

DONAUINSEL



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TECHNISCHE
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DIPLOMARBEIT

DONAUINSEL

ausgeführt zum Zwecke der Erlangung des akademischen Grades
eines Diplom-Ingenieurs / Diplom-Ingenieurin unter der Leitung

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ABSTRACT

Die Arbeit erzählt von der *Donauinsel*, von ihrer Entstehung, ihrer Rolle in der Stadt, ihren NutzerInnen und von anderen ihr verwandten Objekten. Eine Reihe von Beobachtungen über das Objekt der Insel selbst berichtet über ihre Besonderheiten – als ein Monument der Donauregulierung, als (ambivalenter) Ort dazwischen, als kulturelles Produkt menschlichen Begehrens – und untersucht mithilfe von Präzedenzen charakteristische Eigenschaften der Donauinsel. Sowohl ihre Territorialität – aufgrund ihrer Größe im Kontext der Stadt, als auch ihre Leere – aufgrund der Abwesenheit von ‚Architektur‘, werden in vergleichende Analogien zu anderen territorialen Objekten gesetzt, wie die ehemalige *Berliner Mauer* – ein architektonisches Element, das eine Stadt in zwei Teile teilte, die *Péripherique* in Paris – eine achtspurige Straße entlang der ehemaligen Stadtmauer, sowie solche, die sich durch ihre potenzielle Leere auszeichnen, wie der *Tiergarten* in Berlin – ein Sumpfgebiet, das heute „*vielleicht der öffentlichste Raum in Berlin*“ (S. 96) ist, und der *Central Park* in New York – „*eine Leere, die die Klippen provoziert hat, die ihn heute definieren*“ (S. 96). Nur so wird das Potenzial der Insel erkennbar.

Ein Leporello der *Donauinsel* im Maßstab 1:10000, begleitet von einem Bildertableau, zeigt eine alternative Existenz der Insel im Kontext von Wien auf. Durch eine Verstärkung der ihr zugrundeliegenden Qualitäten wird die Donauinsel sowohl als Objekt in der Stadt, als auch als Hintergrund für die Aktivitäten, die sie ermöglicht, konsolidiert.

ABSTRACT

The work tells a story of the *Donauinsel*, of its creation, of its role in the city, of its users and of other objects related to it. Observations on the object of the island itself speak of its peculiarities – as a monument to the Danube regulation, as an ambiguous in between space and as a cultural artefact produced by the citizens' desires – and investigate the properties which characterise it most by looking at precedents. Both its territoriality – due to its sheer size in the context of the city, and emptiness – due to the absence of ‚architecture‘ on its grounds, are put into comparative analogies to other territorial objects like the former *Berlin Wall* – an element that cut a city into two, the *Péripherique* in Paris – an 8-lane road along the former city walls, as well as such characterised by their potential emptiness like the *Tiergarten* in Berlin – a swamp that is now „possibly the most public space in Berlin“ (p. 96) and the Central Park in New York – „a void that provoked the cliffs that now define it“ (p. 96). Only so does the island's potentiality becomes evident.

A Leporello of the *Donauinsel* in 1:10000 accompanied by a tableau of images provide an alternative possibility for the existence of the island in the context of Vienna. By strengthening its already inherent qualities, the project aims in consolidating the *Donauinsel* as an object in the city, as well as a background for the activities taking place on it.



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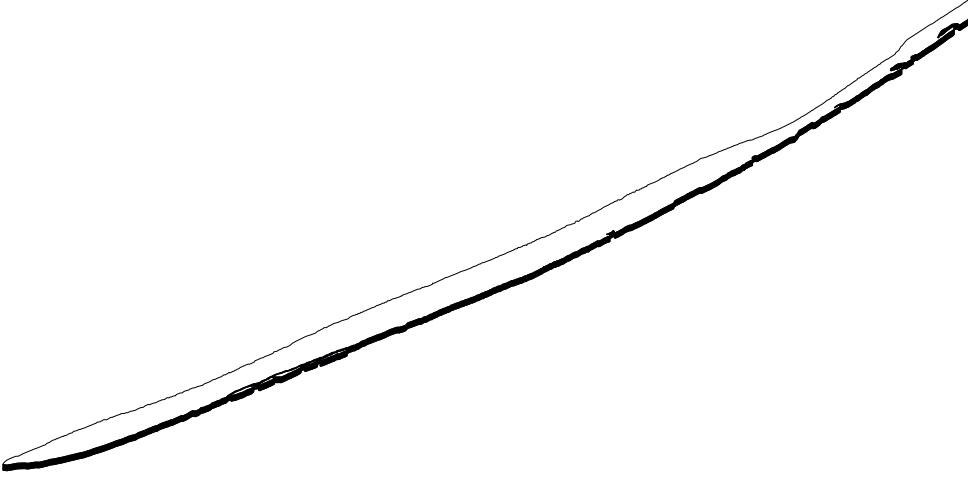
WHAT IS THE DONAUINSEL?

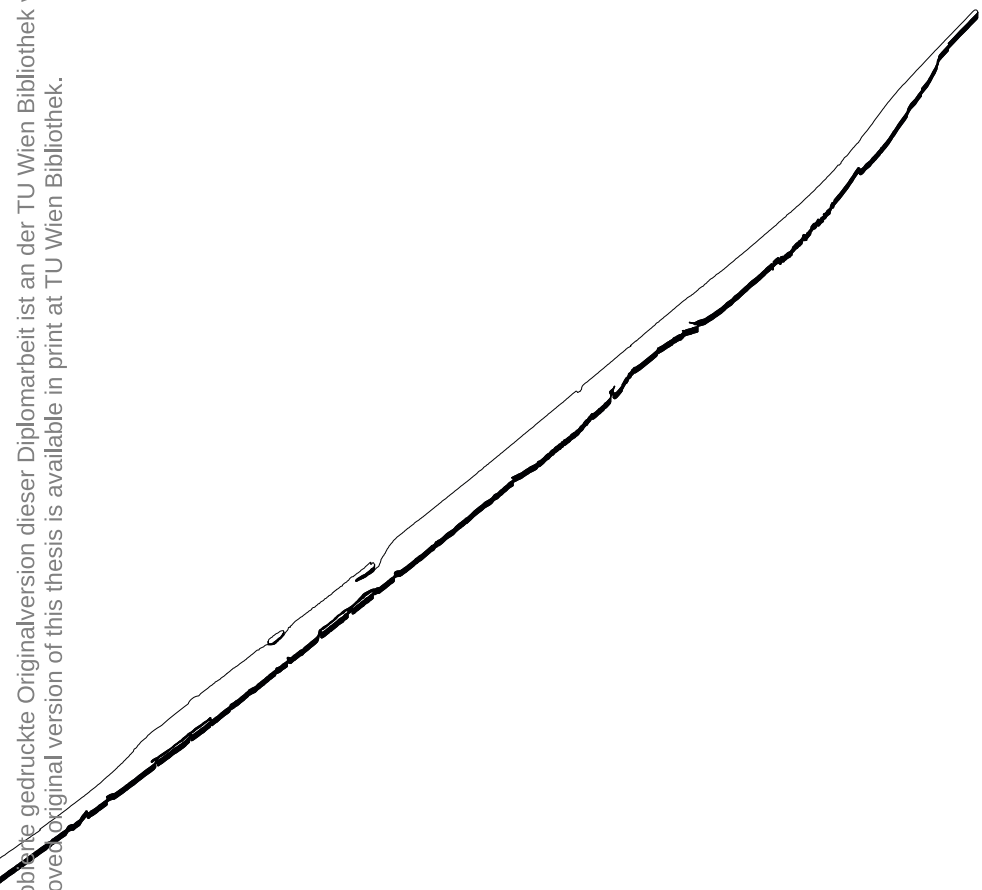
What is this thing called *Donauinsel*? Is it an object? Is it part of the city? Is it defined by water or is it part of the opposite coastlines of the Danube? It certainly is an island, since along its perimeter runs water, touching the two different water scapes of the *Donau* and the *Neue Donau*, and being only accessible via bridges, boats or swimming. Completed only in 1988, it is still a fairly young phenomenon in the city. But what are the reasons for the island's strange proportion of 1:100, being extremely long and very thin? Because it is more than 20 kilometers long, many people have never reached or seen the north or south end. Is it natural or artificial? Is it crossing Vienna, is it on its outskirts or in between the two parts of the city? Is it territorial? It is a project of escape, a place in the city and yet outside of it, defined by separation, a free space. Its artificial landscape serves as a public green area, a popular recreation spot for its population. But what is the reason for its popularity? Is it the greenery, the water or one of its many curiosities like the cyclodrome, the sheep meadow or the FKK section? Is it the proximity of intimacy to collectivity? Or perhaps the location at both outskirts and yet somehow in the centre? It is quite popular among Viennese, on a normal sunny day it is actually the most popular piece in the city - one tenth of the citizens flee to its presumable boringness. So what does the *Donauinsel* provide that other places in the city do not? Is it purely nature and recreation that pull the people out of the city? Or its 'emptiness', allowing unpredictable occupations and uses, like the *Tiergarten* in Berlin? Is it actually one of the most public spaces of the city? Besides *St Stephans church*, *Ringstraße*, *Gürtel*, *Wienfluss*, the *Red Vienna Blocks* and the *Flak towers*, the island is one object among others that manifest the townscape of Vienna. To the human eye, the Danube and the island appear almost straight, the object lies there like a pin, but in reality it is a 'spaghetti' and makes a long stretched curve, which Hermann Czech described as „*a city element of friction that should not be underestimated*“¹. Its artificiality speaks a story of intention and coincidence, of a by-product becoming a popular public space. Its in-between-ness will become productive in the time to come, and its desirability is obvious.

„*Our plan is to drop a lot of odd objects onto your country from the air. And some of these objects will be useful. And some will just be ...odd.*“²

¹ Hermann CZECH: *Zur Abwechslung*, Vienna 1996, p. 86 (own translation)

² OMA, Rem KOOLHAAS, Bruce MAU: *S, M, L, XL*, New York 1997, p. 966





Length	21,1km
Width min.	70m
Width max.	210m
Perimeter	42,6 km
Area	3,9 km ²
Construction	1972 - 1988
Location	48° 14' N, 16° 24' O
Type	oceanic island*

**Oceanic islands are the radical islands, truly isolated, not only in space, but also in time. Oceanic islands have no past. Oceanic islands are immediately a "new world", a reconstruction, a miniature, a utopia. Oceanic islands need to contain everything, because they cannot rely on anything else. Oceanic islands are "a world", one that appeared all of a sudden. Oceanic islands are fortresses (and fortresses are always doomed to surrender). Contrary to an archipelago, which is a project of a civilization, an oceanic island is a project of a world (and a project of escape).*

[Excerpt from the Editorial of San Rocco #1: Islands, 2011]



Regenerhöhe

Bahntrease.
WrKL

0 100 200 300 400 500

Jedlerssee

Florisdorf

ALTES

Grosser
Bruchhaule

Liesendation

Walterschüllne

Gross
Gans Ho

KAISER

Jägerfl.

Tabor

WAS

Hauten

Fischer
Häuten

Brigitten Au

Nordwest-Bahnhof

Augarten

Am Tabor

Döbling

Währing

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ARTIFICIAL OBJECT

The *Donauinsel* is a project of the city, realized from 1972 to 1988. It was the largest construction site in the history of Vienna and is today (quite a monumental) man-made object which is more than 20 kilometers long and on average only 200 meters wide. The reason for its creation is a technical one speaking of our industrial society: taming the river. Formerly extensive, it got constricted and tamed to a straight stream and today more than 10 bridges cross the Danube only in Vienna and connect both parts of the city. The island has ‚accidentally‘, or rather unconsciously become kind of a monument to it.

„We live in the midst of her, and yet to her we are alien. She parleys incessantly with us, and to us she does not disclose her secret. We influence her perpetually, and yet we have no power over her.“³

In the course of modernization and the Fordist economic model which emerged around 1900, new principles and concepts like flatness or horizontality materialized⁴ and led to transformations and interventions into natural territories to a greater extent than would have been possible before the machine age. Seattle for example got exceptionally ‚regraded‘ at the beginning of the 20th century by leveling its hills in order to create a flat urban street grid⁵. This is only one of many exemplary indications of Milica Topalovic’s observation that *„the world is [literally] becoming flatter“*⁶ due to the paradigms of efficiency, speed and profit. The island joins other artefacts that have been transformed by humans, the almost 200 km long *Suez Canal* which was artificially dug in the second half of the 19th century, the same time period when also the *Corinth Canal* was carved into the rocks of the Isthmus of Corinth and today manifesting a monumental cut into the landscape. Other domestications of nature are the memorial of *Mount Rushmore*, a colossal sculpture representing the heads of four American presidents in the height of 18 meters chiseled into the rocks of South Dakota, or the current consideration of blowing up the summit of *Linker Fernerkogel* in Tyrol for the sake of mass tourism to connect two large ski areas. Concerning the Danube, rocks were blasted at the *Iron Gate* on the Serbian-Romanian border to facilitate ship navigation, and the massive regulation of the river bed was undertaken in Vienna by moving tons of earth. Not only in order to facilitate ship navigation, but also due to flood protection and due to the creation of new building sites for the growing city. In the years to come a whole new part of the city was developed ‚on the other side‘, becoming also the hosting ground for institutions like the Vienna International Centre - an enclave that hosts currently more

than 4000 ‚citizens‘.

„Until the Danube was regulated, it was impossible to think of the river as part of the city. The meandering river was - almost like the sea for a coastal city - the limit of any possible idea of growth; with the additional complication that there was no edge where a front could have been formed. Only the regulation of the Danube opened up the hypothesis of a development over there.“⁷

The regulation of the Danube in Vienna can be described by two major projects. The first regulation took place in the 1870s by the puncture *Donaudurchstich*, before being an 8-kilometers wide wetlands with numerous streams meandering through.

It was a wet, marshy and difficult area to cross back then and hence also a border during the Roman Empire. It shaped the territory but also the city of Vienna – unlike London or Paris, the city of Vienna grew next to the river. Passing the wet area was quite a difficult operation which produced many temporary bridges throughout the years, each of them being ruined by the dynamic water streams. This situation changed rapidly when the city of Vienna made the deliberate decision to constrict and tame the water jungle by cutting its meandering legs and straightening its body. This operation was accompanied by the erection of a set of bridges that secured the unproblematic flux of people, cars and also trash which was massively deposited on the unattractive land trans the Danube. The project of regulating this area to a straight stream was essentially to fill in most of the river arms, to create a new main bed for the river and a floodplain.

This flood plain *Donauwiese* with a width of about 500m next to the regulated river existed from 1875 to 1972 and was quasi the precursor of the *Donauinsel*. It already served as a popular recreation spot and was used for hiking, swimming or ice skating in winter, cycling, flying kites and playing football. But it was also a place for prostitution and crime, for alcoholism and surreptitious trade.

Nevertheless, there were strong floods in the years 1897, 1899 and 1954 that affected the city - buildings were destroyed and protective dams broke. Therefore a second regulation was considered to further enhance the protective effect. This time the project of regulating was fundamentally to create a discharge flume (*Neue Donau*) and a dam (*Donauinsel*), basically by piling up the excavated material from one side to the other. The mammoth task took 16 years in total and the construction had already started when a design competition was launched in 1973. Whereas in the beginning the island was considered as a purely technical engineering structure characterized by steep

slopes and later on as a building site, which triggered the imagination of the architects of the time, proposing residential development or even a central station. Yet, in the end it ultimately became (or remained) the cultural artefact of the recreational island.

