1 Is Vienna still a just city? The challenges of transitions

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Introduction

Historically, European cities have been associated with social cohesion, quality of life and economic competitiveness, in particular since the Second World War (Kazepov, 2005). *Redistribution* (via generous social policies), *representation* (through democratic inclusion) and *recognition* (acknowledging diversity; Fraser et al., 2003) have all contributed to high levels of social justice (Fainstein, 2010). The strong influence of public (often national) institutions in urban development within Europe as a whole, including urban planning (Fincher and Iveson, 2008) and targeted national urban policies (Zimmermann and Fedeli, 2021), has led to local contexts characterised by lower levels of socio-spatial inequality and high standards of living in comparison to other cities throughout the world. Considering these traits as analytical building blocks, scholars have tended to identify the *European city* as a model of social justice (Le Galès, 2002; Häussermann, 2005). However, European cities are today under a great deal of pressure as a result of long-term transformations associated with the post-industrial transition, demographic trends, welfare rescaling and recalibration (Kazepov, 2010), and the effects of the 2008 economic and financial crisis, which has affected most European countries (and cities; Hemerijck, 2013). These trends have produced new social risks (e.g. structural long-term unemployment, new labour market vulnerabilities, etc.) that undermine the building blocks of the European city model, producing rising income vulnerabilities and poverty, discrimination of migrant populations and, in general, widening social and spatial inequalities within – but also between – cities (Novy and Mayer, 2009; Kazepov et al., 2021). Such transformations challenge the territorial cohesion of Europe and promote the emergence of different patterns of economic, political and social development across cities (Cassiers and Kesteloot, 2012; Lewis, 2017).

The magnitude of such changes and their impact, however, are not uniformly experienced and managed by European countries and cities (Brenner et al., 2010; Jessop, 2015; Le Galès, 2018), and there are varying degrees of resilience across respective localities. Recent investigations (Cucca and Ranci, 2017) highlight how such transformations bring about increasing differentiation among European cities, resulting from the interplay of structural factors, path dependencies and multilevel governance arrangements, on the one hand, and the ability of local institutions to deal with new social needs and problems, on the other. Some cities are better than others at innovating their policies in order to reduce the gap between emerging problems and financial constraints. Since the emergence of the economic crisis in 2008, the capacity to reduce these gaps could be interpreted as a measure of possible resilience (Fainstein, 2015), although questions as to why such differences are observable and what *makes a difference* remain open.

For this reason, we use the European city framework as a starting point in investigating how Vienna is addressing the challenges and consequences of new social risks. Vienna has been portrayed as highly representative of the European city model, having had a long history of promoting socially inclusive forms of urban development through specific social policy interventions and housing programmes. The roots of the *Vienna model* date back at least to the 1920s, a period known as *Red Vienna* (Blau, 1999; Kadi and Suitner, 2019), but continued throughout the post-war period as part of the corporatist welfare state model (Reinprecht, 2014; Österle and Heitzmann, 2020). However, due to ongoing population growth from the 1990s onwards, the impact of the financial crisis, austerity policies and the relatively recent refugee flows, Vienna is experiencing important pressures to orient its urban development strategies following stricter economic criteria. The housing sector has faced particular pressures due to changes in rent regulation (Kadi, 2015; Friesenecker and Kazepov, 2021). However, systematic empirical analyses of relevant shifts in urban, housing and welfare policies and their implications for Vienna have so far remained scarce. Existing studies limit themselves to examining specific local policies or focus only on certain areas of the city and have not explicitly addressed the city in all its dimensions (with exceptions: Matznetter, 1990; Novy et al., 2001; Musil, 2009). In this multifaceted book, we aim at contributing towards filling this gap, presenting the results of our ongoing investigations regarding change in four relevant domains: (a) political representation; (b) housing; (c) labour market and (d) the environment. Change in these areas has had important consequences for the degree of social inclusion of inhabitants of the city.

