10 Vienna's resilience

Between urban justice and the challenges ahead

Roland Verwiebe, Yuri Kazepov, Michael Friesenecker and Byeongsun Ahn

Introduction

In the past, Vienna and other metropolises (such as Amsterdam, Berlin, Barcelona, Copenhagen and Stockholm) have been regarded as prime examples of the *European city* model (Le Galès, 2002; Häussermann, 2005). However, trajectories of European cities have increasingly diversified over the last 30 years as a result of varied reactions to a broad set of transformations. These transformations include the following: de-industrialisation and the consequent changing occupational structure (Hamnett, 2021); welfare rescaling (Kazepov and Barberis, 2017); growing inequality (Cucca and Ranci, 2017); housing shortages (Scanlon et al., 2014); broader demographic changes (Kreichauf, 2018; Wolff and Wiechmann, 2018); a fragmentation of the political (party) system (Ford and Jennings, 2020); efforts to govern climate change and environmental risks (Kern, 2019; Bulkeley, 2021); and, more recently, the economic and social consequences of the financial crises of 2008 and the COVID-19 pandemic (Hadjimichalis, 2011; Guida and Carpentieri, 2021). Yet, many scholars agree that the starting point for the process of differentiation among European cities is located in the post-Fordist transformation (Amin, 1995). This does not mean that differences did not exist before (see Diefendorf, 1989). On the contrary, it means that differences have been superseded by economic growth (unequally distributed, but existing, nonetheless) and Keynesian state intervention that attempted to iron them out (Brenner, 2004). The crisis of Fordism, despite the accompanying spread of an all-encompassing neoliberal narrative, brought about differentiated patterns of demographic change (with rising migration) and economic development (often with jobless growth) that began reshaping the social fabric of European cities. These changes challenged the balance between economic competitiveness and social cohesion that had once characterised the system of governance, exposing urban economies to rising inequalities

and emerging social polarisation (Cucca and Ranci, 2017). As a result, growth-oriented policy agendas reinforced the unequal distribution of the costs of transition to the new patterns, and these were paralleled by a retrenchment of welfare state provision. While some scholars attribute this development to the overall process of neoliberalisation drawing cities into its orbit (Harvey, 2005; Mayer, 2007), in this volume we have a more nuanced perspective. Neoliberalism does indeed affect European cities, but we see urban change as a more complex and localised outcome of a (partly) path-dependent process in which the distinctive institutional and structural contexts play a significant role – not only in filtering global processes but also in shaping the ways in which they play out (Musterd and Ostendorf, 1998; Fainstein, 2010; Andreotti et al., 2018).

Embracing this approach, each chapter of this volume analyses how Vienna's institutions have been challenged by the changes taking place, and how they have reacted. More specifically, they do so across four major policy fields – political participation, housing, labour market and environmental sustainability – attempting to better understand how the transformations have changed the degree of inclusiveness of the city, as well as resulting patterns of social justice. They identify potential trade-offs, negative synergic effects and dualisation trends that have emerged since the early 1990s. Indeed, notwithstanding the mediating role of Vienna's existing redistributive system (both cash and in-kind), evidence from the chapters of this volume point to growing vulnerabilities among different social groups and widening urban inequalities, on the one hand; and putting the City of Vienna under pressure to innovate their policy-making system, on the other. By investigating multiple policy dimensions, the authors have carried out an analysis of policy changes embedded in the interplay between institutional actors across different territorial jurisdictions. These changes have had variegated effects, sometimes simultaneously reinforcing the inclusion of certain groups and the exclusion of others. The following section highlights the major findings of the volume, addressing structural constraints and social innovation cross-cutting the various policy domains characterising Vienna's institutional landscape, highlighting how they are reshaping the boundaries of social justice.

Between resilience and change: key findings of the volume

The analyses of the four policy areas provide important insights and details about the process through which inclusion and exclusion occur and are consolidated. Not all social groups are affected, or are

affected in the same way, but for some, these processes lead to culminating disadvantage.