Every water management measure means an intervention into the law of the stability of the ecological system and every intervention triggers a consequence. Since the regulations of the Danube, the entire water management in the surroundings of Vienna is controlled technically, the Danube river levels are regulated by an hydroelectric power plant, three weirs control the water level in the *Neue Donau*, in the case of floods arranging the water flow, and the ground water level is stabilized by technical means. In the midst of them lies the *Donauinsel*, the monument of their artificiality.

³ Johann Wolfgang von GOETHE: *Die Natur*, Weimar 1783 (own translation)

⁴ Milica TOPALOVIC: *Land as a Project: On Territorial Construction*, in: RUBY, Ilka & Andreas (Eds.), *Infrastructure Space*, Berlin 2017, p. 152

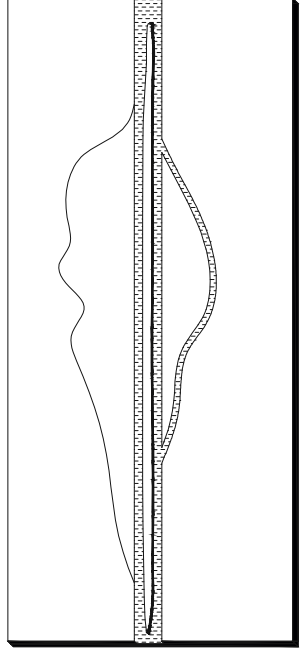
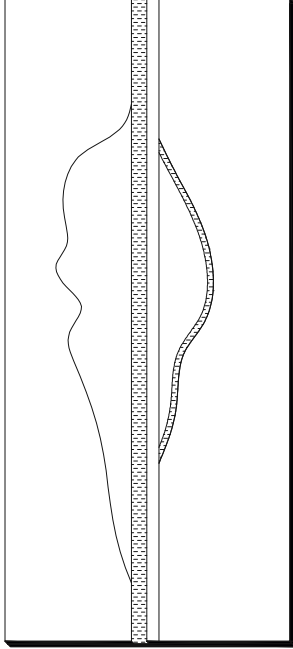
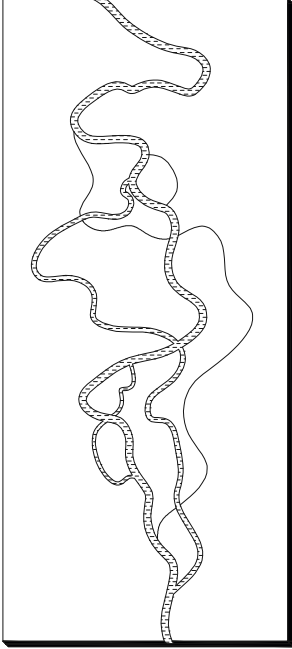
⁵ *Too High & Too Steep: When Seattle's hills came falling down*, The Seattle Times [website], <https://www.seattletimes.com/entertainment/books/too-high-too-steep-when-seattles-hills-came-falling-down/>, (accessed 20.05.2023)

⁶ Milica TOPALOVIC: *Land as a Project: On Territorial Construction*, in: RUBY, Ilka & Andreas (Eds.), *Infrastructure Space*, Berlin 2017, p. 152

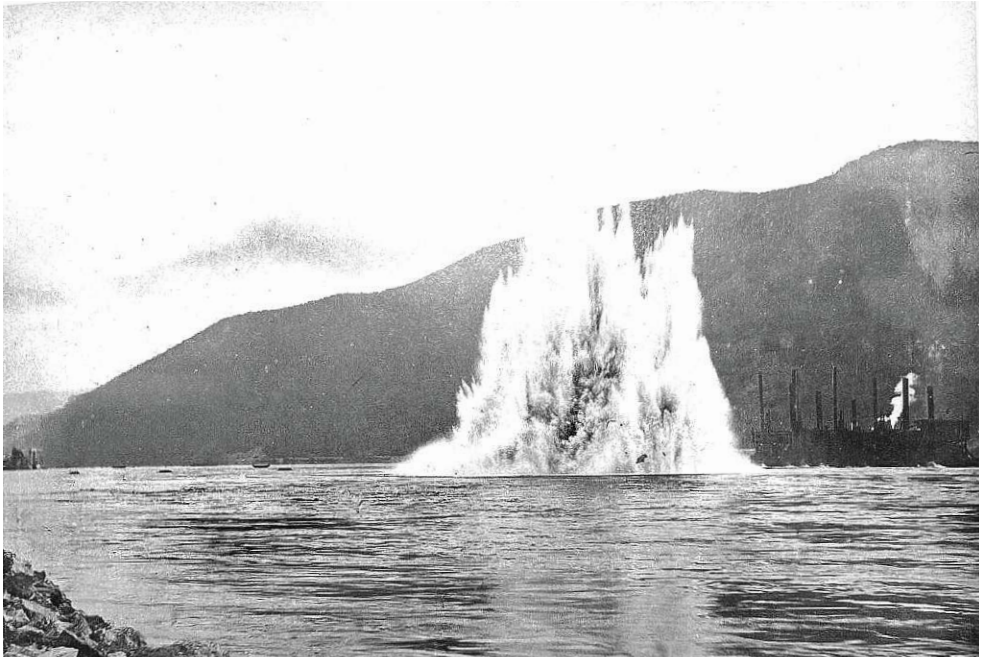
⁷ Hermann CZECH: *Zur Abwechslung*, Vienna 1996, p. 137 (own translation)

The Danube throughout the years.

1750s: wetlands, 1870s: first regulation, 1980s: second regulation



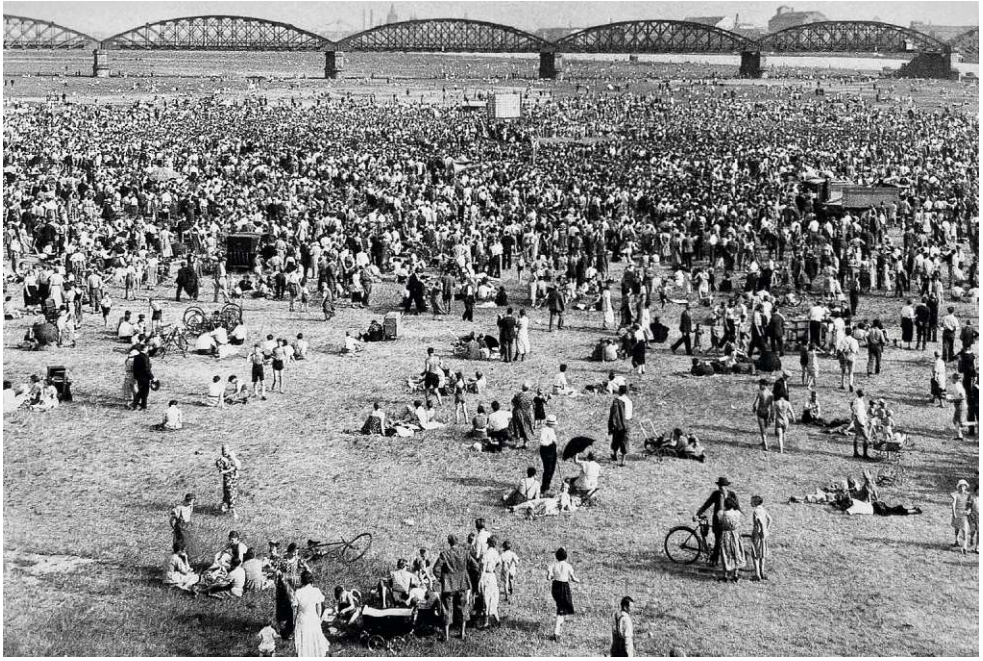
An underwater blast at the *Iron Gate* on the Serbian-Romanian border in the 1890s, one of many actions to tame the landscape of the Danube.



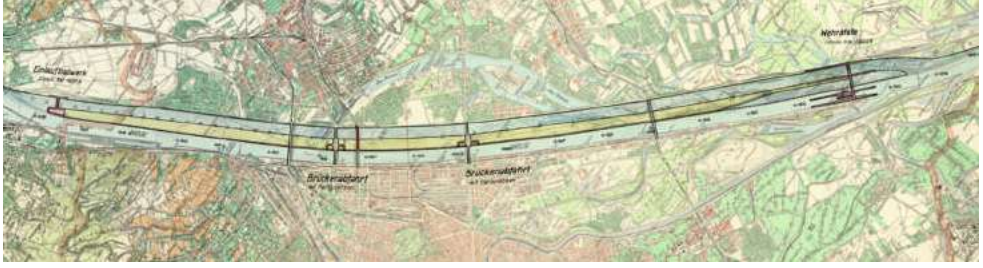
The flood plain *Donauwiese* was an area of wide meadows serving as a flood protection but also used for recreational activities. 1931



With time the characteristic objects in the background collapsed and reemerged, yet what remained are the people seeking open space.



The technical flood protection project by August Zottl proposed the island in its purest form. 1957



The ground breaking ceremony of the *Donauinsel*. 1972



The island under construction - modelling of the terrain. 1970s



The object in the making. 1977

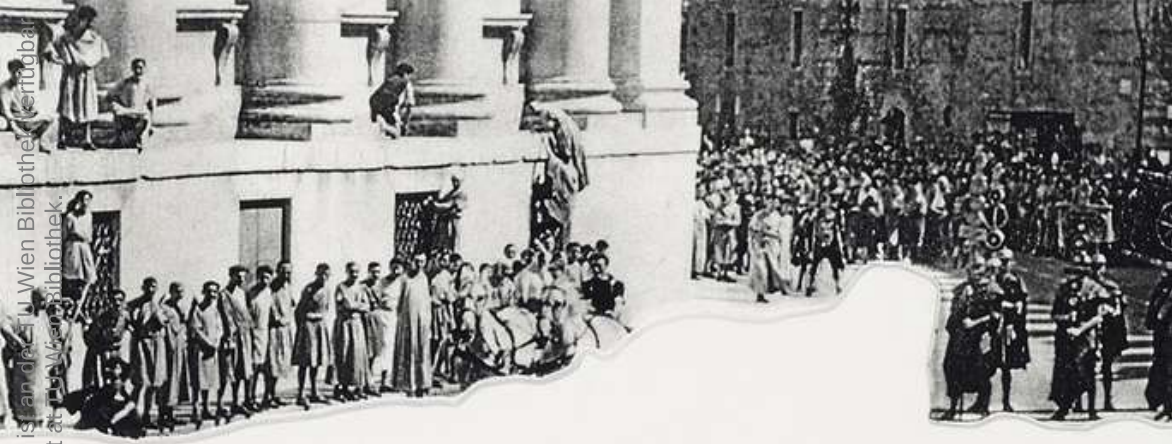


PICTURE CREDITS

- p. 16-17: HINKEL, Raimund: *Wien XXI. Floridsdorf. Das Heimatbuch*, Wien 1994, p. 34
- p. 25: City Archive Orșova (Photographer: Géza Hutterer)
- p. 27: ÖNB
- p. 29: District Museum Floridsdorf
- p. 31: WStLA
- p. 33: MA 45 / [website] <https://www.diepresse.com/1415062/wieso-wien-nicht-untergeht-die-donauinsel#slide-2> (accessed 20.05.2023)
- p. 35: WIEN: *Wettbewerb Donaubereich Wien : 1. Wettbewerbsstufe*, City of Vienna, 1973, p. 133
- p. 37: MA 45 / [website] <https://www.diepresse.com/1415062/wieso-wien-nicht-untergeht-die-donauinsel#slide-9> (accessed 20.05.2023)



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OBJECT IN BETWEEN

„The space in between can only materialize as a space of confrontation between parts. Its existence can only be decided by the parts that form its edges.“⁸

The artificial island is situated in between two poles, amidst *Donau* and *Neue Donau*, amidst the beginning of the alpine territory and the flat alluvial landscape, amidst *Vienna* and *Transdanubia*. ‚The land beyond the Danube‘ constitutes the 21st and 22nd district of the city, an area that is bigger in size than the districts 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 altogether. As the city expands eastwards and is establishing a new centre there itself, the island becomes more and more the geographical centre of the city entirety. Today it is not clear what the *Donauinsel* or the entire Danube area is. The status of the *Donauinsel* can only become clear, if the second center is enhanced on the other side of the Danube, because then it will become a space in-between. Hermann Czech describes the „*conceptual ambiguity*“⁹ of the in-between area as follows:

„Is it a city expansion area, is it a recreation area, is it a special area for rare occasions, is it merely a traffic area? Is it a river, is it a reservoir? As long as we try to define it by itself or by its connection with the western city centre, it will remain a puffy affair. Only when the city is conceived symmetrically, with a second polar centre beyond, will the Danube area become an intermediate space. In the tension between two centres, its ambivalences and conflicts will be able to become productive.“¹⁰

The island is an object that produces tension in the urban fabric, created through placement, form, scale and especially their relations amongst. The extreme horizontality of the island serves as a background for the two parts of the city, which defining elements sometimes pop out of the green horizon like the monuments of Paris behind the walls of the apartment for Charles de Beistegui by Le Corbusier. Since the island stretches over a length of 21 kilometers, one simply does not perceive it in its entirety and always only fragmentary in relation to the opposite river banks. It is of crucial importance what happens on the other side of the water, because this is where you look at when you are on the island. You are both in the scenery and in the spectators' tribune, a „*compositional dialectic between subject and object*“¹¹. Eight bridges for train, metro, or car pierce the object and rupture the human scale of its vegetation and small paths, speaking of the intensity on the other sides and reinforcing the feeling of being in-between. A feeling that is particularly drastic at one of the occasional raves happening beneath the *Ostbahnbrücke*, where the

sound of the loudspeaker is being in repetitive intervals silenced by the monumentality of the momentous noise produced by the passing train. When sitting in one of these trains or cars moving along the bridges crossing the island, one experiences a dense sequence of various layers: the urban fabric of Vienna, the *Donau*, the *Donauinsel*, the *Neue Donau*, the urban fabric of *Transdanubia*. In opposition to that stands the experience of moving along the length of the island, which is a more consistent and extended affair. The *Donauinsel* is too big to be a park, but also too defined to be a territory, it stands in between. Even though it seems as if the island ‚lacks‘ context, in reality it lies directly in between the context of the distinctive water areas and the two different urban landscapes.

„The part is absolute; it stands in solitude, yet it takes position with regard to the whole from which it has been separated.“¹²

18 bridges touch the island, 9 of which are two-sided and 9 of which are one-sided, 5 of which are motorways and 5 of which are railway lines. In total, there are 15 accesses to the island, 3 bridges only cross the island, one of which is an oil pipeline. Their different characters in terms of construction, age, color or light structure and simultaneously provide an orientation when moving along the island.

The *Reichsbrücke* is the most important bridge connecting the two sides of the city and crossing the island a little north of its centre. It is already the third bridge at this location and a constitutive part of the axis of *Praterstraße* that holds together different city defining elements: leading from the edge of the first district (the center of the old city) straight to the ‚land beyond‘. It is interrupted by the *Praterstern* - once Europe's biggest roundabout, therefore crossing the axis of the *Praterallee-Heinestraße* connecting the *Prater* and *Augarten*, as well as by the *Reichsbrücke* with its signature row of lamps which frame the view towards *St. Stephans* cathedral at one end of the axis and the *International Center* on the other.