The European city and justice: theoretical debates

During the Fordist period, cities in Europe were the centre of both production and consumption, fuelling economic growth and requiring the organisation of social reproduction through stable industrial relations and redistributive policies (e.g. welfare and housing). Such measures, which gave protection to vulnerable groups, made living in the city more affordable. The acceleration of global economic restructuring, kicked off by the economic crises of the 1970s and the shift towards post-industrial urban economies from the 1980s onwards, has impacted the local urban conditions and inequalities in cities worldwide, including Europe (OECD, 2018). Following these transitions, economic flexibility has become prioritised over social stability, and the search for greater competitiveness was no longer connected to a high level of social integration (Cucca and Ranci, 2017). The 2008 economic crisis brought about deeper welfare state recalibration (if not retrenchment) in most European countries, challenging redistributive policies (Hemerijck, 2013), which substantiate formal recognition of rights and social justice struggles at the city level (Fainstein, 2010).

Academic discussions surrounding urban transformation have largely been shaped by two main theoretical approaches, and complemented by a third, emergent, one: (1) a structural neo-Marxist approach, which considers economic dynamics to be the most relevant driver of change, and regards a neoliberal turn in contemporary cities as a spatial fix, functional to the post-industrial and global restructuring of capitalist society (Brenner et al., 2010); (2) a neo-Weberian approach, which highlights the capacity of European cities to govern social and economic transformations and combine strategies to promote competitiveness with consideration for locally based, collective interests (Bagnasco and Le Galès, 2000; Le Galès, 2002); and (3) an approach characterised by the concept of urban justice and resilience that – in its different forms – attempts to combine the previous two approaches by showing, on the one hand, the importance of claims to *the right of the city* (Lefebvre, 1968) as well as the role of urban contention; and on the other hand, the importance of institutions and rights in substantiating justice. Important differences exist among cities in this regard, and they need to be embedded in specific, multilevel governance arrangements which frame context-specific outcomes.

- 1 *The structural neo-Marxist approach.* International urban studies research has highlighted the rising importance of how developments in the global economy, seemingly *exogenous* to local

policymaking and governance, have gained significance for urban development trajectories. Concepts such as ‘dual cities’, ‘global cities’, and ‘divided cities’ draw close connections between global economic forces and changes in the local social and economic urban order (Harvey, 1989; Sassen, 1991; Andreotti et al., 2018). The crisis of Fordism led to a roll-back of redistributive politics and a roll-out of entrepreneurial governance (Harvey, 1989; Peck and Tickell, 2002). Thus, a fundamental political reorientation towards global competitiveness – through the processes of deregulation and privatisation – was set in motion globally and discussed through the analytical lens of neoliberalism (Brenner et al., 2010; for a critique: Le Galès, 2016). New modes of governance and the pressure for competitiveness brought about strategies that focused on large-scale cultural, political and sporting events, the desire to create culture-led (Kalandides, 2013) or ‘green’ (Garcia-Lamarca et al., 2021), and city-branding strategies, all of which can be seen as efforts to create new ‘fixes’ for capital accumulation. Moreover, housing is increasingly dominated by the interests of private – often (global) financialised – capital (Aalbers, 2017). These changes resulted in the visible increase in inequality within urban areas, which has been captured throughout the 1990s in the American context as ‘dual or divided cities’ (Mollenkopf and Castells, 1991; Fainstein, 1995). Also, in recent decades, processes of gentrification and segregation have been documented in European cities, although in variegated forms (Musterd et al., 2017; Arbaci, 2018). This corresponds to an urban labour market, which is almost entirely service oriented, thus fuelling a polarisation of occupational composition (Sassen, 1991; Burgers and Musterd, 2002; Pratschke and Morlicchio, 2012; Storper, 2018). Regarding political participation, Swyngedouw speaks of a ‘post-political urban order’, in which a post-democratic arrangement ‘has replaced debate, disagreement and dissent with a series of technologies of governing that fuse around consensus, agreement, accountancy metrics and technocratic environmental management’ (Swyngedouw, 2009, p.601). Thus, democratic relations are fundamentally becoming eroded (Crouch, 2004; Leitner et al., 2007; Mayer, 2013), as the post-political order ‘dismantles welfare systems, increases inequality, and unleashes into urban political life the harsh relations of market competition’ (Purcell, 2009, p.143). Pressed by the effects of austerity measures, emerging social needs induced by the mood of permanent crisis – as if *there is no alternative* – municipalities are increasingly bundling resources and cutting

(or tightening access to) welfare services. This trend brings about claims and conflicts revolving around the *right to the city* (Lefebvre, 1968), which has inspired social movements demanding, for example, participation in planning, environmental protection and the provision of affordable housing.