Mocca and Friesenecker (Chapter 2), and Ahn and Mocca (Chapter 3) discuss the changing practices of *political participation* and governance structures in Vienna. Mocca and Friesenecker start out with an analysis of how the Social Democratic Party of Austria (SPÖ) were able to hold on to the mayoral office from 1919 to the present day (with a short exception during the Nazi regime), through widespread consensus, thanks to its generous redistributive policies and the provision of key public services. Thus, they have effectively maintained unparalleled, long-standing political control over the city. However, the rise of smaller parties in recent elections (such as the Greens; the liberal party, NEOS; and the right-wing Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ)) indicates an emerging differentiation of the party spectrum. Similar to other European cities (Rontos et al., 2016; Eizaguirre et al., 2017; Russell, 2019), new political cleavages have emerged in Vienna. These social or spatial cleavages in voting might be the result of the vulnerabilities that globalisation and economic restructuring have kicked off. This has led to the *Green-Alternative-Liberal vs. Traditional-Authoritarian-Nationalist divide*, associated with transborder mobility and the economic integration of the European Union (Ford and Jennings, 2020). As Ahn and Mocca show in their analysis, despite innovation in the party system and the emergence of new political cleavages, political participation in the city is situated in the context of a *top-down* governing system and a strong legacy of vertical policy-making (Brandtner et al., 2017). However, from the early 1970s onwards, the City of Vienna has established a diverse range of participatory tools to encourage bottom-up mobilisation of community-based initiatives. A parallel process of decentralisation in the city has shifted power and resources to public enterprises and district authorities, opening up additional participatory pathways – albeit limited to small-scale urban planning. While opportunities for citizen participation have improved, bureaucratic obstacles have simultaneously increased (Brait and Hammer, 2017), resulting in an uneven distribution of participatory channels across the city which favours inner-city districts, where educational attainment and median earnings are higher. This policy deficit hinders a meaningful involvement of citizens from the lower social classes (e.g. in American and British cities, see Taylor, 2007; van Holm, 2019).

In the section on *housing* (Chapters 4 and 5), Litschauer and Friesenecker discuss key aspects of the transformation of Vienna's housing model and how it has come under pressure over the last three decades. However, contrary to other European cities, such as Amsterdam,

Berlin or Dublin (Adelhof et al., 2008; Tsenkova and Polanska, 2014; Byrne and Norris, 2019; Granath Hansson and Lundgren, 2019), the authors acknowledge that social housing still remains the largest housing segment in Vienna, providing affordable housing to roughly 40% of the city's population with the aim of avoiding segregation. This has been accomplished through: (1) massive investment in the maintenance of the existing public housing stock; (2) increased construction of subsidised social housing, mainly built by limited-profit housing associations to ensure below-market rent vis-à-vis high construction quality for its tenants; (3) targeting social housing, not only at the poor, but also offering options for the middle classes through high-income thresholds; (4) an active land banking and zoning policy that guarantees plots for the construction of new affordable housing; (5) quality management that ensures social orientation (e.g. affordability) and housing quality for new, large-scale, constructions. Nevertheless, the past decades have also seen liberalising tendencies of the Austrian federal government reduce the distributive effects of rent regulation in the private rental segment, leading to steep price increases and the rise of time-limited rental contracts (Kadi, 2015). These developments have also affected the redistributive capacity of social housing. Municipal housing has become more socially targeted, while escalating land prices, changing housing needs due to ageing, immigration and climate change pose further challenges in the provision of new social housing to low-income groups (Scanlon et al., 2014). In a nutshell, Vienna's housing system has witnessed an evolving insider-outsider divide between the social and private rental segments, and within the private rental segment, corresponding to the duration of one's residency in Vienna. In both segments, sitting tenants enjoy affordable and secure housing, while conversely, housing becomes less affordable to newcomers (especially low-income groups, low-skilled immigrants and refugees), who also face increasing housing insecurity.