At the time of the bridge's first construction it connected the *Praterstraße*, one of the three avenues that intersect at *Praterstern*, with the important road on the other side of the Danube that led to the north-eastern territories of the monarchy. The first bridge was built in 1876 in the course of the Danube regulation. After it was no longer sufficient and dilapidated, the second bridge was built in 1937¹³, which again collapsed unexpectedly in 1976 – an image that many still have in mind until today. The subsequent ‚bridge-watching‘ on the shore was probably one of the first ‚events‘ on the *Donauinsel* already under construction. Soon afterwards today's third *Reichsbrücke* was built

which also extended the new U1 metro line, connecting the other side of Vienna to the metro network for the first time and way earlier than planned. Today, the metro station *Donauinsel* at the *Reichsbrücke* is the only one located directly on the island, one of the most frequented spots where people from both parts of the city converge.

⁸ Pier Vittorio AURELI: *The Possibility of an Absolute Architecture*, Cambridge 2011, p. 27

⁹ Hermann CZECH: *Zur Abwechslung*, Vienna 1996, p. 137 (own translation)

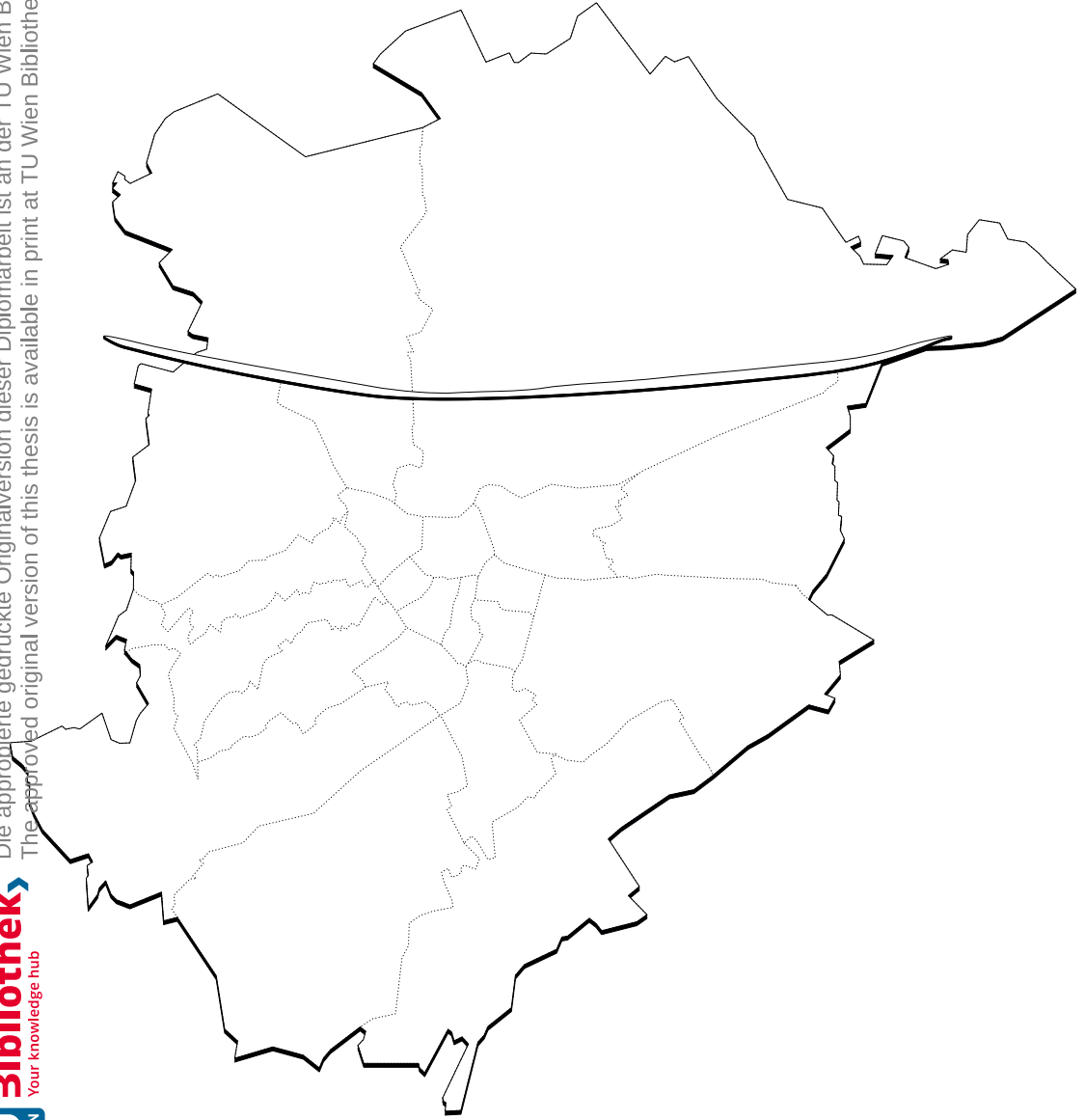
¹⁰ *ibid.*, p. 137 f. (own translation)

¹¹ Pier Vittorio AURELI: *The Possibility of an Absolute Architecture*, Cambridge 2011, p. 64

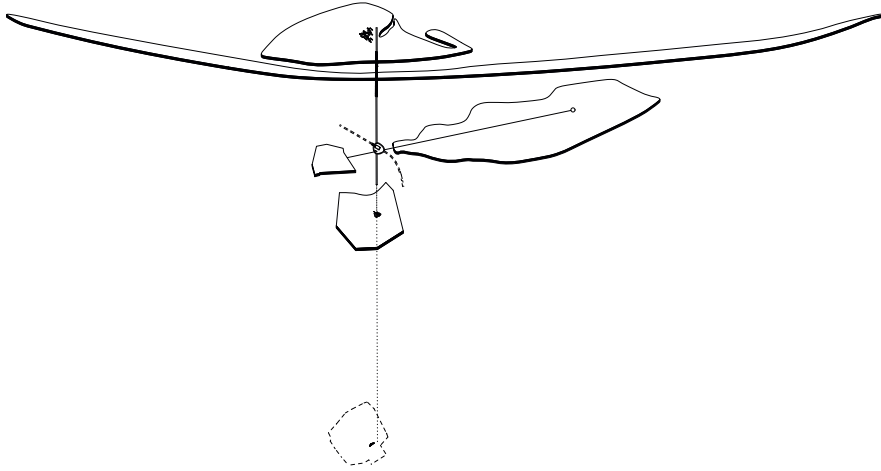
¹² *ibid.*, p. 45

¹³ [website] <https://www.geschichtewiki.wien.gv.at/Reichsbrücke> (accessed 20.05.2023)

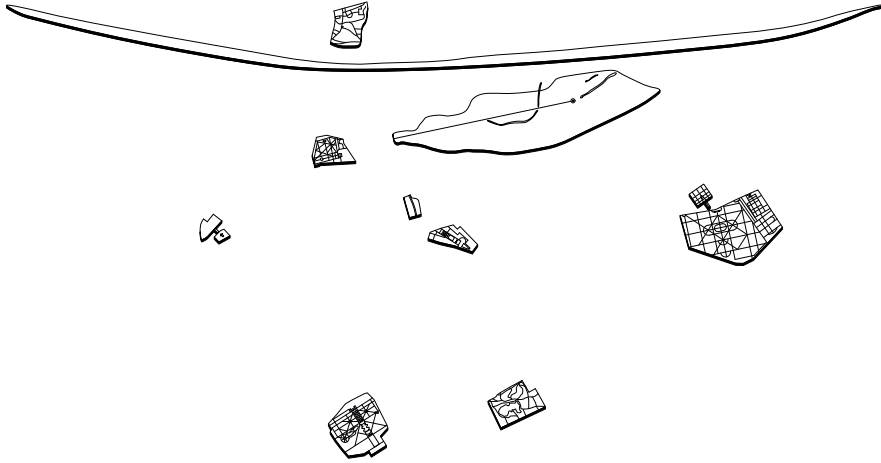
In the context of the city: in between *Vienna* and *Transdanubia*.



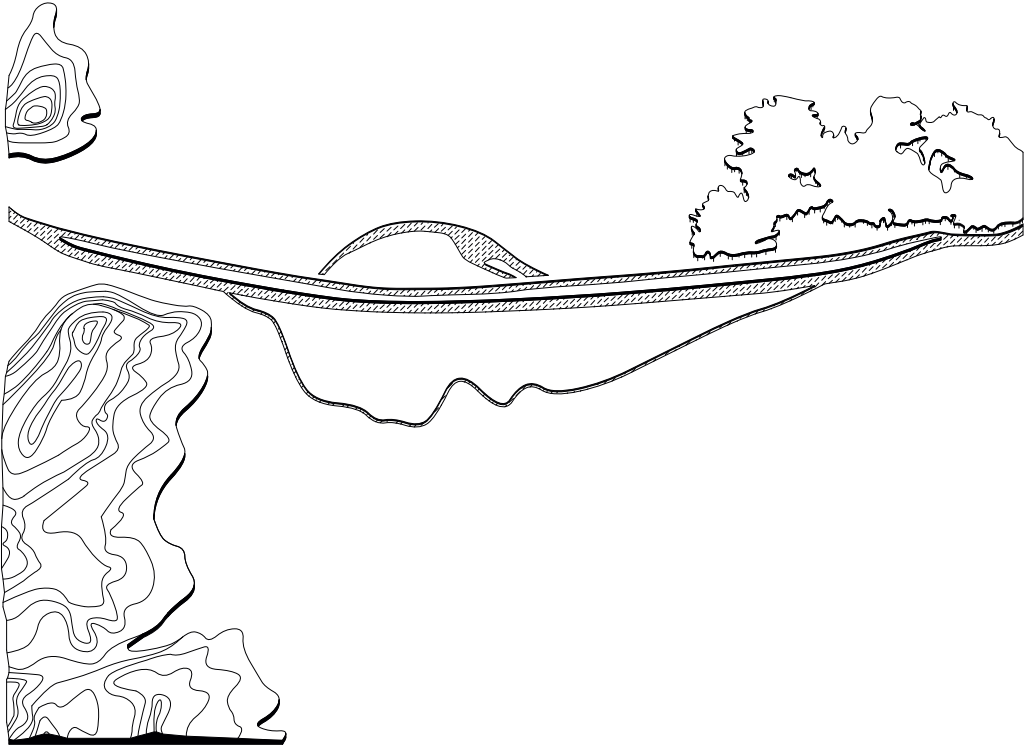
As part of a spatial sequence along the axis of *Praterstraße*: the center (first district), the infrastructural hub of *Praterstern* with the crossing of the *Prater-Augarten* axis, the *Donauinsel*, the *UNO-City*.



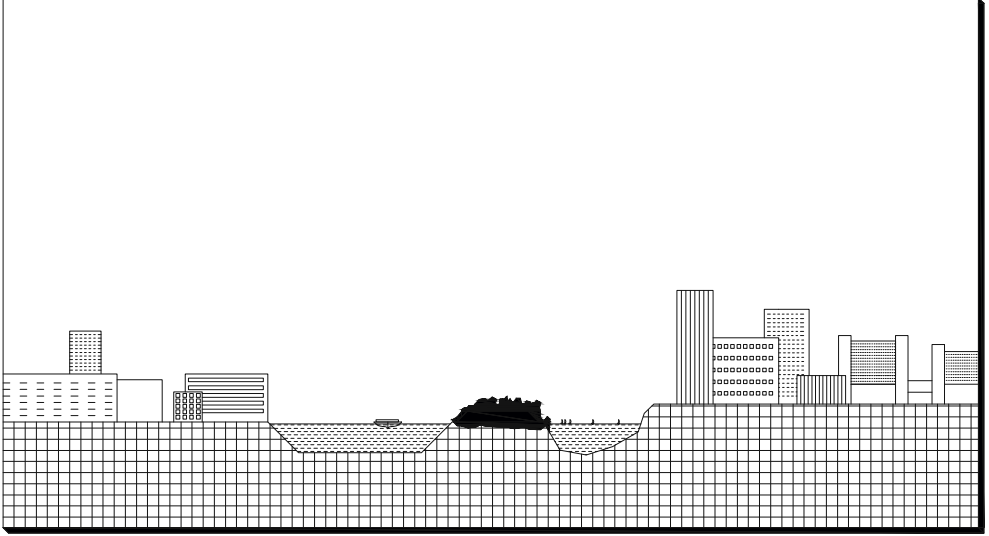
In the context of Vienna's biggest parks: *Donaupark, Augarten, Prater, Türkenschanzpark, Stadtgarten, Belvedere, Zentralfriedhof, Schönbrunn, Wienerberg.*

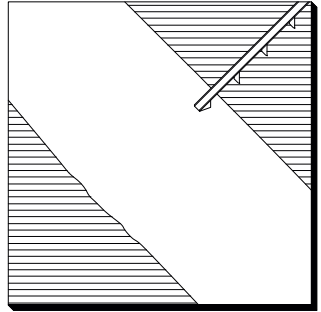
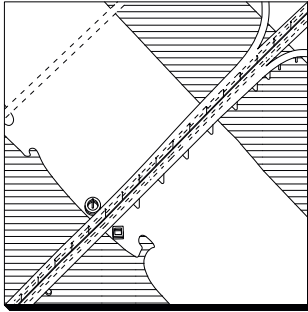
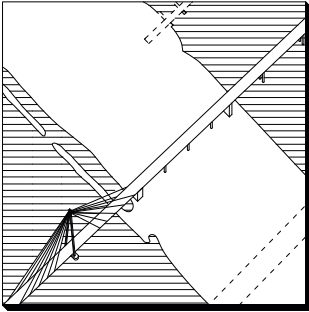
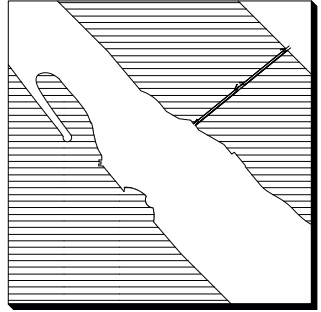
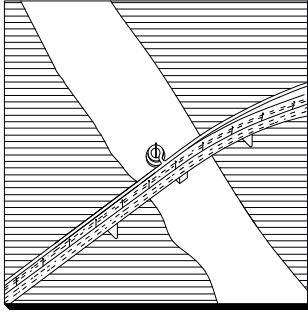
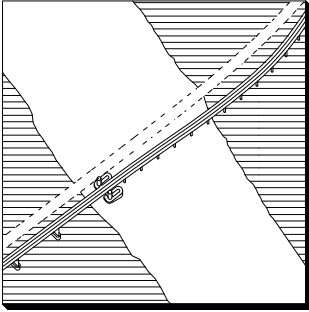
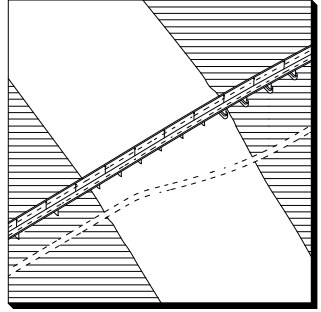
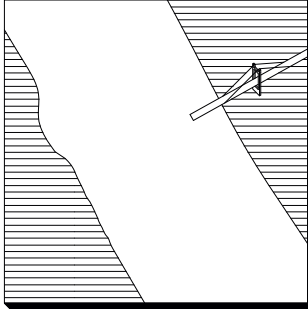
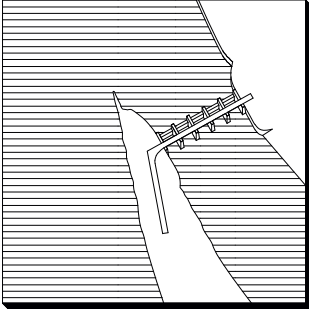


In the context of the neighbouring territories: the beginning of the alpine territory (*Wiener Pforte*) and the alluvial national park *Lobau*.