- 2 *The neo-Weberian approach.* The previous line of reasoning has been criticised by scholars closer to a neo-Weberian approach, particularly with regard to the overly universalising claims in most global cities research (Bagnasco and Le Galès, 2000; Le Galès, 2002). Specifically, what is called into question is the failure to acknowledge the persistence of distinctive national and local institutional arrangements in light of more global economic shifts (Marcuse and van Kempen, 2000; Obinger et al., 2011). Advocates of this approach call for an analysis of redistributive institutions at different scales and of their role in shaping urban change and social transformation (Kazepov, 2010). Essentially, this neo-institutional literature has highlighted the continued significance of welfare and redistributive policies – including housing, as well as labour market and educational programmes – in mediating the impacts of global economic restructuring at the local and regional level. In particular, European cities retain distinctive governance features and comparatively low levels of social and spatial inequalities (Musterd and Ostendorf, 1998). These specific characteristics, and the period of relative demographic and economic growth that characterised many (West-) European cities up until the crisis unfolded in 2008, revived a discourse in the scholarly literature on the renaissance of ‘the European city’ (Kazepov et al., 2021). However, this approach retains some degree of vagueness, not always accounting for intra-European differences (Novy and Mayer, 2009). Moreover, it does not take account of East European cities, where the process of transformation since 1989 became more challenging, especially because social policies were severely and abruptly resized (Ferenčuhová and Gentile, 2016).
- 3 *An urban justice and resilience approach.* The previous approaches produced fairly articulated debates about how to put the question of justice in the city at the core of their struggles. Ranging from more Marxist approaches, contesting neoliberalism and mobilising for the right to the city against the urbanisation of injustice (Merrifield and Swyngedouw, 1996), to specific strands of the neo-Weberian approach, addressing the combination of social justice and resilience in cities through the workings of institutions (Le Galès, 2018). Bridging these two perspectives, Fainstein’s

concept of the ‘*just city*’ links critique of global and neoliberal developments, local policies and changes of the urban fabric with their redistributive consequences. Fainstein (2010) assumes certain room for manoeuvre for local and national policy in defining urban development trajectories and living conditions in times of rising global interconnectedness. The implicit argument in focusing on the concept of resilience is that when unavoidable events lead to system change, these very systems will show different levels of capacity to adapt and/or reconfigure their structure in order to maintain an acceptable growth path in output, employment and wealth in the long run. Although this approach has been criticised for being functionalist and because it obfuscates underlying conflicts and the distribution of benefits resulting from policy choices (Fainstein, 2015), we consider it useful to connect aspects related to urban justice, the challenges of changes and social and institutional innovation. It is an approach that can be complemented by an emphasis on the role of policy instruments in the overall governance of urban change (Kassim and Le Galès, 2010). Indeed, principles of justice do translate into policy measures, which not only define the regulatory framework within which actors unfold their struggles, but also provide them with resources, rights and duties, opportunities and constraints (Knijn and Lepianka, 2020).

The wide spectrum of approaches that have been developed within international urban research all bear some elements of truth in the analysis of how cities change in the 21st century. In this book, we want to contribute to this debate using Vienna as a case in point. We also want to move forward from the existing fragmentation of research on Vienna by analysing how the city has changed over the last 30 years (1989–2019), referring to these debates and attempting to integrate the various approaches without theoretical prejudice.

