

qualitalk

Information on Technology and Society

June 2018

Internet Version

ISSN 1615-9667

19. Volume

62. Edition

Printed Version

ISSN 1435-1641

24. Volume

78. Edition

Viennese are known for their love of a good coffee. No wonder, therefore, that they have an abundance of terms for different types of it: some say there are over 40 »specialties«. One of the most popular one is »Melange«, made out of equal parts of black coffee and foamed hot milk. It is said that »Melange« was created in 1830. At that time, French was still »en vogue« among the well-to-do, and the French word »Mélange« stuck to the brew.

To have a taste of real Viennese »Melange«, why don't you come to Vienna and and have a »Melange« at one of the traditional Cafés together with

Oliver Schuster

Page 2

Viennese Melange

The Blend does it:
City and State Politics

Page 3

Mobility In The Metropolis

Page 4

Living in Vienna –
Different Types of
Communal Housing

Page 7

Impressum



Arnold Schwarzenegger right before taking a ride in the »Bim« (streetcar) in Vienna: On the occasion of the Austrian World Summit 2018 the Austro-American movie actor and ex-Governor of California takes a picture of a streetcar graced with his likeness, as a promotion of Vienna's public transportation.

(Credit: Johannes Zinner, WienerLinien)

Viennese Melange

The Blend does it:
City and State Politics

In this year's poll to rank the World's major cities according to their livability, MERCER QUALITY OF LIVING SURVEY again gives Vienna the top rating, for the ninth year in a row. However, one should keep in mind that Consulting Group Mercer caters mainly to organizations searching for environments attractive for investments. Its questions were directed at influencers who make decisions regarding living and working conditions, mainly for people out of their own ... such as diplomats, leading

Vienna with Zurich (Switzerland), or with Auckland (New Zealand) which occupy second and third place respectively, behind Vienna? Furthermore, what does it really mean to rise by one rank or drop by one rank? One has to look at this ranking as a marketing tool that also is channeling tourists to hotspots. The historic center of Vienna (its first district, lovingly called the »City«) is rather suffocating under the never-ending streams of tourists. Additionally, real estate owners in the City eager to cash by charging ever higher rents, thereby kicking out old-fashioned stores — most of them with a tradition going back to the days of the monarchy — and attracting more and more deep-pocketed international high-fashion stores of the kind one can see nowadays in Paris, London and other European metropolises. Renters of apartments are being driven out as well, so that the slightly refurbished apartments can be leased out at higher rents; few »indigenous« people can afford to live in the »City« proper anymore.

According to the latest statistics 1.8 million Austrian citizens have their principal residence in Vienna. That means that 20.4% of them (or: every fifth Austrian) live in this city. Compare this, for example, to Munich: just 1.7% of the citizens of Germany call Munich their home ... though some Bavarian politicians at times think that they are the ones who should call the shots for the whole of Germany.

Due to its size, the voters living in Vienna carry quite some weight in national elections. And in local government elections, they cast their ballots for the center-left Social



Intersection near Vienna's Prater amusement park, featuring its ferris wheel (»Riesenrad«) and streetcar of the A-line, of the type M-m2/3, in August 1962. (Credit: Archives of WienerLinien)

company representatives and others who have already a certain degree of experience living in foreign cities.

It therefore isn't necessarily an expression of how the city inhabitants feel about their city; therefore the question is: do the »natives« themselves believe that their city is that »great«? They most likely won't have a choice where to live; how could they compare

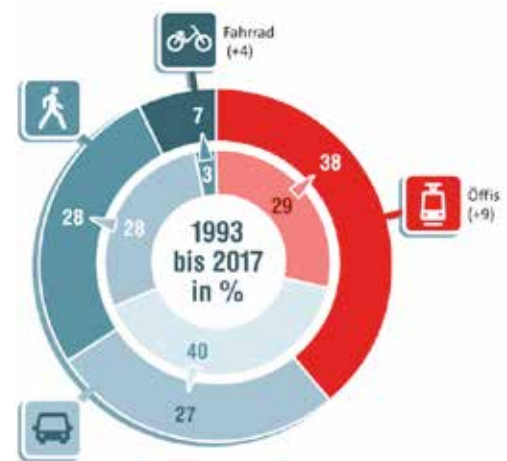
Democrats, ever since the end of the monarchy in 1918. Though their percentage had decreased somewhat, in conjunction with the equally leftist Greens, Vienna's center-left/left government is in contrasting juxtaposition to the current national government formed by the center-right People's Party and the extreme-right Freedom Party. People in other countries may think that Vienna's politics is representative of Austrian politics, but that is not true at present. After 23 years, 6 months and 16 days in office, Michael Häupl, Vienna's mayor ceded his position to Michael Ludwig, end of May 2018; Mr Ludwig was elected with the votes of Social-Democrats and Greens. Like Mr Häupl, who during his reign always stressed the social-oriented aspect in his policies, Mr Ludwig also said, at his accession, that » ... contrary to the current Federal Government, I am of the opinion that social partnership will have a strong future. I am resolved to regularly conduct meetings of the highest levels of our social partners at Vienna City Hall. To further the cooperation between trade unions, the Chamber of Workers and Employees, as well as Vienna's business is of utmost importance to me.«