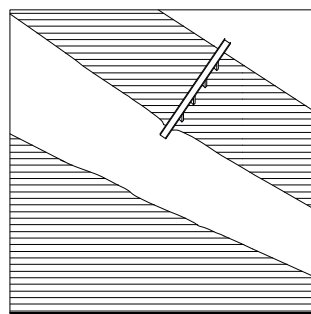
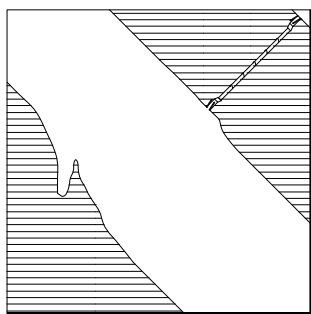
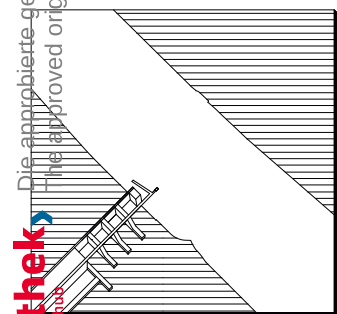
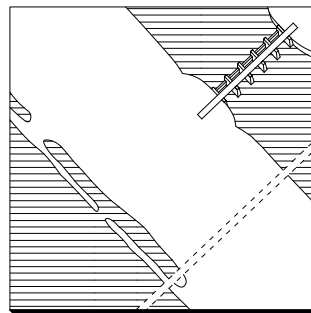
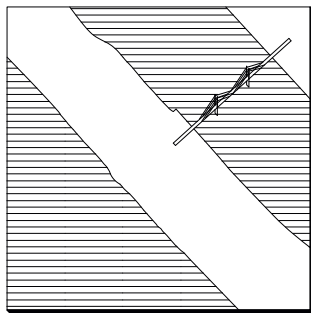
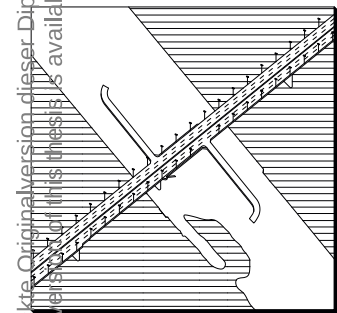
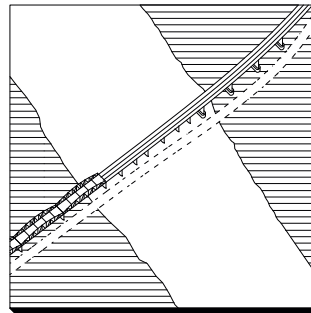
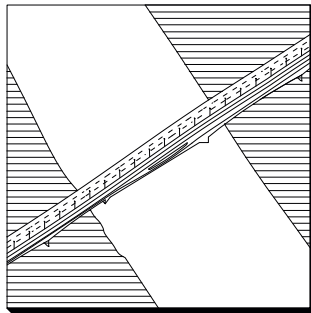
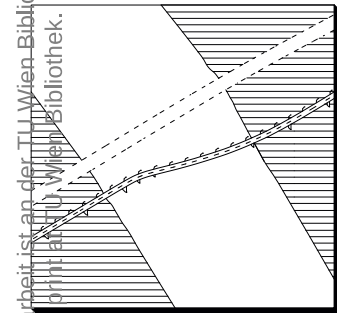


The object in between: two distinctive waterscapes, two distinctive parts of the city.



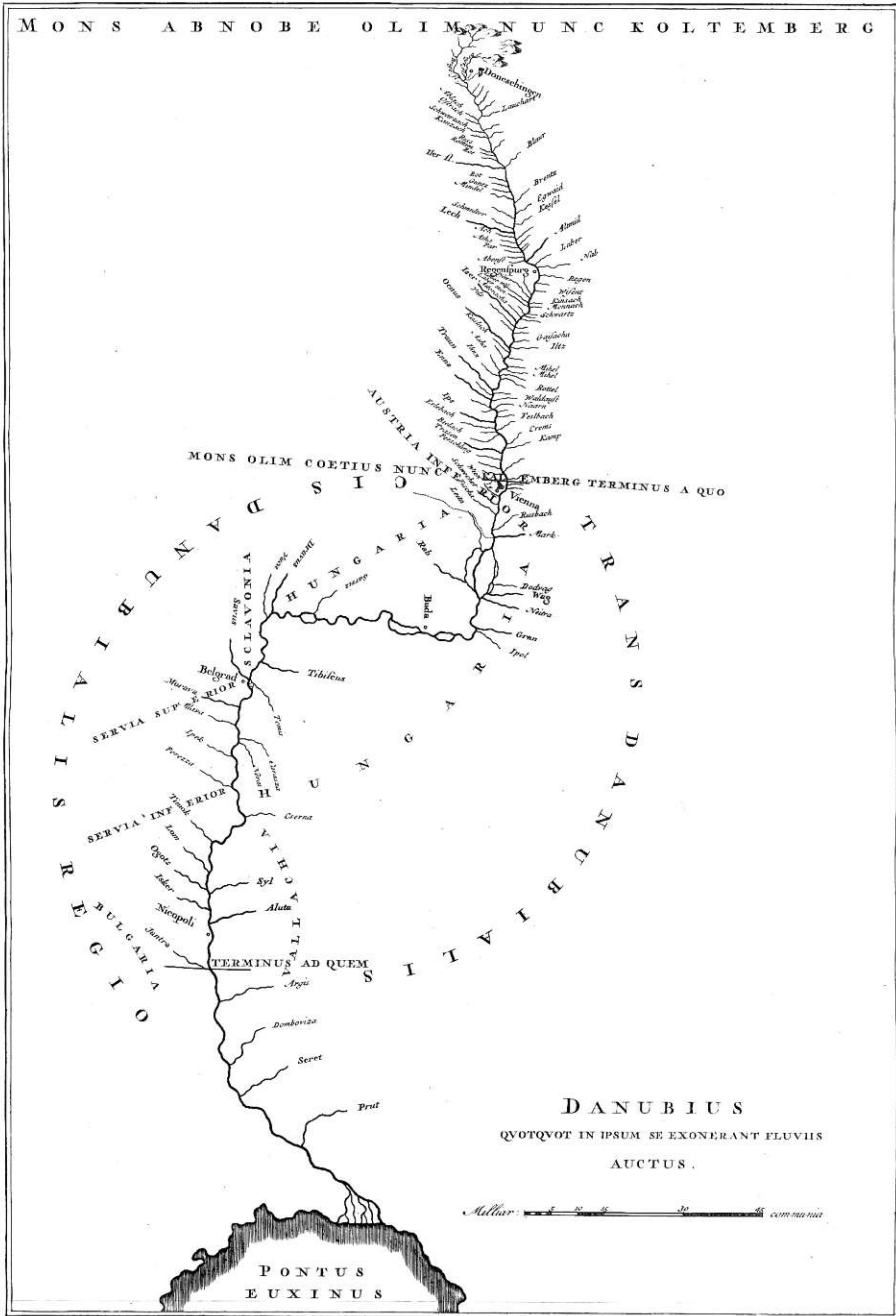


The 18 bridges structuring the island.



„Cis Danubia“ and „Trans Danubia“ - a river creates its two sides.

M O N S A B N O B E O L I M P I N U N C K O L T E M B E R G



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Almost all bridges over the river were destroyed during the war. Emergency footbridges were rapidly built up to provide a connection between the two parts of the city. *Floridsdorfer Brücke, 1945*



,Bridge-watching', onlookers line the shore of the *Donauinsel* under construction after the collapse of the second *Reichsbrücke* in 1976.



The two projects that defined the 70s - the *Donauinsel* in the foreground with the *United Nations* headquarters in the background.



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- p. 40-41: BALDESSARI, John: *Crowds with Shape of Reason Missing: Example 4*, 2012
- p. 59: MARSIGLI, Luigi Ferdinando: *Danubius Pannonico-Mysicus*, 1 / 1, Tab. 1, The Hague and Amsterdam, 1726
- p. 61: ÖNB, (Photographer of the United States Information Services (USIS), 17.8.1945)
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OBJECT OF DESIRE

The *Donauinsel* is a project of escape, it is basically *Exodus*, to slip away from the routine, law, or logic of normal life to a desirable alternative. The water surrounding the island protects this zone from a spillover of the normative into this area, it is ‚naturally‘ excluded, immobile on its own. Still the otherness is subliminal, still the island somehow pretends to be a part of the others, but it is not. It is neither a baroque park like *Augarten*, it is nor a landscape garden like *Donaupark*, or a friendly neighbourhood green pocket. Having emerged some years ago as a by-product of a purely technical infrastructure of subdivision and flood protection, the population already took possession of the island when it was still under construction. Without the presence of plants and made only out of dust, diggers moving earth in the background, they populated the concrete meteorites which would later on define the fundamentals of the island. The desire for otherness, the ‚strong feeling of wanting to have something or wishing for something‘, has produced the urban artefact itself and convinced the city government of the plausibility of its use. In a way the island was already there before it got constructed.

„If desire produces, its product is real. If desire is productive, it can be productive only in the real world and can produce only reality. Desire is the set of passive syntheses that engineer partial objects, flows, and bodies, and that function as units of production.“¹⁴

Once the construction process came to its end, the island provided an area generous enough to allow for both collective engagement as well as a place for seclusion and intimacy. The curiosities on its freshly composed grounds grew day by day, side by side, simultaneously while others quickly disappeared. Some of them are clearly of pragmatic nature like the horizontal filter wells or the light poles, whereas others appear just alien like the pillar platform or the stones at the cherry grove. The prevailing activities provided both by the curiosities as well as the island’s openness drift around stasis, movement and events: sitting, lying, watching, sunbathing, picnicking, barbecuing, FKK, reading, cycling, hiking, walking, walking dog, running, skating, swimming, rowing, windsurfing, paddling, doing gymnastics, exercises, playing frisbee, volleyball, badminton or football, dancing, playing, raving, trading, flying kites, selling food, selling ice, selling drinks, playing music, boxing, fishing, having sex, celebrating, partying, the weekly come-together of the Thai community, the annual *Donauinselfest*, sport competitions, festivals, the *Kirschenhainfest*, the *Afrika-Festival*, the marathon race. The island is able to stage all of these activities and even more, to provide space for the residents

of the city and by that being one of these objects Aldo Rossi speaks of when referring to the collective memory:

„One can say that the city itself is the collective memory of its people, and like memory it is associated with objects and places. The city is the locus of the collective memory.“¹⁵

Most of those activities are concentrated at a particular section of approximately 6 kilometers in the centre of the island, where also most of the daily guest happen to land. It is characterized by its precise location in between the urbanized parts of the city, as well as its framing by public infrastructure such as the metro lines U6, U1 and U2. Here one can find the ones who deliberately decide to leave the city for an hour or a day and indulge in the universe of the island - on a normal sunny day their number goes up to 200.000 or one tenth of the Viennese population. Characteristic for this fragment of the island, as well as its users, is its ambiguity - users defined by the desire to escape, but simultaneously remain and an area where the objecthood of the island is perpetually denied through its efforts to simulate the city. Yet, the area for daily exodus defines only a third of the island as a whole and the ‚outskirts‘ of the island are governed by another logic. Its specific spatial environment ‚accidentally‘ enabled the rise of a specific culture, along with the new species of the so-called *Donauinsulaner*, extraordinary contemporaries who spend most of their time naked on the island - the proud ‚voluntary prisoners of the Donauinsel‘.

„The inhabitants of this architecture, those strong enough to love it, would become its voluntary prisoners, ecstatic in the freedom of their Architectural confines.“¹⁶

Those species populate mostly the remote places of the island at both ends. Yet it’s certainly not because they are shy, one can still encounter them recharging with a refreshment at one of the snack bars or roller skating naked along the paths. Perhaps because of the different natural environment that rules in the more neglected sections, not tamed and chastised as in the central part but unbridled and independent, seeking its way and getting to know the landscape that has been again arranged by man. The desire for acceptance and imprudence, impulsiveness, or unmanageability has led them to these parts of the island and now they together form a symbiosis of possibility. Perhaps those species were once daily visitors, who did escape for an hour or a day, once who slowly dive into the unpredictable universe of the island and discovered its possibilities, or once that

embodied the island from the core beginning - both dreamy and edgy, mysterious and banal, cultivated and anarchic.

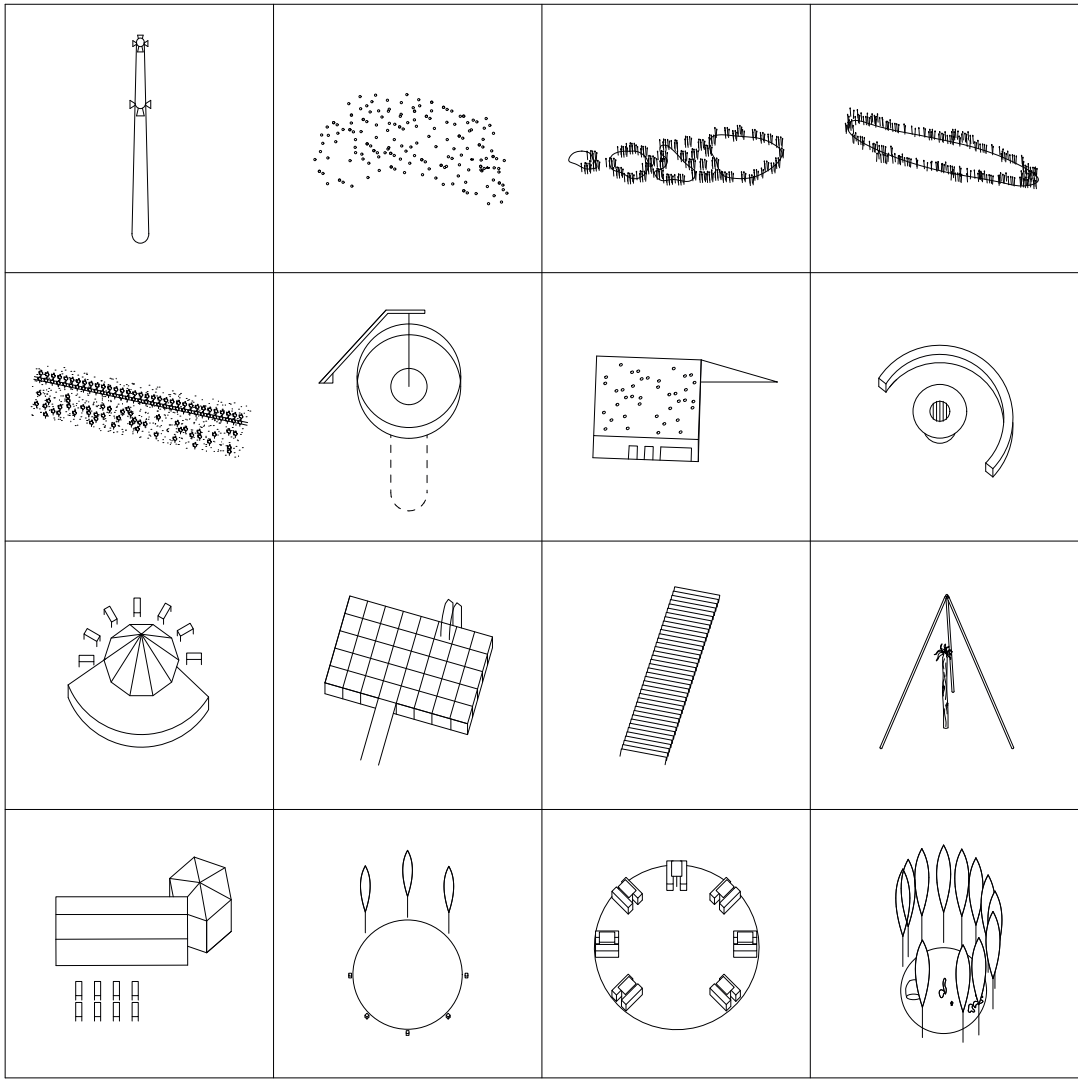
„It is pointless trying to decide whether Zenobia is to be classified among happy cities or among the unhappy. It makes no sense to divide cities into these two species, but rather into another two: those that through the years and the changes continue to give their form to desires, and those in which desires either erase the city or are erased by it.“¹⁷

