parteien, neu war die Politik die sie betrieben. Es war eine Politik des Kompromisses, der Machtaufteilung, des pragmatischen Proporz. Der pragmatische Proporz war ein Proporz zwischen ÖVP und SPÖ geworden."

25. Franz Jonas, qtd. in: Peter Marchart, *Wohnbau in Wien 1923-1983*, (Vienna, 1984), 22.

26. For the biography of Franz Schuster, see Harald Sterk, "Wohnbau zwischen Ideologie, Politik und Wirtschaft. Entwicklungsparallelen im Massenwohnbau der Gemeinde Wien," in *Wien 1945 davor/danach*, ed. Wächter-Böhm, 119f.

27. Reinhard Giesemann, *Wohnbau* (Braunschweig-Wiesbaden, 1979), 108.