

Landscape Narratives

DOCUMENTATION OF AND RESEARCH ON DESIGNED LANDSCAPES
THE ARCHIVE OF AUSTRIAN LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE LARCHIV AT BOKU VIENNA

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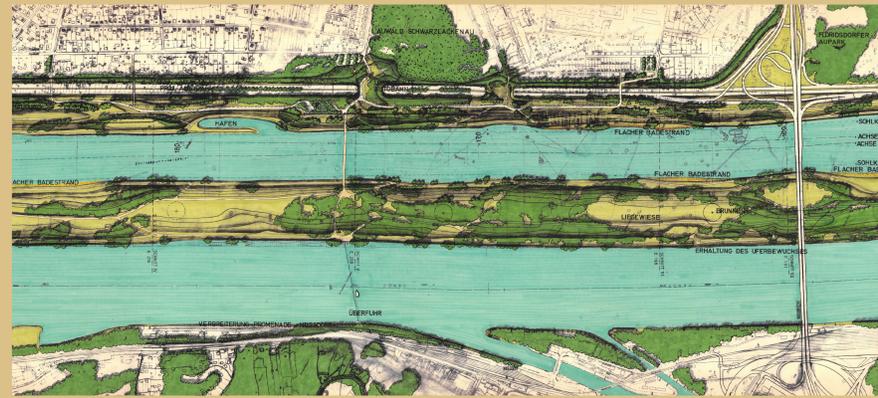
Plans, sketches and photos show how landscape architects shaped the artificial Danube Island in Vienna and the Wachau landscape, today a World Heritage Site. It is the ephemeral nature of plants, which gives archival documents a key role in ensuring the long-term existence – material or virtual – of landscape architectural creations (Hennaut 2021: 106). Analysis of these documents contribute to a thorough understanding of the historical development of the built environment and of key contemporary issues, such as the climate and biodiversity crises, rapid urbanization, and spatial justice.

Danube Island and New Danube

Rivers have been elevated into prestigious areas for social urbanites to gather in, which calls for a design that interlinks the issues of flood protection, ecology, and the accessibility and use of open space (Prominski et al. 2012: 10, Way 2018). In the late 1960s, a new flood-protection project for the Vienna Danube was of mere technical character. It was only in the wake of the global rise of postmodern environmentalism and serious public concern over the continuous destruction of the wetland relicts that the design of the 21-kilometre-long island and the parallel flood-relief channel was transformed into a multipurpose riverscape.

Landscape architects Gottfried & Anton Hansjakob and Wilfried Kirchner designed the middle section of the new island, which is close to residential neighbourhoods on both sides of the Danube and connected to public transport, like an urban park, while the northern and southern sections of the island were drafted to support processes of natural succession. A comprehensive typology of banks should meet flood-protection regulations as well as guarantee an attractive design for recreational use (Krippner and Grimm-Pretner 2020).

Over the last decades, this artificial landscape has managed five major floods and turned into a riverscape of major recreational and ecological importance for the city. Today, three underground lines link the area with the city centre and zones of new urban densification on both sides of the river. It proves that the river design – its form, banks, infrastructure, and structural plantings – is a strong framework which can cope with and adapt to changes in demand, use, and management.



All over the island, meadows and woodland alternate and form enclosed areas as well as zones that open up to the Danube and the New Danube (flood-relief channel).

Design concept by Gottfried and Anton Hansjakob, 1976 (LArchiv)



1980



1981

Excavation of the New Danube close to the Reichsbrücke, then a temporary bridge after the collapse in 1976.

Franz Meneder (Wikimedia Commons)



1984

The river design acknowledges the site's tremendous potential for recreational activities. Sun terraces during and after construction.

Franz Meneder (Wikimedia Commons)



1985

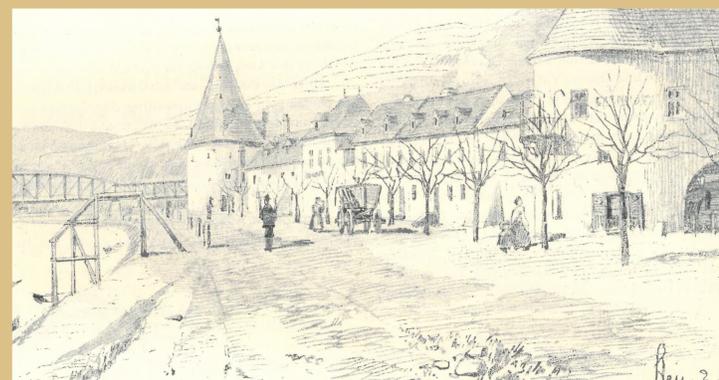
Wachau Routes: arts-based perspectives on a riverine landscape

Landscape is a system in constant flux. Infrastructure and traffic routes form landscapes, they physically shape the terrain, are part of the everyday aesthetics and are sometimes designed for observing travellers. Wachau Routes focuses on the hitherto little-noticed theme of transport routes through the Wachau and the way these routes are seen from different perspectives. Railway line, road, cycle paths and walking trails are examined within the recently started four-year project. The Danube shaped the landscape and as the oldest traffic route through the Wachau, it plays a key role.

Arts-based scientific methods are used to establish and illustrate relationships between the different transport routes, the landscape, and the people. A variety of historical and contemporary ways of viewing and representing the routes through the Wachau are looked at through the lenses of landscape architecture and art.

Historical narratives are used to piece together the perspectives of different protagonists and to create a layered "image" of the Wachau. The project takes up the continuity of the artistic engagement with the Wachau starting in the 19th century. Image interpretation is applied to artistic and technical representations of traffic routes and is based on existing material compiled by archival research. In the research process, current and past ways of viewing and representing the landscape with its traffic routes are critically reflected and provide new insights into the design of these routes as an integral part of Wachau landscape.

🔗 More about this project: www.wachauroutes.at



Wachau railway was planned as an embankment track. The drawing makes the impact on the riverine landscape visible which led to a new alignment close to the hills through tunnels.

Pichler, R. (1910): Der Bau der Bahn Krems-Grein vom Standpunkte der Denkmalpflege. Mitteilungen der k. k. Zentralkommission, Band IX, Wien.

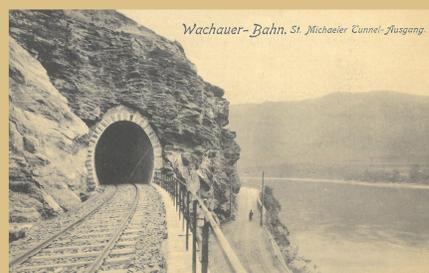


Weidenkirchen, Wachau



Historic postcards compared to the current landscape show the transformation of the riverbank.

LArchiv | R. Tusch



Archival records from a wide range of collections provide a rich source for image interpretation.

1910 Verlag Johann Saska, Krems | Sammlung Tusch



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WATCH THE VIDEO

The construction of
the Danube Island

Interviews with participating land-
scape architects, planners and ecologists



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