The section on *labour transformations* (Chapters 6 and 7) delves into changes in the labour market and the role of Vienna's regulatory autonomy in mediating local outcomes of structural transformations (Österle and Heitzmann, 2020). In Chapter 6, Ahn and Kazepov point out that the long-standing institutional capacity development has enabled the city administration to mobilise effectively against the restrictive reform strategies of the federal government, providing more generous benefits and innovative employment programs for increasingly vulnerable social groups. For example, Vienna's regional minimum income scheme – despite federal reform attempts – continues to provide asylum seekers with access to employment services, which is not the case in other parts

of Austria (Rathgeb, 2021). This local welfare system has been crucial in mediating tertiarisation, professionalisation and polarisation tendencies that currently unfold in Vienna. These are leading to new forms of social inequalities that Riederer, Verwiebe and Ahn describe, in Chapter 7, as *asymmetrical polarisation* (for international comparisons, see Crankshaw, 2017; Hamnett, 2021). While substantial growth in the class of professionals and managers has been a dominating trend, growing inequalities and a parallel polarisation of the occupational class structure cannot be neglected. For example, an increasing share of younger workers and educated women holding professional and managerial positions tend to be employed on a part-time and/or temporary basis, thus showing more vulnerability (Riederer and Berghammer, 2020). There is also a parallel and increasing polarisation within the migrant population. Labour migrants from the 1960s and 1970s and other long-term migrants suffer from higher shares of unemployment and social decline, whereas more recent immigrants – especially those from EU-15 countries – tend, on average, to be even more successful on the Viennese labour market than Austrian citizens.

In the section on *the environment*, Brenner, Mocca, and Friesenecker (Chapter 8) and Friesenecker, Riederer, and Cucca (Chapter 9) analyse environmental justice and sustainability. Brenner et al. argue that, compared to other cities (Anguelovski et al., 2018), Vienna has maintained a high share of Urban Green Space (UGS) (encompassing around 50% of the city) because of its strong state-based approach. This has made it possible for the City to react to structural challenges, including population growth, increasing inequalities, heatwaves and changing weather conditions. Support also came from higher levels, such as the EU, which introduced new opportunities for stronger environmental protection, while public sector maintenance of green spaces is outstanding and stands in contrast to an international trend towards more market-oriented UGS management (Rutt and Gulsrud, 2016; Kronenberg et al., 2020). According to Friesenecker et al., the (semi) public provision of key environmental services for healthy and liveable environments also include public transportation, water supply, waste management and energy, to name only the most important. While this continuous provision of services has contributed to Vienna's reputation as one of the most liveable and green cities in Europe (Verwiebe et al., 2020), the authors reveal that some citizens, especially unskilled workers and migrants, increasingly perceive the environment to be of a lower quality, especially in densely populated, lower income neighbourhoods with a higher share of immigrants. This corresponds to small pockets of undersupply in UGS, while access to an adequate amount of green space is ensured for the vast majority

of the population. Furthermore, disparities between central and peripheral city areas exist, particularly concerning prevalent problems with green space, air quality and the provision of public transport. While environmental policies in Vienna are less related to gentrification and displacement compared to other cities (Anguelovski et al., 2018), the authors of both chapters argue that (perceived) inequalities in accessing environmentally friendly services and healthy, liveable environments at the neighbourhood level should be taken seriously. Particular attention should be paid to climate change associated heat waves and its health impacts for the elderly and socially deprived population, which will be key future challenges for environmental justice and sustainability in Vienna.

Vienna's emerging vulnerabilities

In light of the growing tendency towards market-led urban development models across cities and regions, scholars in the field of planning have invoked the notion of urban justice, proposing a conceptual framework for evaluating the social effects of neoliberal urban policies and practices (Marcuse et al., 2009; Fainstein, 2010; Knijn and Lepianka, 2020; Moroni, 2020). Accordingly, Fainstein (2014) proposes that the three governing principles for urban justice include *democracy*, *diversity* and *equity*, which form the rhetoric around urban policy, shaping the quality of urban life. These governing principles aim at promoting urban justice within the broader governance system, advocating greater political representation of non-elite interests regarding cultural recognition and economic redistribution (Fraser, 2009). Consequently, achieving meaningful, democratic outcomes in urban policy-making requires a transversal approach to planning, connecting different policy dimensions of institutional justice, on the one hand; and fostering the inclusion of diverse social groups and their interests by redrawing the boundaries of social justice, on the other hand.