Vienna not only is a municipality but, since 1922, also one of the nine Federated States of the Republic of Austria. Therefore, the mayor of Vienna is at the same time also the minister-president (»Landeshauptmann«) of the Federated State of Vienna, comparable to minister-presidents of Federated States – such as Bavaria or Hesse in Germany. The members of government of the Federated State of Vienna are at the same time members of the Municipal

Senate of Vienna. This dual function is of great importance in the political field. One example: it is the Federated State of Vienna that brought an action at Austria's Federal Constitutional Court against the Federal Government because of its rescinding the law implementing a nationwide smoking ban in all bars and restaurants. That law was enacted by the previous federal government, a coalition of Social Democrats (SPÖ) and the People's Party (ÖVP), to take effect on 1 May 2018. To appease its new coalition partner, the smoker-friendly, extreme-right Freedom Party, Chancellor Sebastian Kurz of the People's Party agreed to have the law repealed. □

Mobility In The Metropolis

Vienna can pride itself of having an excellent public transportation system within the city limits. Statistics tell us that every day, 2.6 million passengers use the »Öffi«, as they are lovingly called by the citizens: streetcars (»Bim«), buses, subways. Last year, 778 000 annual passes were sold, more than the total number of cars registered in the city. And the trend of sales of passes is upwards. Though one can applaud decrease from 40% to 27% of car use in the city, and improved fuel economy of modern cars as compared to older models, one has also to consider that twenty-five years ago, around 1993, cars were mostly of the compact type, consuming on average less fuel than today, the popularity of ever larger cars with off-road features, real or pretended SUV



Public transportation: from 1993 through 2017 use of passenger cars in Vienna decreased markedly, compared to use of public transportation (»Öffis«) (courtesy of Wiener Linien).



»Schanigarten«
during summer time, many restaurants and cafés put out tables and chairs in front of their locale, much enjoyed by smokers (in most restaurants, smoking is now prohibited, though the law is still contested in Vienna).

Less advantageous: resulting privatization of public space narrows sidewalks and reduces parking spots for cars. Note: the Municipal Government has to approve installation, and if they do, they levy a charge for it.

has been on the increase. Increased gross weight, greater wind resistance mostly outweigh the gain made in pure engine fuel economy, and enlarge the environmental burden. Additionally, in recent times, the frequency of *last mile* delivery of on-line purchase orders has increased significantly, thanks to Amazon & others, which data are not included in the otherwise very informative pie chart. It could be that the increase of travel distance may also be due to bicycle delivery that wind their way in death-defying maneuvers through traffic – notwithstanding marking of separate bicycles lanes in same areas of the city. I rarely encounter normal cyclists on my ventures outside to the super market, but rather the food deliverers.

Contrary to the situation in many other large cities, where public transportation has been transferred to private companies, Vienna's public transportation is firmly in the hand of the municipal government through its subsidiary »Wiener Linien« (Vienna lines). Costs to the user are highly subsidized; e.g. for seniors (here above the age of 63) can purchase an annual pass for 235 Euro (approx. US\$ 273.00 at current exchange rates). Compare this to the price for the *65+ Years Annual Pass* of the Frankfurt metropolitan area transport network which sets you back 639 Euro (approx. US\$ 743.00); and you have to be two years older than in Vienna to take advantage of that one.

Vienna did not follow the trend over decades in other large cities to reduce or even scrap its streetcars. Mainz, the capital city of Rhineland-Palatinate, Germany, had a network of streetcar rails of 39 km (about 24 sm) gradually reduced to 19 km (11.8 sm). It was

only on 11 December 2016 that the municipality of Mainz opened a new track of 9.2 km (5.7 sm), from its main R/R station to Lerchenberg, a suburb know mainly for its broadcasting center for ZDF (Second German Television). By the way (no pun intended) the track passes the soccer stadium of Mainz's venerable Football Club (founded in 1905) »1st FSV Mainz«, at present still named *Opel Arena* though no one knows right now what will happen to the stadium's name after the car manufacturer Opel was sold by its U.S. parent company GM to France's PSA (Peugeot Société Anonyme) that apparently wants to reign in costs.

Streetcar tracks in Vienna amount to 220 km (137 sm). Obviously, the Municipal Government realized that the aging populace, out of a general feeling of unease, rather shies away from using subways. Elderly people travel mostly short distances for which subways with its access over stairs, escalators and elevators are rather time consuming. Frequent repairs on those hinder accessibility even more.

Car traffic seems to be a continual headache for Vienna's politicians, and rightly so. Lately, with discussion of building a tunnel 9 km (5.6 sm) in length underneath a natural reserve, Lobau, on the eastern corner of Vienna, has brought again Deputy Mayor Maria Vassillakou of the Greens party – famous for her insistence to convert one of the main shopping streets in Vienna, the Mariahilfer Straße, to a pedestrians-only area – to the fore. The Greens fear that with the construction of a freeway underneath the natural reserve thereby completing Vienna's north-east loop, car traffic in Vienna only will increase. In order to contain that Ms Vassillakou proposes



a City Toll. Furthermore: costs are estimated to be 1.9 billion Euro; completion planned for 2025. Minister of Transport, Mr Norbert Hofer (FPÖ) is opposed to a City Toll and counter-offered a nationwide public transportation pass.