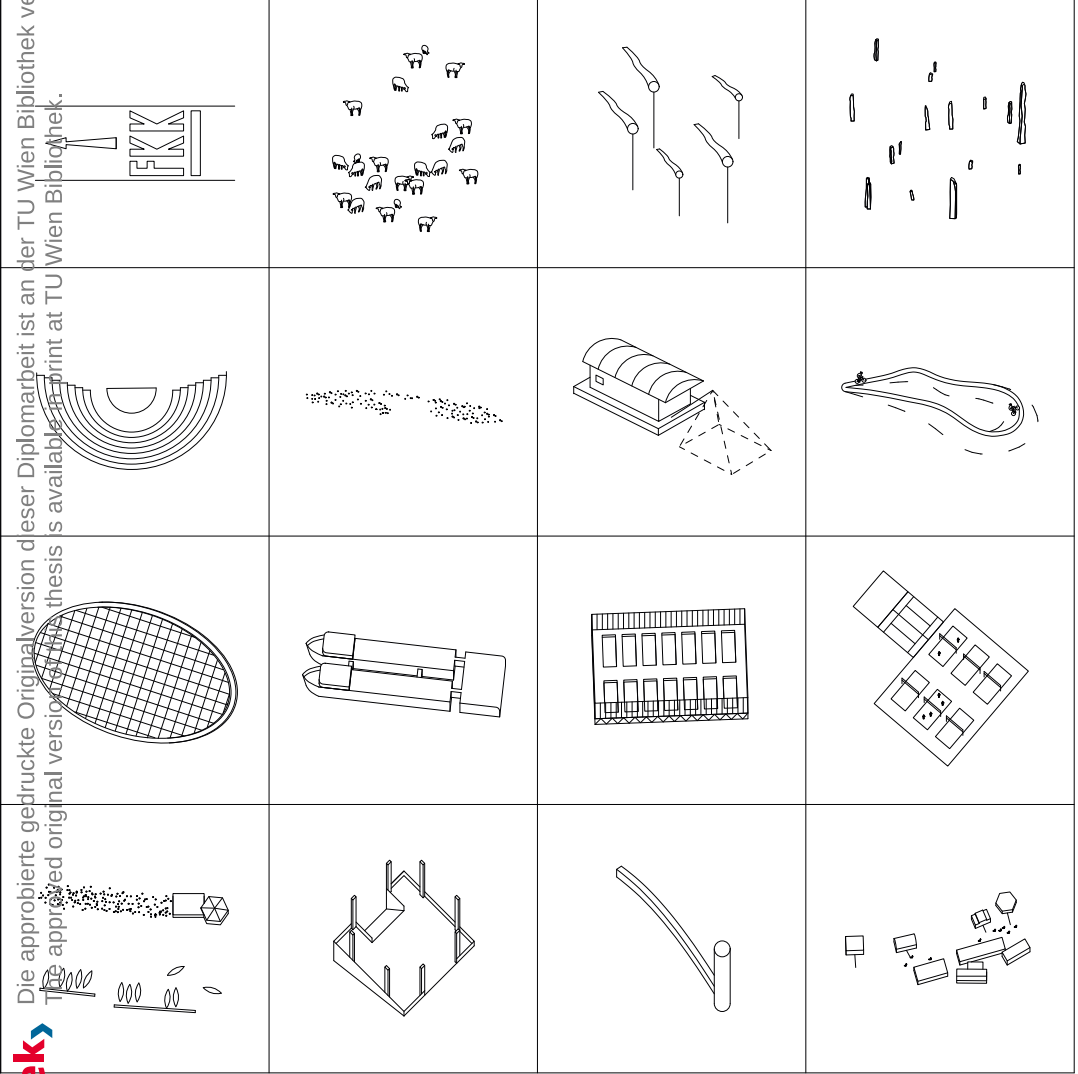
¹⁴ Gilles DELEUZE, Felix GUATTARI: *Anti-Oedipus, Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Minneapolis 1983, p. 26

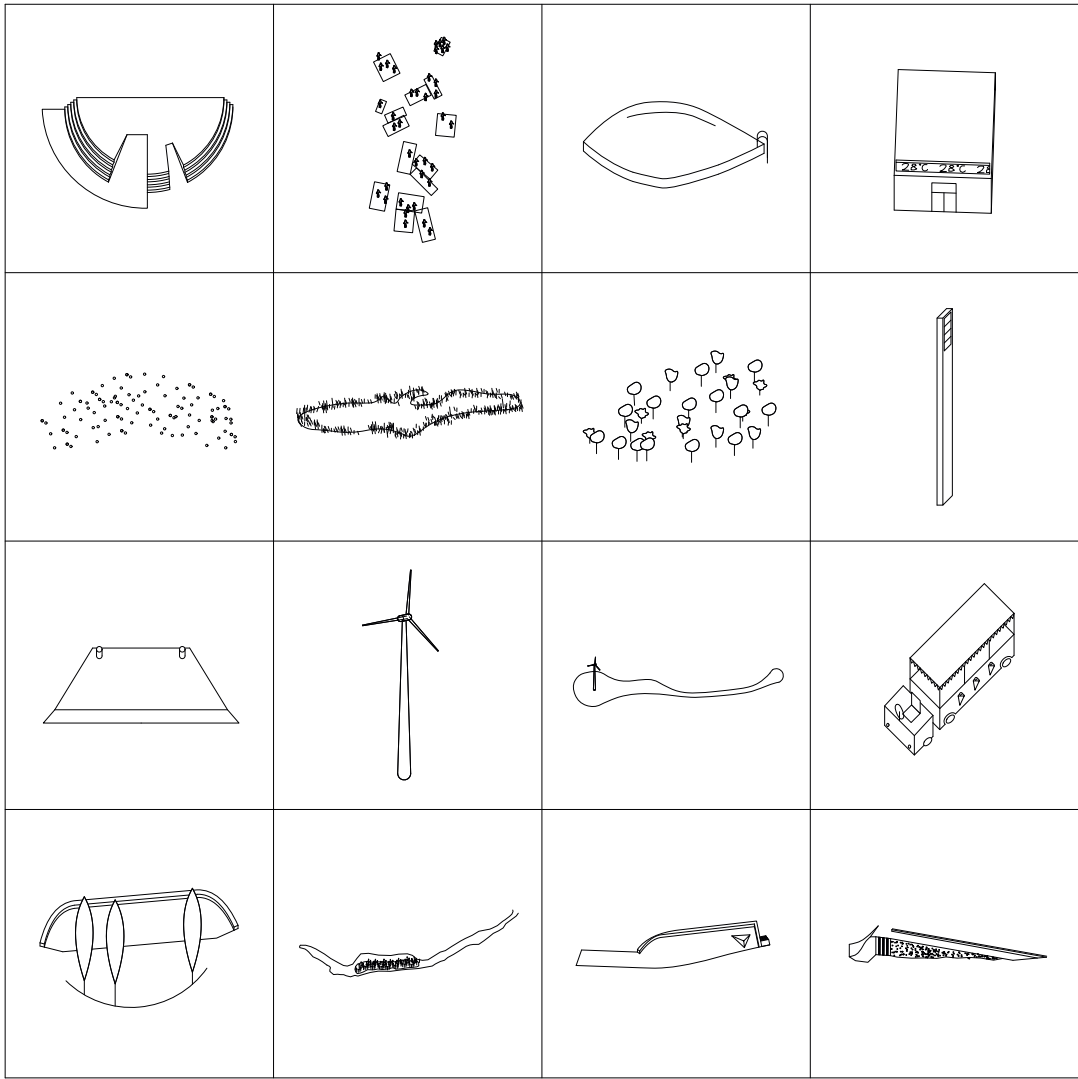
¹⁵ Aldo ROSSI: *The Architecture of the City*, Cambridge 1982, p. 130

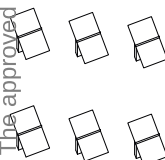
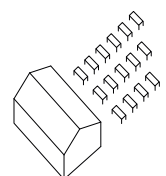
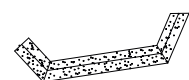
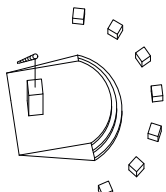
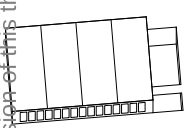
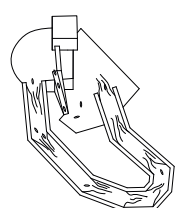
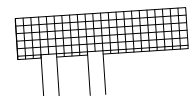
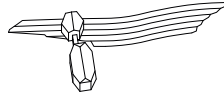
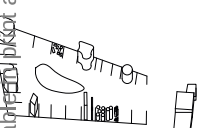
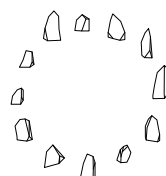
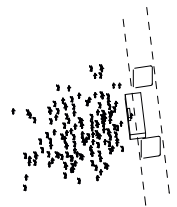


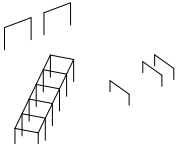
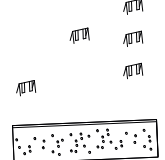
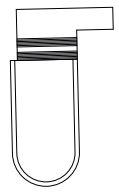
¹⁶ OMA, Rem KOOLHAAS, Bruce MAU: *S, M, L, XL*, New York 1997, p. 6

¹⁷ Italo CALVINO: *Invisible Cities*, New York 1974, p. 35







Without the presence of plants and made only out of dust the citizens populated the concrete meteorites. 1978



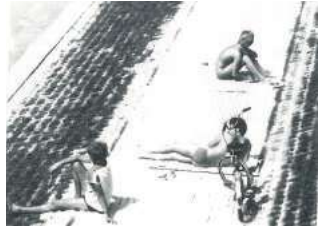
The specific environment of the island enabled the emergence of a new species - extraordinary contemporaries referred to as *Donauinsulaner*. 1996



The *Donauinsel-Atlas* - a brochure produced by the city authorities
imagining the island as a leisure paradise. 1983



Activities: stasis



Activities: movement

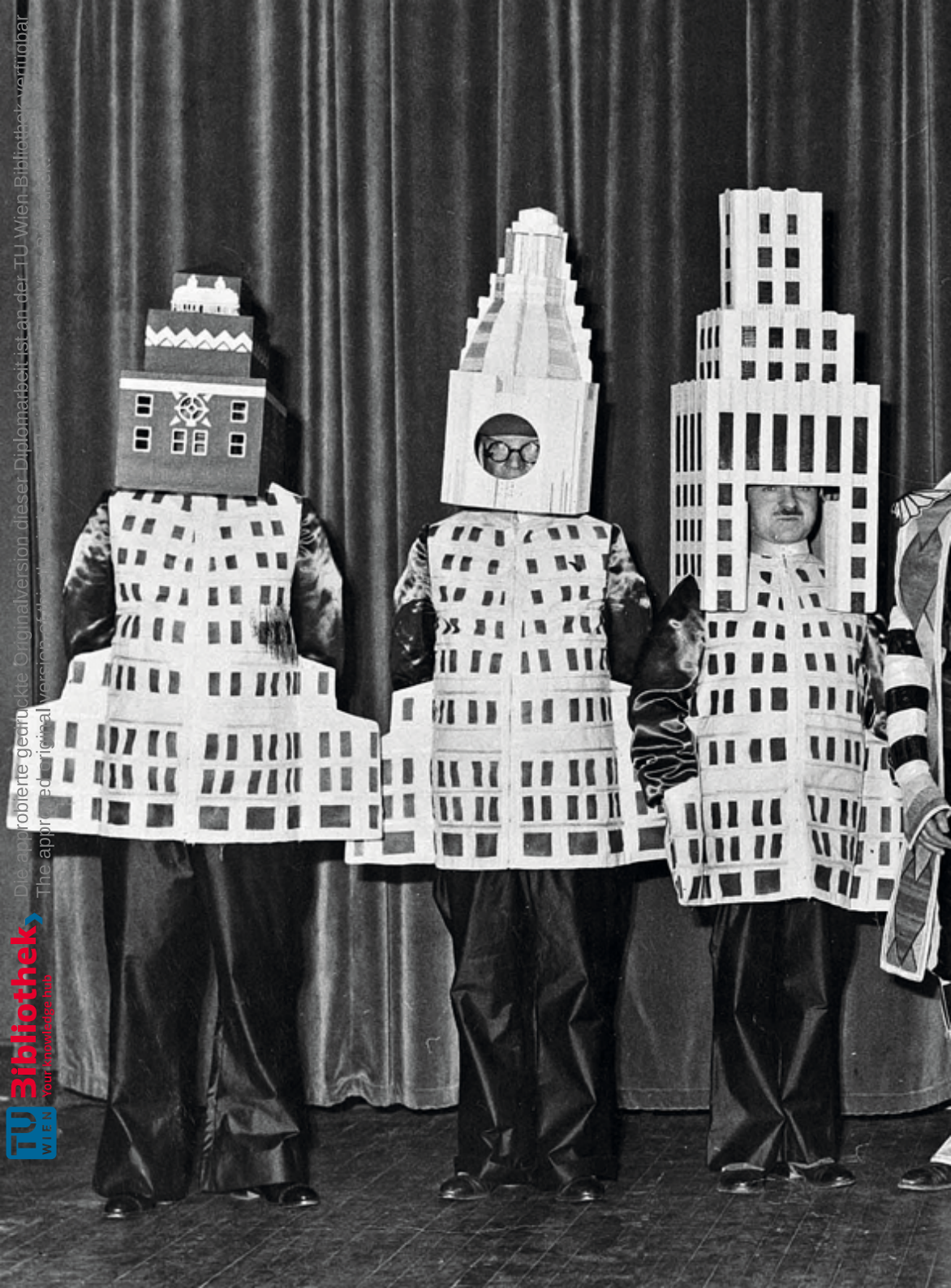


Activities: events



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- p. 85: from top left to bottom right
1,2,3: KAUSEL, Eva: *Arkadien an der Donau? Freizeit in der Großstadt am Beispiel der Wiener Donauinsel*, Wien, 1991, p. XXVIII f.
4,5,6,7: stills from: WStLA, media wien, 039, *Freizeit in Wien* [film], 1981
8: still from: WStLA, media wien, 033, *Aus den Trümmern ins Heute* [film], 1985
9: still from: SPIRA, Elizabeth T.: *Alltagsgeschichten: Donauinsulaner* [film], ORF, 1996
10-12: stills from: WStLA media wien, 039, *Freizeit in Wien* [film], 1981
- p. 87: from top left to bottom right
1: KAUSEL, Eva: *Arkadien an der Donau? Freizeit in der Großstadt am Beispiel der Wiener Donauinsel*, Wien, 1991, p. XXVIII
2: still from: SPIRA, Elizabeth T.: *Alltagsgeschichten: Donauinsulaner* [film], ORF, 1996
3,4,5: stills from: WStLA, media wien, 039, *Freizeit in Wien* [film], 1981
6: still from: SPIRA, Elizabeth T.: *Alltagsgeschichten: Donauinsulaner* [film], ORF, 1996
7,8: stills from: WStLA, media wien, 039, *Freizeit in Wien* [film], 1981
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10,11: KAUSEL, Eva: *Arkadien an der Donau? Freizeit in der Großstadt am Beispiel der Wiener Donauinsel*, Wien, 1991, p. XVIII f.
12: still from: SPIRA, Elizabeth T.: *Alltagsgeschichten: Donauinsulaner* [film], ORF, 1996
- p. 89: from top left to bottom right
1: still from: SPIRA, Elizabeth T.: *Alltagsgeschichten: Donauinsulaner* [film], ORF, 1996
2: WStLA
3: still from: WStLA, media wien, 039, *Freizeit in Wien* [film], 1981
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6: [website] <https://www.diepresse.com/5032938/33-jahre-donauinselfest-die-insel-die-pop-up-buehne> (accessed 20.05.2023)
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TERRITORIAL AND EMPTY

The particularity of the *Donauinsel* lies in its characteristics of being both territorial and empty. Similar to the *Péripherique* in Paris or the former *Berlin Wall*, the *Donauinsel* is an infrastructural object which structures and shapes the city.