Between structural changes and institutional responses

Vienna has a long history of promoting socially inclusive forms of urban development through specific redistributive policy interventions, making it relevant not only for debates within the framework of the *European city* but also in terms of urban justice and emerging local forms of citizenship. While other cities (e.g. London, Paris, Berlin or Amsterdam) have long been at the centre of the debate, Vienna has only recently been the subject of more scholarly attention, and this tends to be predominantly in the field of housing. Here, Vienna

aimed to counterbalance market processes with progressive redistributive policies for promoting social equality, be it through the direct construction of social housing by the municipality, the funding of affordable housing provision through limited-profit associations, comprehensive rent regulation and active land banking policies (Reinprecht, 2014; Friesenecker and Kazepov, 2021). The interest in Vienna, however, goes beyond housing. As we will see, other policy domains have relied on similar regulatory principles, fostering social justice and inclusion, trying to complement or compensate for policies developed at the federal level (e.g. on the labour market) and supra-national levels (e.g. on participation and the environment) to enhance the degree of inclusiveness at the city level.

Has this situation changed in the last three decades? As with most cities, Vienna has undergone important socio-economic and demographic structural changes in that time that have challenged the patterns of social justice developed after the Second World War. From a socio-economic point of view, the shift from the industrial sector to the service sector has accelerated in the last three decades, showing a marked tertiarisation. These trends have been accompanied by significant changes in the structure of the population. In fact, despite an ageing native population and a low birth rate, net in-migration has contributed to an increase in inhabitants, by around 350,000 since the year 2000, so that the population reached 1.91 million in 2020 and is expected to grow further still (<https://bit.ly/2TjOIS7>). These changes were partly the result of Austria joining the European Union in 1995 and of the EU expanding eastwards between 2004 and 2007. This repositioned Vienna from the fringes of a divided Europe into the heart of an ‘integrating’ economic and political space bridging East and West (Musil, 2009; Novy, 2011).

The joint effect of these changes produced negative intersectionalities, socio-economic insecurity and rising unemployment, in particular among unqualified school leavers. The consequences of these developments and their synergic effects with other changes are yet to be fully investigated for the city. However, are institutional arrangements and policies addressing these challenges adequately? A number of studies have highlighted an emerging social divide in the city, spatialising social stratification patterns (Hatz et al., 2016). These range from top-down recommodification processes of housing through legal changes and deregulation (Novy et al., 2001; Kadi, 2015) to increasingly segregated migrant economies (Kohlbacher and Reeger, 2016; Riederer et al., 2019), the exclusion of specific groups from political participation (Ehs, 2018) and uneven access to urban green spaces and public transportation

(Haslauer et al., 2015). As we will see in detail through the various chapters of this book, policies in the areas of housing, labour market, political participation, and the environment filter the impact of the changes in peculiar ways and influence the recognition of rights, redistributive outcomes and participatory arrangements. Will Vienna be able to govern these challenges? What conclusions can be reached for an international urban research agenda from an analysis of Vienna's specificities? Is a new insider-outsider divide emerging and – if so – along which lines? Are new and old inequalities stratifying in specific ways?

Aim and structure of this book

Despite the fact that Vienna represents a prime example of a European city under growing pressure, no systematic and conceptually encompassing research has yet investigated the role of institutional frameworks across policy domains in shaping urban inequalities and social conditions in the city. In order to bring the fragmented landscape of existing research together, each chapter of this book will carry out a thematic analysis of the interactions among the three key analytical dimensions characterising the overlapping debates regarding *the European city* and social justice: (a) the role of redistribution policies; (b) the recognition of rights and diversity; and (c) the role of political representation. These dimensions will be empirically analysed, focusing on four areas: (1) political participation and governance; (2) labour market policies; (3) access to housing and its affordability; and (4) environmental justice.

Each individual chapter aims to identify any potential trade-offs and synergic effects that have emerged over the last three decades (1989–2019), potentially impacting upon the degree of inclusiveness of the city. In doing so, the chapters relate the four policy areas to the respective contextual and institutional conditions and any change over time. By doing so, they show the interplay across the multiple territorial jurisdictions within which the city acts, draws resources, and plays out conflicts, thus disentangling the governance dynamics that are taking place. This long-term perspective allows us to identify how the potential contradictions and conflicts between neoliberal economic change and the capacity to govern social and economic transformations play out in the city. We can then explore whether it is possible to combine socially inclusive policies, environmental protection and (socially) innovative initiatives with economic competitiveness, and if so, to explore which preconditions are necessary as well as any divides that are emerging.