The authors of this volume have addressed how post-Fordist transformation in Vienna has affected the three criteria of justice, cross-cutting the city's four major policy fields – political participation, housing, the labour market and the environment. While observing some trade-offs between economic competitiveness and social cohesion in recent years, their conclusions point out that existing regulatory frameworks for Vienna's urban institutions continue to play a strategic role in mitigating the repercussions of external crises. Strong governmental intervention in the key policy arenas characterises the particular political dimension of Vienna's urban justice, rooted in its top-down policy-making style, mediating the contradictory effect of the deliberative approach

to planning that may reinforce the exclusion of disadvantaged social groups. Strong governmental intervention has been particularly successful in urban development and affordable housing provision, linking its formal policy-making structure to the needs of the broader society (i.e. not just the needy), on the one hand; and limiting the potential interference of market actors, on the other. Regarding the redistributive dimension of urban justice, Vienna's local welfare system remains strong and crucial for the protection of emerging vulnerable populations. Drawing on the autonomy acquired as a consequence of the long-standing decentralisation and institutional capacity it developed, the City of Vienna was able to implement need-oriented policies that addressed urban problems, as well as complementing federal policies with the provision of its own active labour market policies and social housing. This institutional innovation has created *just* access to public services and benefits, and has promoted social inclusion and diversity in community-oriented urban development.

Notwithstanding these institutional capabilities, however, the authors have also identified some exclusionary tendencies in the four policy areas, fuelling socio-economic vulnerability. This is particularly true for non-EU migrants, young people and low-income households. In fact, despite the generous local welfare system, Vienna's transition into an innovation-driven urban economy has engendered a new division of labour, segmenting a large proportion of the city's migrant population into low-wage and low-skill occupations. Currently, this trend towards polarisation among non-EU migrants coincides with the professionalisation of highly skilled EU-15 migrants and the decline of migrant middle classes. Although less pronounced, a series of recent housing reforms have also changed the eligibility criteria for affordable social housing, widening the gap between newcomers and sitting tenants. While continuing the *housing for all* approach, the impact of demographic change has placed new challenges on the right to housing, aggravating housing inequality among low-income households. Paradoxically, these challenges are emerging amid growing opportunities for grassroots participation in urban policy-making, especially in small-scale urban planning and subsidised social housing. In line with Fainstein's (2010, 2014) criticism of the popular demand for deliberative democracy, the current trend in Vienna's urban politics nuances equitable urban development, which is increasingly at odds with democratic principles of political participation, failing to ensure adequate representation of diverse local interests. This changing policy context may have emerged (in part) from the transformation of needs, claims and demands of Vienna's growing population, featured by the declining working-class dominance and the

widening barriers of electoral participation for migrants in urban politics. These changes produce new vulnerabilities, necessitating a new innovative turn in urban policy-making.

Vienna, a *just city* of the 21st century? Challenges for future urban development

If Vienna wants to remain a *just city*, with a high degree of inclusiveness, it must address several challenges, ranging from persistent (low but rising) structural inequalities to demographic transitions, from climate change to digitalisation and multi-level governance. These challenges do not pertain to a single dimension, but cut across the whole urban social fabric.