The *Péripherique* is an 8-lane road that encircles the French capital and creates the border between the inner city and the suburbs, following the course of the old city wall. It is a big object with a lot of traffic, without which nobody can think of the infrastructural system of the metropolis. Orientation and the image of the city are largely shaped by this object, its accesses and passages. You are either ‚inside‘ Paris, or ‚outside‘ by crossing the infrastructural monumental border. At the same time, it creates an inherent consistency and object-likeness with its bridges and tunnels. With a certain inherent brutality it bridges even cemeteries or tunnels under sports fields.

The former *Berlin Wall* enclosed the space of West Berlin in the territory of East Berlin, and by that „*paradoxically making it ‚free‘*“¹⁸. Viewing platforms next to the wall are signs of the desire to look to the other side, to overcome the border, of the curiosity to catch a glimpse about what is going on on the other side (at least from the west to the east). The wall cut a city in two that was once one, also buildings become pedestals for voyeurs or are even separated from both parts of the city in the intermediate zone.

*„It’s also so bizarre, but West Berlin has seem to be so studiously ignoring the Wall. It’s like living on an island and ignoring the sea, sort of tabu subject. So the enormous attention which is given to the wall by the men in the towers on the East, seems to be an unbalanced thing.“*¹⁹

In Vienna, the *Donauinsel* divides the city into two, the historical city center and *Transdanubia*, and whenever one has to move from one side to the other it is necessary to cross the island. As an infrastructural project with a length of the entire diagonal of the city, the island goes beyond the architectural scale and is monumental due to its sheer size. It lies in between, but it is not only a border, but also creates a space of its own. More precisely, it is a space that is ‚empty‘, without architecture per se. Is it dramatic to have a void in the middle? In some cities the void is even the central figure around which the urban fabric has developed, for example Peking which was laid out around the rectangle of the imperial city²⁰.

Both the *Tiergarten*, the *Central Park* and the *Donauinsel* constitute empty spaces in the middle of a city. The *Tiergarten* in Berlin is a place which is „*constantly open to interpretation*“²¹, where everything seems

possible, a place of steady transformation. It is a very rich place, where humans, animals and plants coexist, where a high level of biodiversity shows up but also „*human history and natural history are manifestly constructed together*“²². It was a swamp, a royal hunting ground, a public forest with baroque features, a picturesque park with clearings and drained water, in the Third Reich the alleys were widened and the victory column was placed for military parades, it was even cut down in the cold winters after the WWII and used as vegetable grounds. Now it is a park, „*possibly the most public space in Berlin*“²³, a „*radical expression, of what is urban and public in the city*“²⁴. Many public events are hosted on its main alley, called *Straße des 17. Juni*, may it be the fan mile for the football world cup, the love parade or political demonstrations. The green walls of Tiergarten frame the events and serve as a uniform background for the liveliness of the people and installations. Besides, the inside of the park offers spaces for various activities through its planned wilderness, the layout of the so called ‚plant societies‘ are the precondition for its (also spatial) diversity²⁵. Several scattered monuments speak of its history, sometimes having been transformed to other phenomenons like the Command tower which is overgrown today and became the only hill in *Tiergarten* and at the same time a vibrant bird sanctuary.

The *Central Park* in New York is probably the most striking example of a void in the middle. The provocative contrast between its emptiness and the concentrated mass of its surroundings describe an antagonism that sharpens ones curiosity. An extremely dense urban structure of skyscrapers built up around the park, and an even denser typology of the ‚twin tower blocks‘ emerged because of the park, the void, itself, because everybody wanted to live right next to the open space in the bustling city²⁶. As Rem Koolhaas aptly put it, *Central Park* is „*a void that provoked the cliffs that now define it*“²⁷. Their contrariness is at the same time their impressive visual power. Moreover, this contrast is strengthened by the fact that the park was supposed to depict a fragment of untouched nature²⁸, which of course it is not. That it is a „*synthetic Arcadian carpet*“²⁹ designed in a picturesque manner, pretending to be real nature in the middle of the obviously artificial environment of Manhattan.

It depends on a cultural or political decision to leave spaces empty, uncontrolled or neglected. Thus what appears natural should rather be considered artificial. Comparable to the definition of deserts, „*the very word [desert] is a human value judgement*“³⁰, not a statistical or scientific fact.

„Does the Mojave, as a desert of definition, define anything more than a set of human attitudes to a particular piece of territory that we have agreed (or not disagreed) to call deserta, abandoned?“³¹

By stating the emptiness, nothingness, otherness of a certain place, it becomes a place where the respective conceptual system is not sufficient, a place where the law of freedom reigns.

This kind of emptiness is an indispensable feature of a city, it constitutes the places in which freedom of action and interpretation become probable, it opens up possibilities for life to happen.

„They all reveal that emptiness in the metropolis is not empty, that each void can be used for programs whose insertion into the existing texture is a procrustean effort leading to mutilation of both activity and texture.“³²

What is permanent, is the form of the object in the city. What stays a matter of imagination, is which histories can be inscribed to it, which transformations it can hold, which changes of program or use the ‚emptiness‘ of the territorial Donauinsel can or will enable.

¹⁸ OMA, Rem KOOLHAAS, Bruce MAU: *S, M, L, XL*, New York 1997, p. 219

¹⁹ quote from: Cynthia BEATT (director): *Cycling the frame* [film], Germany 1988

²⁰ Dominique PUTZ: *Les figures architectoniques – La construction logique de la forme architecturale*, Paris 2020, p. 95 (own translation)

²¹ Sandra BARTOLI (ed.), Jörg STOLLMANN (ed.): *Tiergarten, Landscape of Transgression (This Obscure Object of Desire)*, Zürich 2019, p. 10

²² *ibid.* p. 7

²³ *ibid.* p. 10

²⁴ *ibid.* p. 7

²⁵ *ibid.* p. 227

²⁶ Iñaki ÁBALOS: *Absolute Beginners*, Zürich 2022, p. 116

²⁷ OMA, Rem KOOLHAAS, Bruce MAU: *S, M, L, XL*, New York 1997, p. 202

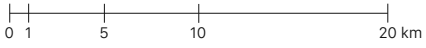
²⁸ Iñaki ÁBALOS: *Absolute Beginners*, Zürich 2022, p. 102

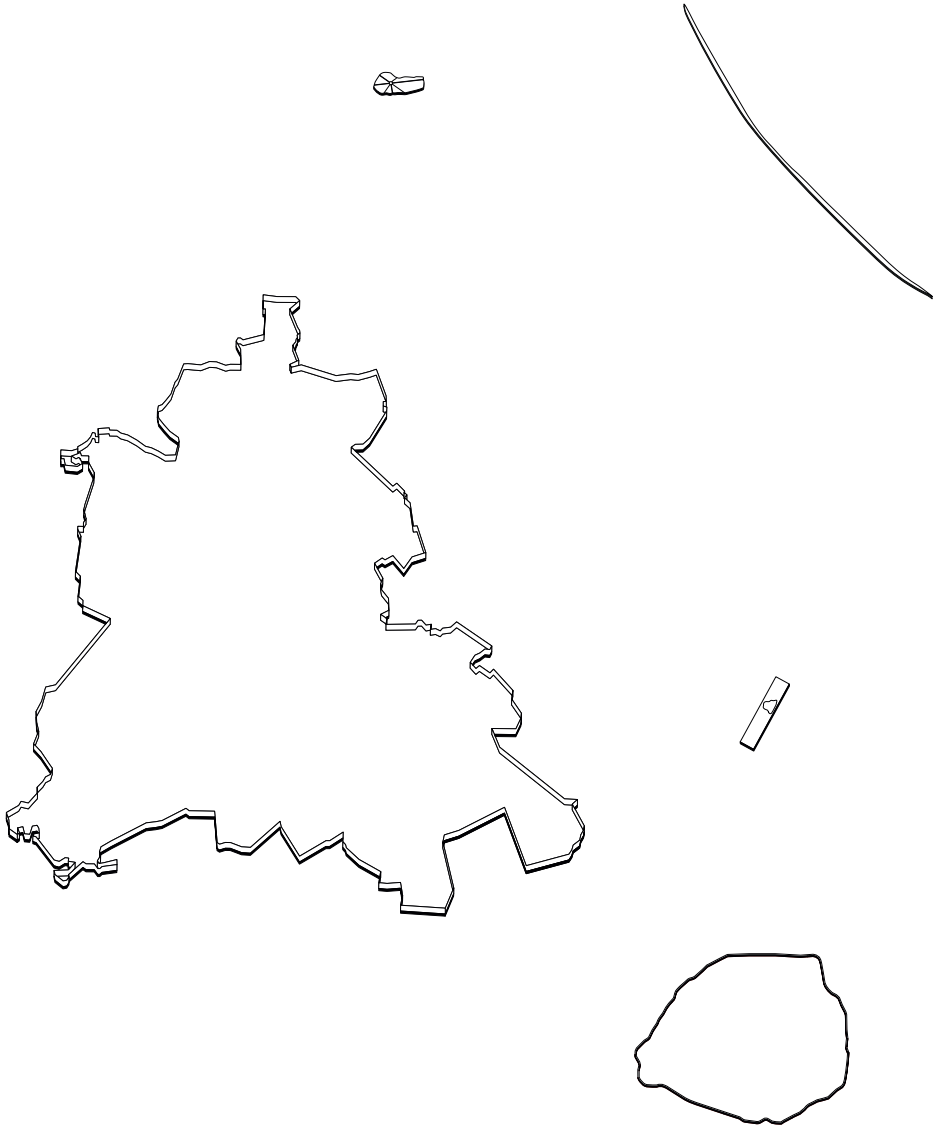
²⁹ Rem KOOLHAAS, *Delirious New York: A Retroactive Manifesto for Manhattan*, New York 1997, p. 22

³⁰ Reyner BANHAM: *Scenes in America deserta*, Cambridge 1989, p. 205

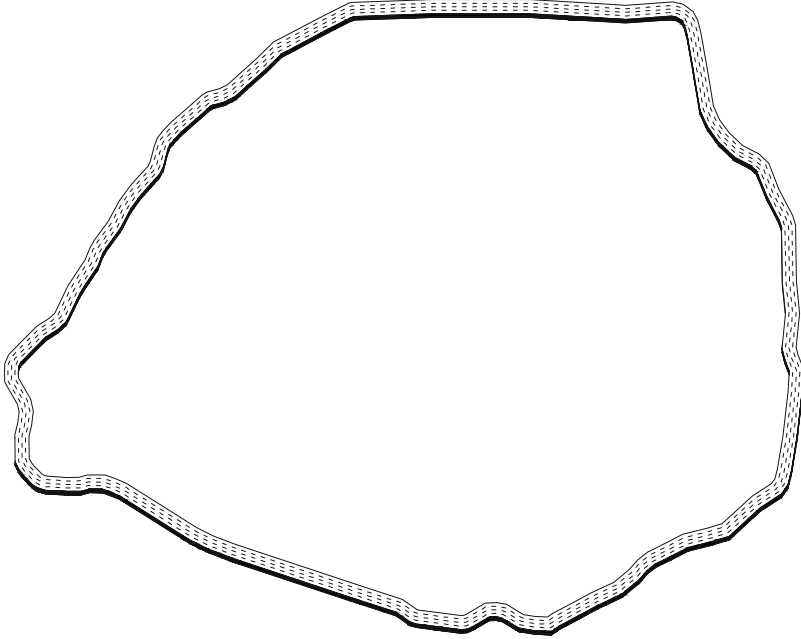
³¹ *ibid.* p. 206

³² OMA, Rem KOOLHAAS, Bruce MAU: *S, M, L, XL*, New York 1997, p. 202



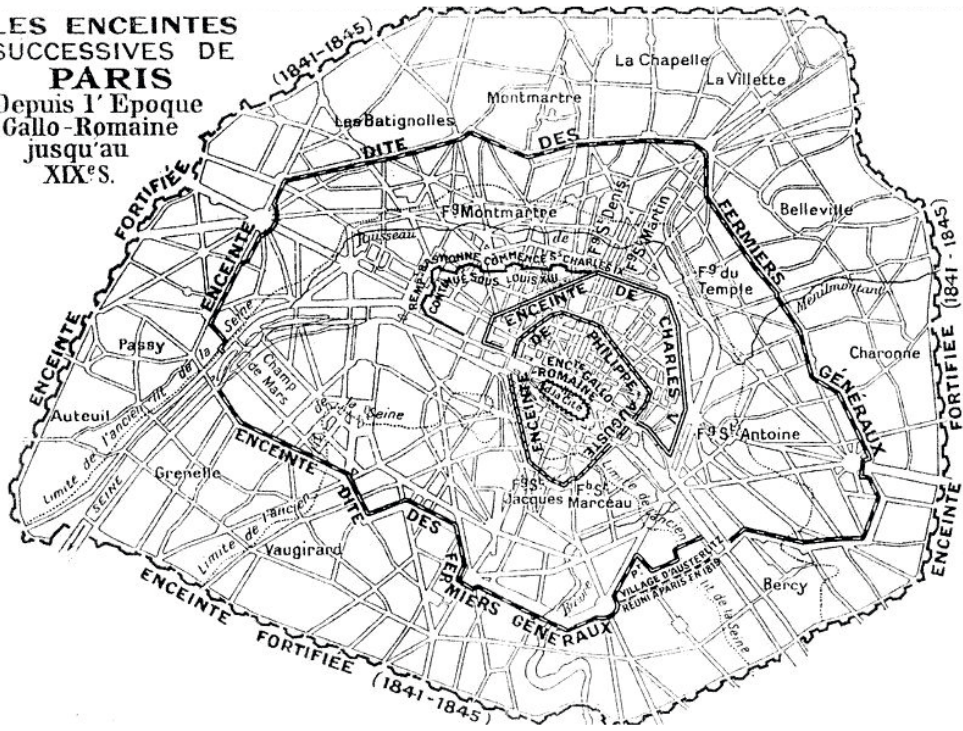


Territorial object: *Boulevard Péripherique*, Paris



The different fortification walls of Paris, the outermost of which has the present morphology of the 8-lane road called *Péripherique*.

LES ENCEINTES SUCCESSIVES DE PARIS Depuis l'Époque Gallo-Romaine jusqu'au XIX^{es}.