The chapters provide a systematic, comprehensive analysis of the analytical dimensions identified above, providing the reader with the building blocks with which to reconstruct Vienna's overall profile. Accordingly, the book is divided into four sections, each addressing the four respective policy areas, with two chapters for each. The themes analysed in each chapter are aimed at highlighting how the transformations taking place throughout the last 30 years have influenced the degree of inclusion proffered by the city.

- 1 *Political participation and governance.* In order to understand democratic processes and the extent of social justice in the city, it is important to disentangle how people maintain control over their living environments. From this point of view, Vienna represents a unique case: since the foundation of the Austrian Republic in 1919, the city government has been controlled by the Social Democratic Party (SPÖ), the Nazi period being the only exception. As Chapter 2 shows, this has been an important factor in shaping the recognition of social rights and redistribution of resources, through generous provision of city-specific services and benefits that have influenced patterns of social justice in the city and the consensus of its inhabitants. Over the last few decades, calls for more democratic control of decision-making in city planning have arisen, and a strong request for social participation to complement the representative democracy (Fainstein, 2010; Silver et al., 2010). In Vienna, as Chapter 3 shows, this process has occurred predominantly from the top-down, even when decentralisation brought about localised collaborative arrangements. In fact, the corporatist governance system formalised spaces for public-private-citizen partnerships between the administration and non-institutional actors at the neighbourhood level. As the two chapters show, the role of the public sector is crucial to understanding justice patterns in the city, relying on redistribution more than on bottom-up democratic participatory processes.
- 2 *Access to housing, affordability and innovation.* Housing has been a key area for neoliberal attacks on welfare state regulation. The transformation of housing markets, however, differs strongly from context to context (Scanlon et al., 2014). Several national and municipal authorities have abolished rent regulations and sold off public-owned dwellings, reducing affordable housing solutions for the lower- and middle-class populations. As Chapters 4 and 5 show, Vienna still displays a high degree of resilience, and the long tradition of affordable housing policies has

never been significantly discontinued, even though recognition and redistribution underwent important changes. Some authors have started to recognise an increasing dualisation (Kadi, 2015; Friesenecker and Kazepov, 2021); in particular, as far as access to affordable housing for newcomers in the city (especially ethnic minorities groups) is concerned. In fact, despite widening access to council housing, access is ultimately limited by long waiting lists, and non-profit units require a substantial down-payment by tenants. Additionally, the national government has progressively liberalised rent regulation in the private rental market. In this context, housing prices have also substantially increased in Vienna – especially for new residents – albeit from a much lower level than other capital cities, such as Amsterdam, Berlin, Paris or Zurich. The aim of the two housing chapters is to present how the potential insider-outsider divide plays out in Vienna, which mechanisms challenge the inclusiveness of housing policies in the city, and highlighting the potential innovative and institutional responses to these trends.

- 3 *Labour markets, occupational restructuring and policies.* European cities have exhibited different trends in their general transition from a Fordist economic structure to a service-based economy (Koch, 2006). In Chapters 6 and 7, the authors seek to capture the features of this transition in Vienna, and to analyse how the occupational structure has changed, with which effects and how policies have co-evolved. This aspect seems to gain particular relevance in the local debate within Vienna, where unemployment has been presented as a challenge to social stability and cultural identity, polarising public opinion and putting the educational system of the city, social services and active labour market policies under pressure (Atzmüller, 2009). These chapters show who is affected most by the post-Fordist transition of the productive system of the region and how policies have responded to the challenges. The degree of freedom Vienna retains as a *Bundesland* has allowed the City to develop a partly autonomous labour market policy, complementing and compensating for the impact of structural changes and federal labour market reforms. This has allowed Vienna to preserve, to a great extent, high levels of inclusion.
- 4 *Environmental justice and sustainability.* Policies implemented to address the challenges of environmental change are important when urban resilience and justice are investigated. As we will see in Chapters 8 and 9, the City of Vienna tries to balance an environmentally friendly context, competitiveness in the global market