Social inequalities as a challenge

As the chapters in this book have documented, inequalities are on the rise and remain one of the key challenges for urban futures. Economic and labour market restructuring processes produce new socioeconomic divides and vulnerabilities that bring about an increase of people at-risk of poverty and living in precarious financial situations (Verwiebe et al., 2020). In this regard, trends of digitalisation will further impact Vienna's service-oriented labour market in the coming years. Here, much depends on Vienna's ability to create local jobs and invest in future technologies, ecology and digitalisation, addressing the gap between low and high qualified labour force. Vienna's current urban development strategies (e.g. Smart City Strategy) is a promising way into the future, going beyond a mere technological approach and embracing social inclusion targets. Yet, the great challenge relates to how social policies can be innovated beyond active labour market approaches, focusing on educational training and investments. Raising low incomes in specific branches (e.g. through minimum income schemes and the reduction of precarious jobs) will be the basis upon which to build more empowering and capacity-building policies. The feasibility of such policies depends on the future availability of financial resources which, in view of the city's growing budget deficit, points to an additional challenge that Vienna needs to address.

The challenge of dualisation

The future redistributive capacity of Vienna's housing model will also depend, to a large extent, on how labour market and social policies

might interrupt the trends of dualisation and socio-spatial inequalities over the coming years. This is true despite the fact that eligibility criteria for a large proportion of municipal housing stock and parts of the new subsidised stock have become targeted at the inclusion of vulnerable groups, as well as including parts of the (increasingly precarious) middle classes (Friesenecker and Kazepov, 2021). Continuous investment in maintaining old (and building new) social housing each year, as well as recent reforms countering neoliberal tendencies, will potentially strengthen the redistributive capacity of the City's housing model (Kadi et al., 2021). However, this capacity will diminish, especially in combination with population growth (+350,000 inhabitants over the last 20 years: <https://bit.ly/2TjOIS7>), and diversifying housing needs. Moreover, policies geared at liberalisation and financialisation of the private housing segment need to be countered, especially at the federal and European level, highlighting the multi-level governance strategies that the city should expand.

The climate change challenge

Another key challenge, cutting across all policy themes, relates to the climate crisis. Countering social and spatial inequalities is a key issue for an environmentally *just city*. The city is in a strong position when it comes to providing public infrastructure that combines social and ecological aspects (Bärnthaler et al., 2020). The ability to control key services (such as water and energy production, the public transportation system, the housing sector and city planning) through public ownership in times of austerity and increasing public debt play a crucial role in countering socio-spatial inequalities. In view of this, measures to increase the participation (but also responsibility) of citizens in co-creating their local environments also represent promising ways towards a more inclusive and *just city*. This also implies addressing inequalities in accessing environmentally friendly infrastructure, including green space. This became crucial during the COVID-19 pandemic but is also a key challenge in countering the exposure to environmental harms, such as the effects of heatwaves on elderly and the socially deprived population.

The challenge of participation in multi-level governance

These emerging challenges resonate with another key challenge for the future, which is maintaining political participation in complex multi-level governance arrangements. One example of how this challenge

plays out at the *horizontal* level is in regard to integrating the growing numbers of the population who are excluded from voting. Indeed, the internationalisation of the city has increased the *electoral gap*: 30% of the Viennese population are ineligible to vote because they do not have citizenship. Moreover, among eligible voters, turnout rates decreased and protest votes increased (especially among the working class). While Vienna has developed its repertoire of participatory processes, at least at the neighbourhood level, spatial inequalities and uneven social patterns in participatory processes limit the ability to address shortcomings in representative democracy. In order to close the electoral and participatory gap, there is a need for an improvement in the inclusion of the foreign-born and immigrant populations in civil society associations and political and administrative offices. An example of how the challenge plays out along the *vertical* dimension of multi-level governance relates to the City's capacity to politically counteract ongoing welfare retrenchments and neoliberal oriented policies. Increased efforts to build broader political alliances between Austrian and European cities, and rebuilding solidarity among federal states beyond party interests, NGOs and civil society associations, will be crucial in transforming the upper-tier levels towards complementary multi-level arrangements that focus on improving the living conditions of residents, and reducing inequalities.

Such challenges are common to most European cities; the existing institutional infrastructure in Vienna and its resilience provide a good starting point from which to address them. Will the city be willing to take on the challenge?

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