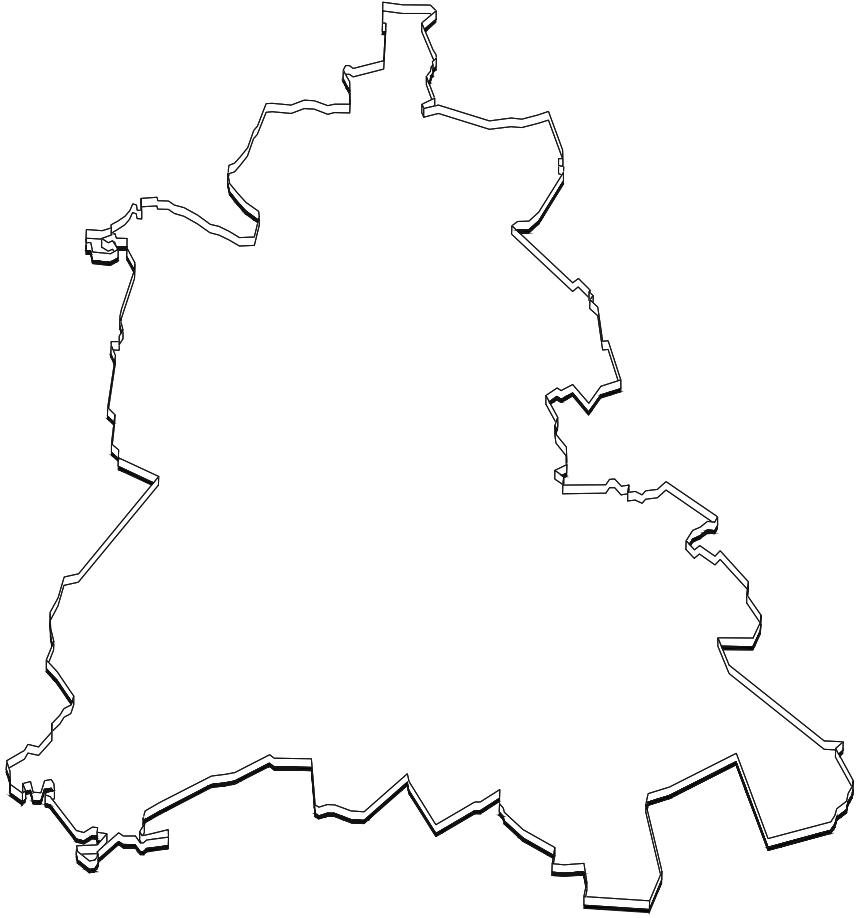
It is one of the busiest roads in Europe, almost all major French motorways lead towards the *Péripherique* from the whole country. It is in a way the monument to France's centralism.



Flea markets take place near, next to or underneath the *Péripherique* - a happening that ocured in front of the fortifications walls when they were still present.



Territorial object: *Berlin Wall*



Tilda Swinton cycling the frame of West Berlin.



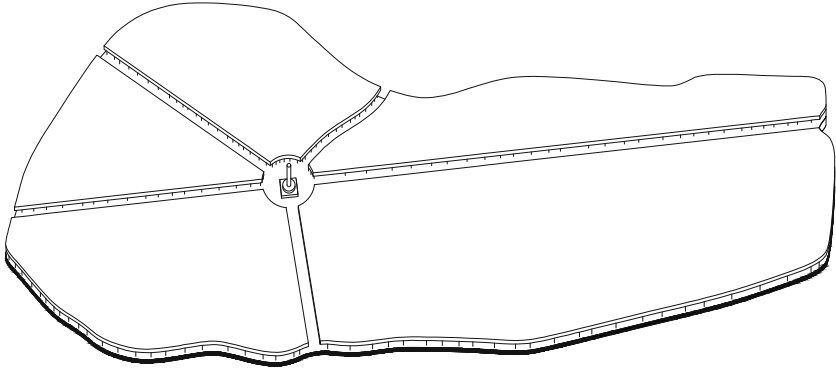
Besides its violent purpose of separation the wall as an artefact was still capable to relate to particular events.



One day after the fall of the *Berlin Wall*, 10. November 1989.



Empty object: *Tiergarten*, Berlin



Tiergarten was almost completely cut down in the cold winters after WWII for the purpose of using the material as firewood. 1946



Later on the cleared areas served as vegetable grounds for individual production due to food shortage after the war. 1946



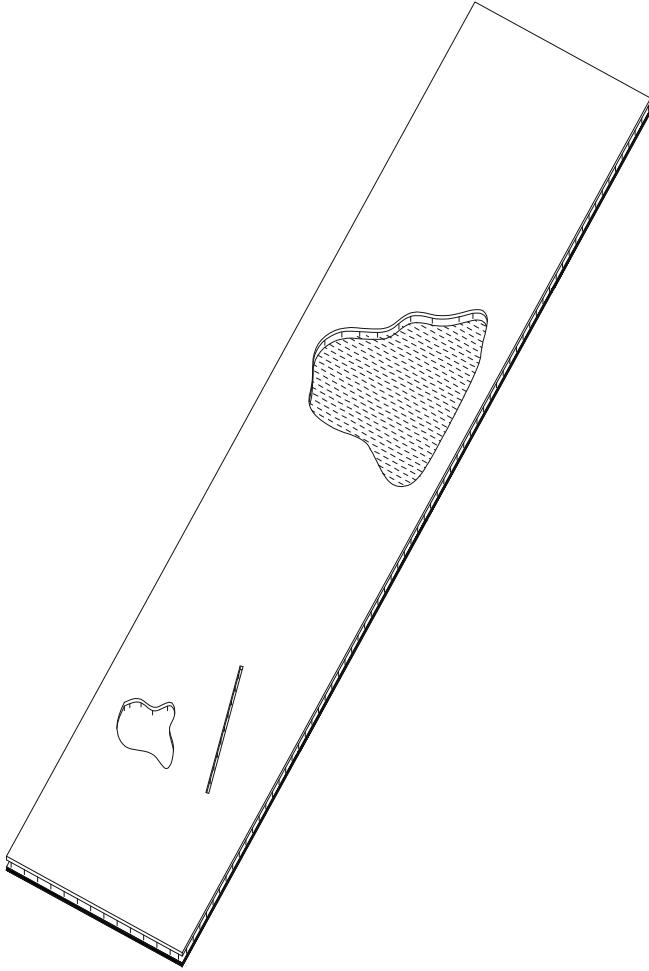
The main alley *Straße des 17. Juni* crossing *Tiergarten* frames public mass events like the fan mile during the world championship. 2014



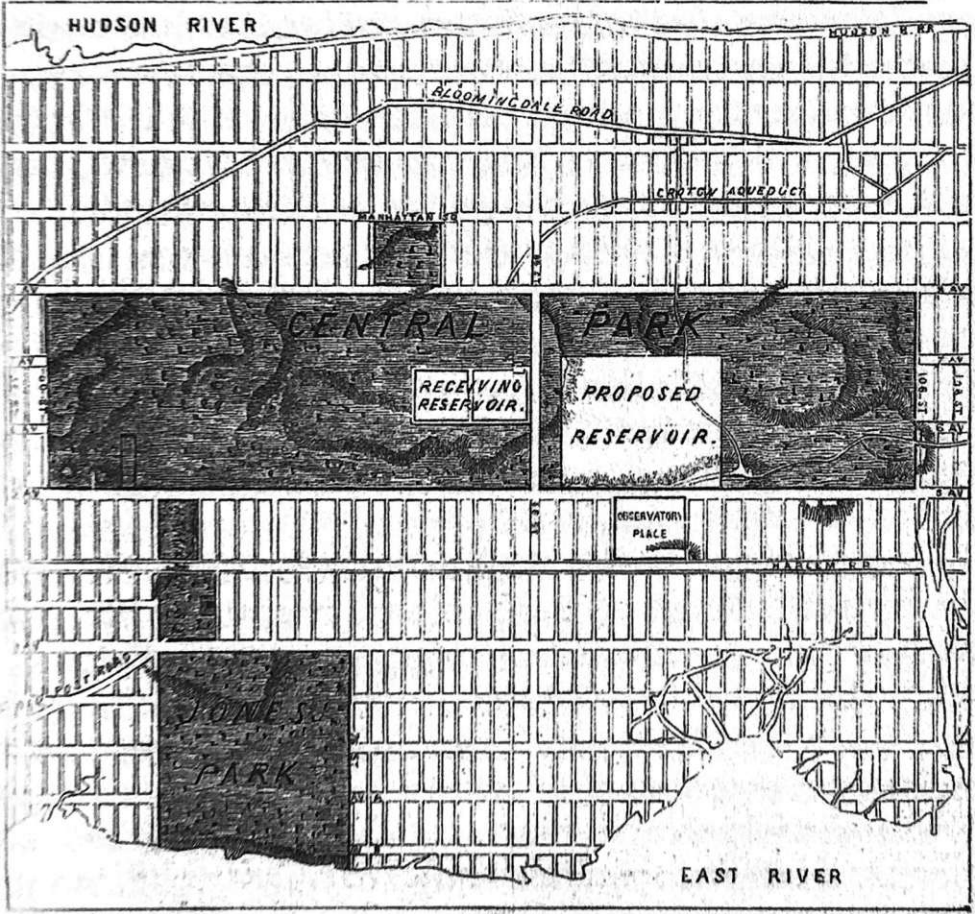
FKK culture in the emptiness of *Tiergarten*.



Empty object: *Central Park*, New York



„A void that provoked the cliffs that now define it.“



The *Sheep Meadow* is one of the main features of *Central Park*. It was originally designed for military parades but was then converted into a sheep pasture to enhance the romantic English quality of the park. 200 sheep were placed in 1864 and removed in 1934.



One of several ,be-ins' in the emptiness of Central Park (protests on various issues like the Vietnam War). 1967



PICTURE CREDITS

- p. 92-93: Costume party of New York architects, 1931.
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- p. 103: [website] https://paris1900.lartnouveau.com/paris00/les_enceintes.htm (accessed 20.05.2023)
- p. 105: Porte de la Chapelle, 1978.
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- p. 111: stills from: BEATT, Cynthia: *Cycling the Frame* [film], Germany 1988
- p. 113: OMA, Rem KOOLHAAS, Bruce MAU: *S, M, L, XL*, New York 1997, p. 223
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- p. 119: Tiergarten, 1946.
Courtesy Collection Regard, Berlin (Photographer: Hein Gorny)
- p. 121: BRANDLHUBER, Arno (ed.), HERTWECK, Florian (ed.), MAYFRIED, Thomas: *The Dialogic City. Berlin wird Berlin*, Cologne 2015, p. 126
- p. 123: BARTOLI, Sandra (ed.), STOLLMANN, Jörg (ed.): *Tiergarten, Landscape of Transgression (This Obscure Object of Desire)*, Zürich 2019, p. 99
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- p. 129: ÁBALOS, Iñaki: *Absolute Beginners*, Zürich 2022, p. 95
- p. 131: [website] <https://www.businessinsider.com/manhattan-new-york-city-central-park-sheep-meadow-2018-1> (accessed 20.05.2023)
- p. 133: [website] <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/03/25/style/central-park-be-in-history.html> (accessed 20.05.2023)
- p.136-137: still from: HERZOG, Werner: *Fitzcarraldo* [film], Germany/Peru 1982 (following page)





A LEPORELLO

The island is as big as a city, but also as simple as an object. The characteristics of the *Donauinsel*, its artificiality, its in betweenness, its desirability, its territoriality and emptiness all have been described up until now, but the quality that in the first place enables all of these is its objecthood. The project seeks to enhance precisely this. By generating an abstract homogeneity the island stands in opposition to the complexity of the city, it becomes an object in the city, but also a background for the figures on its grounds. A place of otherness in the city, and a contrast to the opposite park- and boulevard-like waterfronts. Its consistency is generated by the composition of three elements: woods, voids and a path.

„One of the potentials of the field is to redefine the relation between figure and ground.“³³

A consistent dense greenery generates the mass, filling the shape of the island. It is the even covering of the field, the common element wherefrom spaces for the various activities are cut out and thereby framed. It is the new context from which the heterogenous ‚anomalies‘ stand out against.

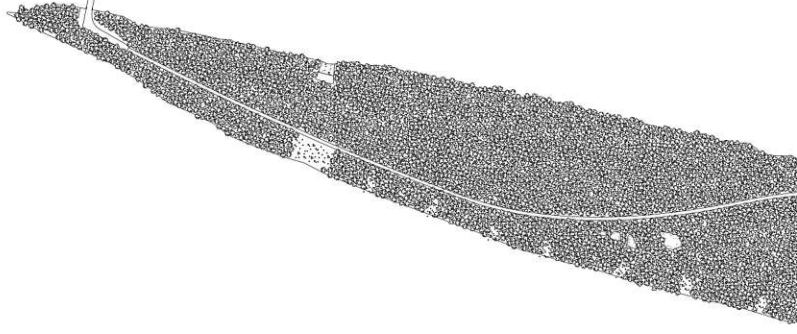
The voids are the figures in the field and exceptions to the rule, they are determined, have a form, are different. Certain actions take place in different kind of voids, but the program is unforeseen use. Only by defining the mass, the voids become places of attractions.

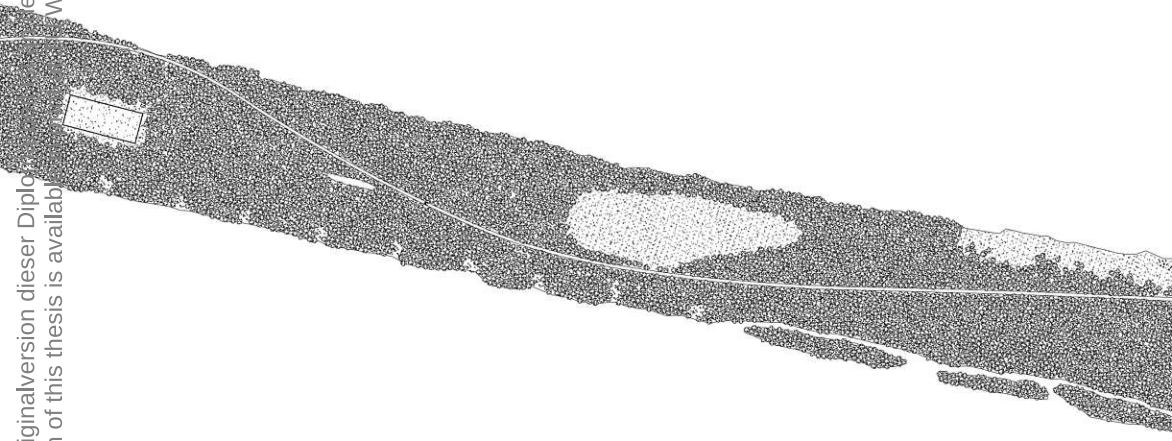
Attractions may be ponds, meadows, beaches, mounds, plateaus, orchards, stairs, platforms, but also sports fields, horizontal filter wells, material stocks, a cyclodrome encircling a wind turbine, snack bars or a fragment of an old river arm. All those elements allow for a wide range of programmatic experiences.