and social inclusiveness. Balancing these dimensions, however, is not easy. In these two chapters, the authors engage critically with the potential trade-offs in the provision of access to urban green spaces and high-quality environments. Disentangling any potential contradictions, the authors illustrate how green policies can introduce inequalities if the social dimension is not considered in the equation. Indeed, they highlight how, by keeping the governance of environmental issues under the jurisdiction of the city's government, Vienna has been able to influence both access to, and distribution of, urban green spaces across social classes following an equity principle. This is evident also in the increasing and widespread perceptions of environmental quality in the city. Inequalities, however, do exist and persist, particularly for some foreign-born groups who cumulate several disadvantages (from housing to the labour market). In recent years, awareness has increased with regard to the fact that, in pursuing social *and* environmental justice, the integration of different policy domains is required.

The clear challenge that emerges from the analysis of these four areas is the relevance of the insider/outsider divide and the ambiguity of how it has been structured over recent decades. This challenge exists in every jurisdiction that has the power to intervene and modify the boundary-making process and define the criteria of who is *in* and who is *out*. However, it is even more apparent in cities, considering the decentralisation/devolution trends from the 1980s onwards. Vienna is in a privileged position in this regard since it is both a city and a regional government in a federal state which grants its *Bundesländer* a relatively high degree of autonomy and resources. The chapters of this book collectively show how the City of Vienna has used its (delegated) political power to influence the way in which the boundaries of justice and equity and the inclusionary/exclusionary dynamic have been redrawn (Knijn and Lepianka, 2020). The strong role of the public sector – and the inherent resilience of institutions – have mitigated the impact of neoliberal tendencies, not only slowing down the processes of change but also buying time to experiment with innovative solutions (most prominently in housing, but similarly on the labour market). This overall tendency has not prevented exclusionary processes, and some social groups are more affected than others: for instance, the substantial immigration of recent years has caused newcomers to experience more difficulties in accessing housing compared to long-term residents; lower educated newcomers have even more difficulty

in finding a job on the labour market than those who are more highly educated, and so on. The magnitude of these gaps, however, is surely smaller than in other cities, and Vienna can still be considered a city in which recognition and redistribution play an important role. Participatory practices are still in their infancy, but growing, and attempts to combine social and environmental justice are advancing on the political agenda.

Acknowledgements and thanks

The quality of research and writing relies on many factors. Not insignificant in this case was the part played by the members of the advisory board of the 'Vienna in Transition' project: Talja Blokland, Susan Fainstein, Chris Hamnett, Håkan Johansson, Thomas Madreiter, Enzo Mingione, John Mollenkopf and Sako Musterd. In addition to providing substantial feedback on methods, content and argument, they also commented upon the individual chapters and engaged in discussion with all authors. It was a real privilege being able to rely on such scholarship. Thomas Madreiter was also able to involve officials from the City of Vienna who gave ad hoc feedback on the single thematic chapters. In particular, Clemens Horak, Isabel Wieshofer, Tobias Troger, Bruno Sagmeister, Daniel Glaser, Edith Waltner and Wencke Hertzsch should receive much thanks for their precise and valuable input. We also highly appreciate the support of Ramon Bauer from the Statistics Department of the City of Vienna (MA23), who facilitated our access to data. James Connolly, Luigino Ceccarini, Fabio Bordignon and Ilvo Diamanti helped with comments on specific chapters. Besides the content, we enjoyed the language proof-reading of Emma Hewitt and the editorial work of Nina Görgen and Sebastian Harnacker, who substantially improved the manuscript. Lisa Finocchiaro supported us from an administrative point of view throughout the whole editorial project. Finally, we would also like to thank the authors of the chapters for their patience and for engaging with our never-ending comments: the quality of the output is a shared responsibility.

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