But for commuters to Vienna, life is already difficult enough: in almost all areas, 1st through 10th, 12th, 14th through 18th, and 20th district, one can park in the street only if purchasing a short-term parking chit and put it in the window. People living in the area can get an annual parking sticker at a fairly steep price. Depending on the district between 90 and 120 Euro (US\$105 to US\$140) not counting additional fees at application, between 50 and 70 Euro (US\$ 58.00 through US\$ 81.00). Enforcement is strict: uniformed security personnel roaming the streets checking continually in real time parked cars. But even with a parking permit it is difficult to find a parking space on the streets: building constructions, restaurants' *Schanigarten* reduce the available parking spaces. □

Living in Vienna – Different Types of Communal Housing

Living situation in Vienna is more unstressed than in many other large cities in Europe, due to the fact that the Municipal Government owns a substantial amount of rental apartment and additionally subsidizes apartment buildings. There are no plans of privatization of apartment buildings currently owned by the Government. Support, information for apartment renters is provided free of charge, promptly and competently. It provides people looking for advice a first orientation on a low-threshold level.

After the defeat in World War I (1914 – 1918) and the end of the monarchy, poverty was extensive. Income from sales to the Court was no longer there. A new political direction of society had to be established without delay. Of foremost concern was providing

Municipal Apartment Buildings erected by the Municipal Government of Vienna, since the end of World War I run by its Social Democratic Party. The buildings all bear the inscription preferably in the party's color red: **»Built by the Vienna Municipality in the year ...«** plus the year they were built in. Quite often, they stand out with their weathered, grayed façades as marked.



Corner Tower of an apartment building from 1906 refurbished with small windows to accommodate additional apartments in the former attic of the building.

adequate living quarters to the populace. Social building programs started in 1919 with the construction of town houses, followed by large-sized apartment complexes. **Red Vienna** became famous for e.g. the humongous *Karl-Marx-Hof*, planned by one of famous architect Otto Wagner's students, Karl Ehn. It provided living quarters for 5000 people. The total length of the complex was over 1 km (0.62 sm), and it established Vienna's reputation in the field of social housing.

Municipal buildings erected after World War II did not reach that level; they look often dreary and neglected.

Still, as of today there live more than 500 000 people in about 220 000 social building apartments. During the next five years, plans are to add another 4 000 such apartments, mainly in high-rise buildings on the outskirts of Vienna. Rental fees are capped at 7.50 Euro per square meter (US\$ 7.30 per square yard). Distribution of available rental apartments is regulated through »Wiener Wohnen« (»Living in Vienna«), a subsidiary of the Municipal Government; it is tied in to income of the applicant: for one person, annual net income can't exceed 45 510 Euro (US\$ 52,883); for three persons, 76 750 Euro (US\$ 89,184). Additional conditions: prior two year having lived in Vienna, Austrian (or equivalent) citizenship. Once authorized, one receives a »viewing certificate« for one apartment. If the applicant rejects that apartment, he/she can receive one more »viewing certificate«. However, should the applicant again reject the apartment, then he/she has to go to the back of the queue, to receive anew a »viewing certificate«.

There is, of course, also the free market: mainly old buildings, often former palais of nobility that received updates needed for modern living: elevators, sound-proved windows, roof terraces, penthouses, underground garages. Requirements of middle and upper middle class families in those times led to construction of comparable palais for the well-to-do bourgeois, often decorated with historical elements of baroque and renaissance. Its owners generally occupied just the *bel etage* (level above the street level)



Eyesores – adjacent to Karmeliter-Markt at the former Jewish Quarter: Two different examples of recent addition of top-level stories to increase revenue from apartment rentals – frequently done with little if any consideration for historical façades.
Credit: Dr. Dieter von Jettmar

of the building and rented out the remaining space as living quarters or offices.

Even »general« apartments built around 1900 show an amazing architectural variety. In recent times, many of them had the attic restructured to accommodate mansards, often split-level which means, not barrier-free,

and few people would want to spend the money to install a stairlift.

To preserve the overall historical impression of a building, apartments installed in its attic generally have only small skylights. Occasionally, one can see somewhat outrageous constructions reminding one of an UFO just landed. □

Impressum

qualitalk edited by
Chris Schuth | Max-Planck-Straße 45
55124 Mainz | Germany
phone (+49) 06131 - 476466

www.chris-schuth.de
mail (schnabel-a) chris-schuth.de

June 20178
published four times a year.
Pictures: by the author, if not stated otherwise.

ISSN 1615-9667 [Internet]
ISSN 1435-1641 [printed Edition]
German-English translation by
Dr. Dieter von Jettmar, Vienna (Austria)

qualitalk will be forwarded to registered readers by e-mail and can be downloaded from the internet via
www.chris-schuth.de/qtalk_78_en.pdf

Readers not connected to the internet receive the publication by snail mail.
© Chris Schuth



Chris Schuth
Photo by Maurice de Chlourigon