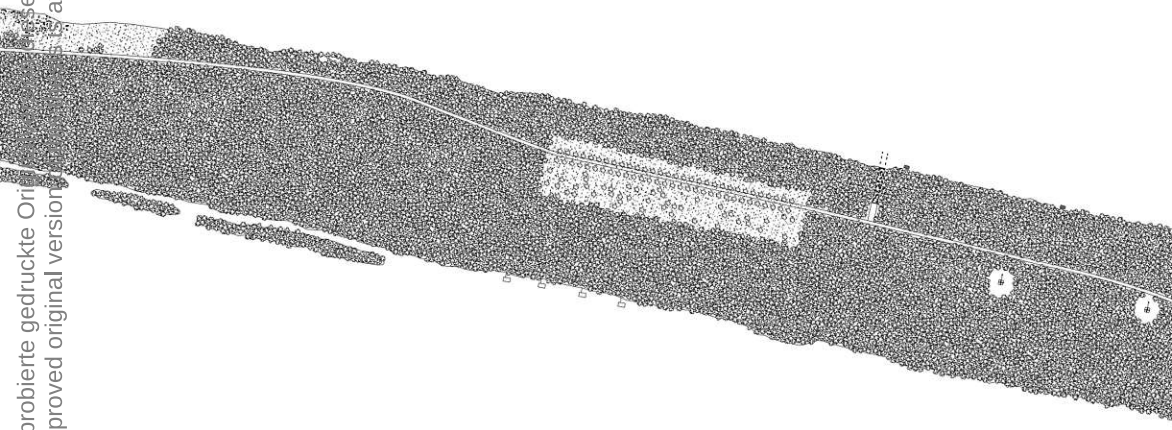
One path seeks the variety within the permanence, connecting the various attractions all over the island, linking the different accesses, allowing different views both onto the industrial *Donau* and the recreational *Neue Donau*, both onto *Vienna* and *Transdanubia*. Apart from this, informal trampling paths meander and lead to other points of interest which may change within the passage of time and seasons. It is the observation of the complexity of the city surrounding the island, as well as the complexity of the island itself which led to the operation of ‚staging‘ - both the elements along its surface against the backdrop of the greenery, as well as the island itself as a simple object against the backdrop of the city.

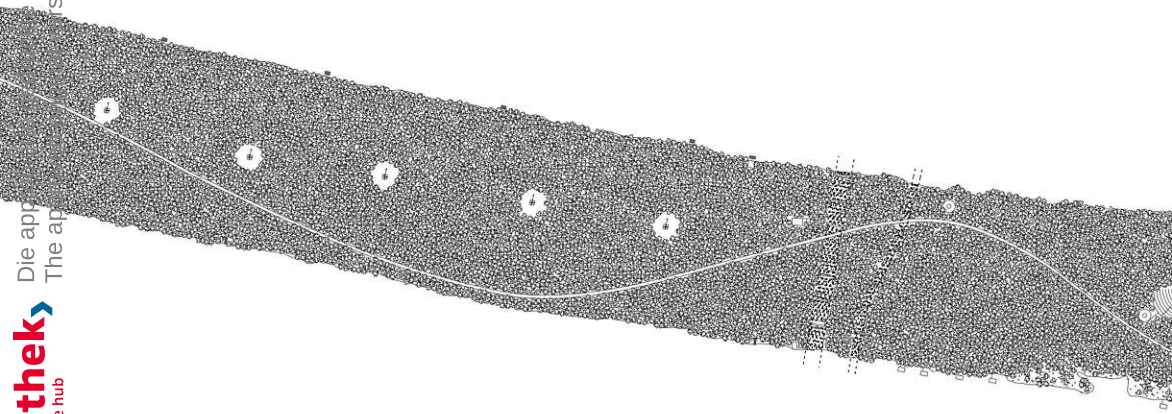
³³ Stan ALLEN: *From Object to Field*, in: AD 5-6, New York 1997, p. 28

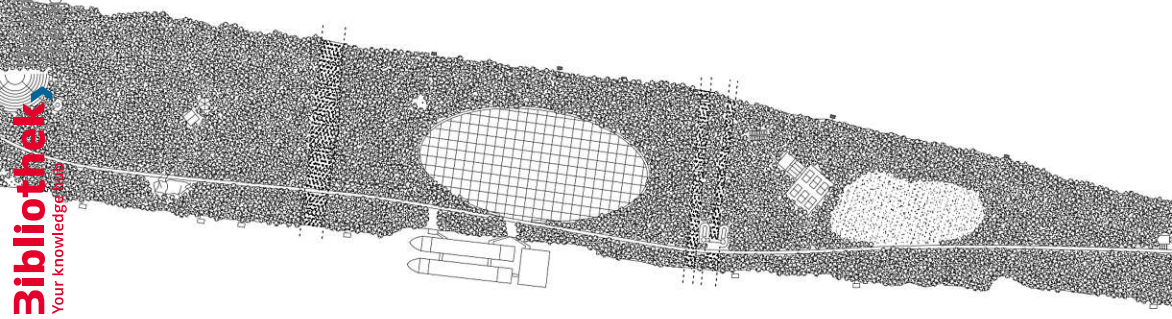
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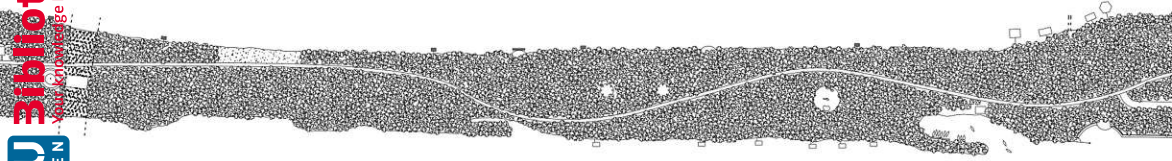


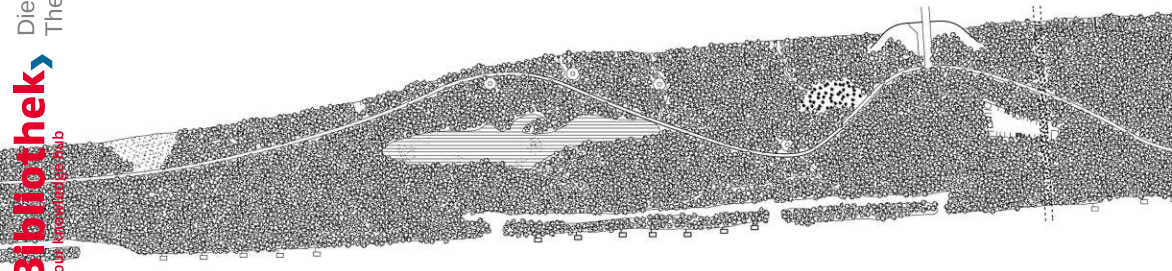


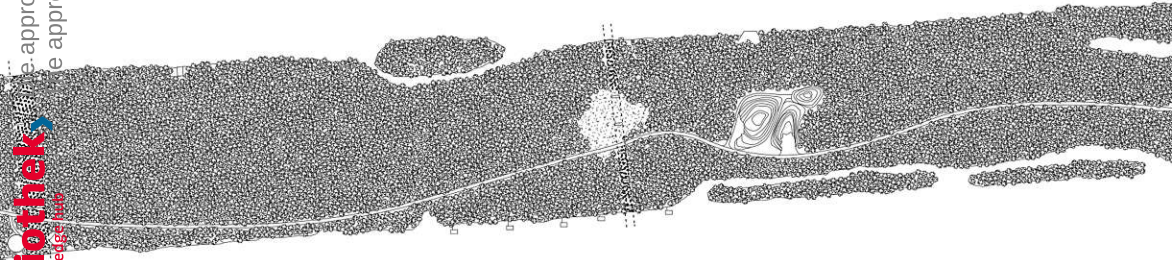


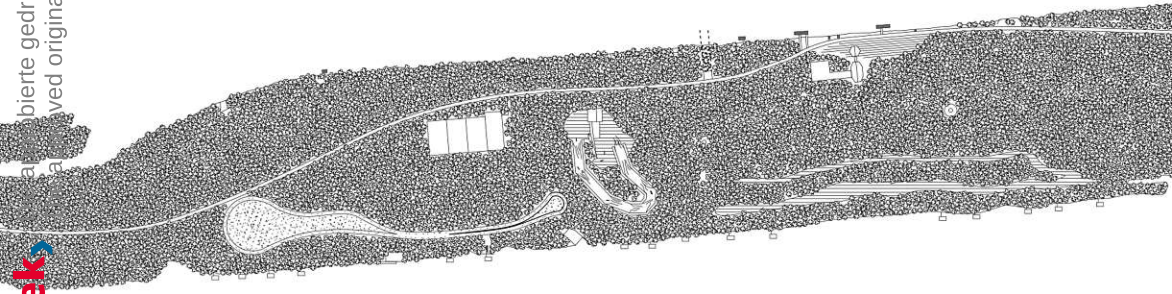


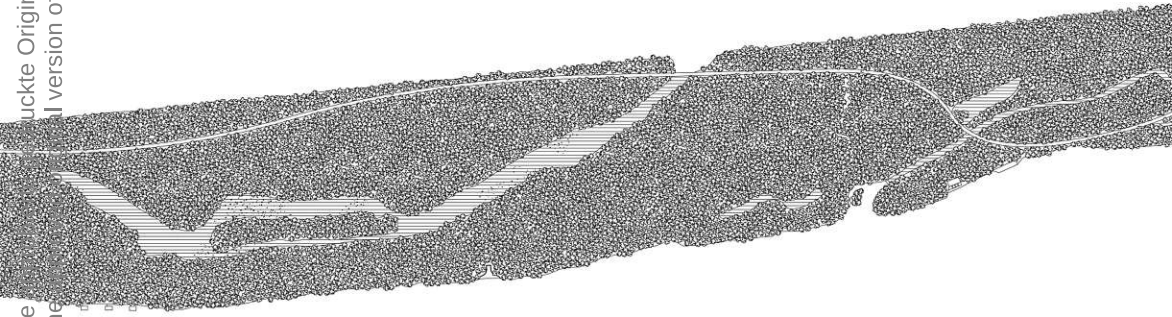


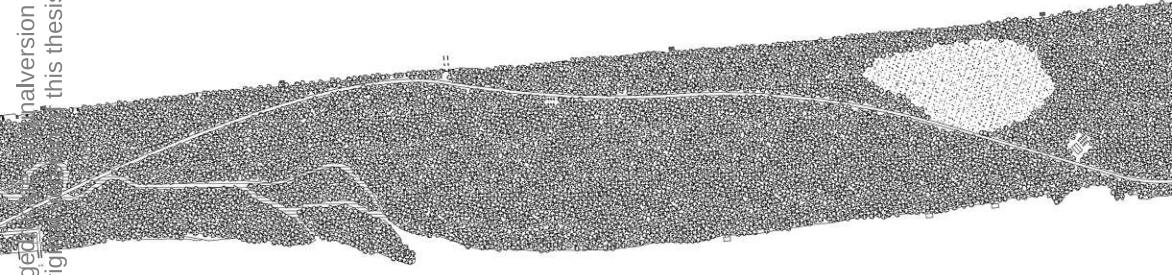


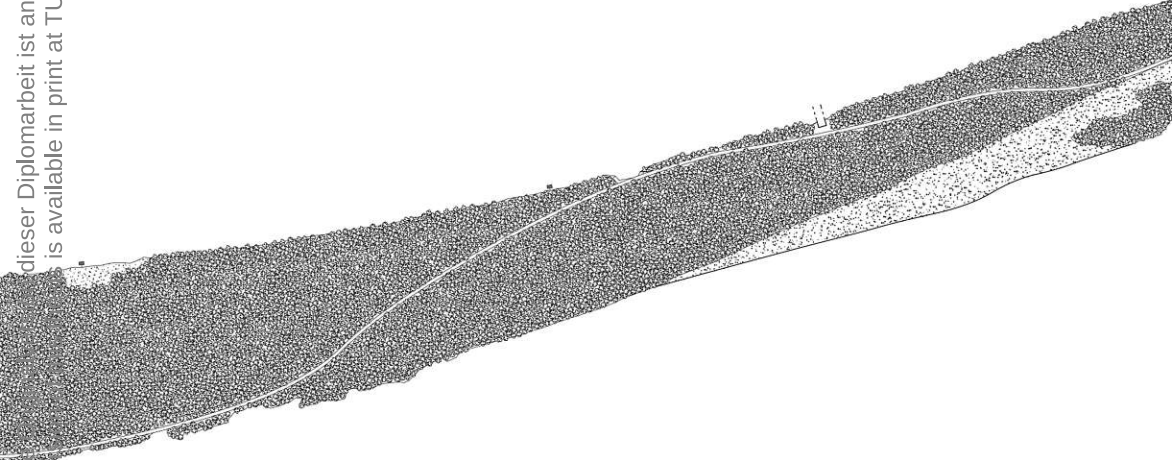


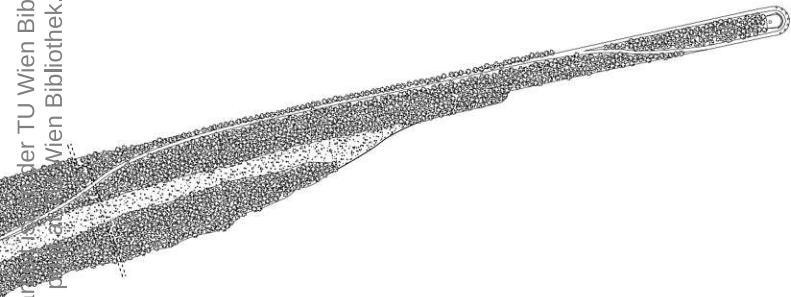






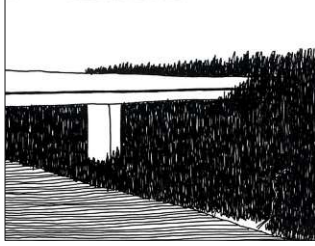
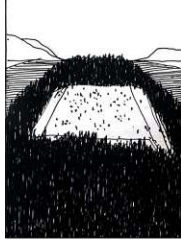
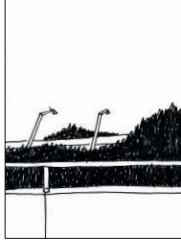
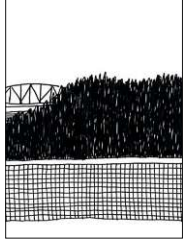
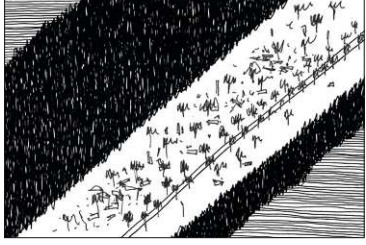
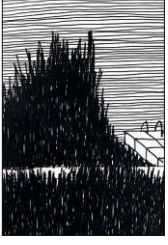


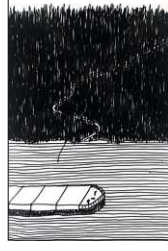
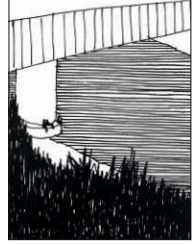
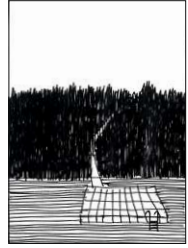
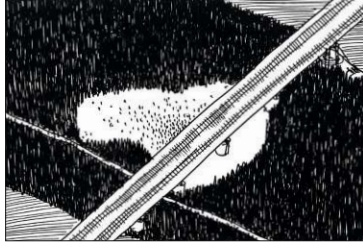
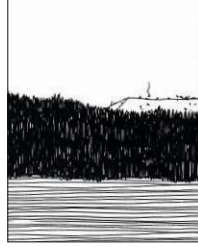
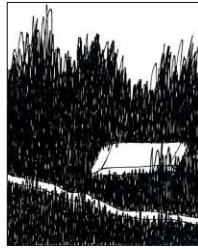






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