3. HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE CITY OF VIENNA

The core zone of the Historic Center of Vienna as inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List comprises an area of approx. 371 ha and comprises, from the historical point of view,

- the **medieval core substance**, i.e. the nucleus of the city, which itself builds upon the structure of the Roman settlement;
- the **large-scale building projects of the Baroque period** with their radial urban axes extending outwards from the center, still dominated today by the former summer residences of the nobility with their parks and gardens, and, thirdly,
- the restructured urban landscape of the **Gründerzeit** with the world-famous buildings of the early Modernist era.

A detailed scientific appraisal of the city’s historical development has already been provided in the papers submitted to support the nomination (pages 11-31) and in connection with the documents prepared by the office of the World Heritage Committee for the meeting in Helsinki.

Generally speaking, a diagram showing this development will thus suffice for the purposes of the present report (see fold-out map on the following page).

The diagram of the city’s development phases provides a striking illustration of the above-mentioned overlapping of the individual architectural periods, which repeatedly built upon the historic strata that preceded them. The changes made in the second half of the 19th century are especially evident in this context:

From 1857 onwards, after the razing of the historic ring of fortifications dating from the Middle Ages and on the site of the former "glacis", a wide strip of land around the city which had been kept largely free of buildings until that date, the world-famous Ringstrasse – or, more appropriately, Ringstrasse zone – came into being as the embodiment of the period known as the **Gründerzeit**.
But the building activities of the Gründerzeit were in no way restricted to the development of this newly-created area of urban expansion. Absolutely in keeping with the Parisian model, they also made extensive inroads into the historic fabric of the city. As a result of this demolition of historic sections of the old town – without doubt a monstrously aggressive act from today’s point of view – there emerged in their turn – as in Budapest and many other European cities – important creations that formed part of a new Gründerzeit Gesamtkunstwerk. In Vienna these structural inroads into the heart of the old city created the magnificent streets of Kärntner Strasse and Graben, the architectural show-pieces of the Historic Center to this day, as well as developing the areas on both sides of the Danube Canal.

Within Vienna’s historic urban fabric the buildings of the Gründerzeit rub shoulders with the buildings of the world-famous Viennese Modernist movement, which is inseparably linked with names such as Otto Wagner, Adolf Loos and Josef Hoffmann. Although the encroachments of this period in the Historic Center are exclusively associated with individual buildings, nevertheless they too represented inroads into the historic substance of the city at the time. The first building in the city with a plain, unornamented facade, the new Michaeler Haus designed by Adolf Loos and erected in 1909-1911 directly opposite the Imperial Palace (Hofburg), caused a scandal which has since become famous the world over. And in 1931/32, to plans by the architects Siegfried Theiss and Hans Jaksch, the first (and, to date, only) high-rise building directly in Vienna’s core zone was also built. Despite its sixteen floors, it not only blended well into the historic townscape thanks to its terraced form, but is now under a preservation order as one of the key European buildings of the nineteen-thirties.

The structural changes which arose as a result of the impact of the Second World War should also be given special attention in this regard. Although the war damage in Vienna was relatively slight, both in general and in comparison to the damage caused in other cities, especially in north-eastern and eastern Europe, it should nevertheless be noted that there were 807 cases of minor, partial and total destruction in the Inner City. More or less every second building in the historic old town was thus either destroyed or damaged. Thanks to the insight and intelligence of
the politicians of the time, the reconstruction and restoration of the city were accomplished swiftly and in accordance with conservation principles, the citizens of Vienna amazingly agreeing that the restoration of the great national monuments should be tackled first and the reconstruction of the residential buildings afterwards. The reopening of the Vienna State Opera House and the Burgtheater in 1955 to mark the official withdrawal of the Allied powers from occupied Vienna are mentioned here by way of example.

However, two of the historic areas of Vienna bordering the Inner City district were so heavily damaged by the bombing, which was concentrated on the bridges over Vienna's waterways, that it was no longer possible to rebuild them in a manner which would have preserved the historic townscape. These were

a) the area on both sides of the Danube Canal, especially the adjacent section of Vienna's 2nd District (Vienna-Leopoldstadt) to the north, and

b) the area of Vienna's 3rd District (Vienna-Landstraße) just across the River Wien from the Inner City, where the "Wien-Mitte" urban regeneration area also lies.

In these two areas of the city the ruins of the historic building stock were completely demolished immediately after World War II and a new urban fabric was constructed, which even then was completely different from Vienna's old town in terms of height, volume and structure of the built environment.