

Tough Choice – Easy Decision

How to Handle Installations in Public Urban Space

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Abstract

In cities of increasing density, public space is under pressure from both commercial and non-commercial interests. Private installations in public space, such as kiosks, pavement cafes, advertising, and parklets, influence its usability and appearance. Based on the assumption that such installations can also alter and define the inclusiveness and accessibility of public space, the authors argue that the process of granting permission for and regulating the design and positioning of such installations is not only an administrative decision but one that is connected with planning strategies and political considerations. This article presents the theoretical background and the ensuing guidelines for a consultancy study for the administration of the city of Vienna. Showcasing a variety of case studies, we discuss the impact of installations on the surrounding public space and develop criteria for their regulation and authorisation in three thematic layers, covering the social, spatial, and design aspects of a submission. The innovative social layer formulates a premise and raises the question: Does the general public benefit from this installation? With this in mind, the authors transform political agendas, policies, and strategic planning goals into a pragmatic toolset, aiming to support the fair and balanced use of public space. The results of the study have already been integrated into a new set of guidelines entitled 'Thematic Concept: Public Space', which is part of Vienna's Urban Development Plan 'STEP2025'. The guidelines are to be actively applied by the city administration in the future assessment of usage requests for commercial and non-commercial installations in public space.

Keywords

landscape architecture; commercial use; non-commercial use; installations; public space; regulation; policy; guidelines



FIGURE 1 Parklet in Vienna. An example of the engagement of residents to appropriate their neighbourhoods. These forms of private, non-commercial installations are politically supported and promoted. Parklets have to be open and accessible to everyone in order to be granted. The initiators are responsible for their installation and maintenance. Most are situated in parking lanes or sidewalk extensions, furnished with seating options and plantings.

Introduction

As Vienna is one of the most rapidly growing cities in Europe (Stadt Wien, 2018), more and more actors claim to use its limited space. Belonging to everyone and apparently available, public space becomes the object of diverse desires in the compact and dense city. Protection and good management of the available space are therefore essential. It is not least a political decision, how publicly usable the space of a city really is and how it is allowed to be dedicated to private interests – be they commercial or non-commercial.

When private individuals or companies make use of public space through a physical object as an installation they have to apply for permission by the city administration to place it. One of the departments involved is the one responsible for architecture and urban design, which judges whether the installation is suitable for the urban open space or decreases its quality.

This paper presents the theoretical background of a consultancy study on installations in public space in Vienna. Within the study, the authors formulated easy-to-use checklists for the assessment of four types of installations which cover commercial ones like pavement cafés, kiosks, and outdoor media structures (advertising) as well as non-commercial ones like parklets. The study was carried out from 2016 to 2017 by the Institute of Landscape Architecture at the University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences for the Municipality of Vienna. It was commissioned by the Municipal Department for Architecture and Urban Design, Vienna.

All installations as described in this text are physical objects placed in public space for a limited time. As structural objects, they are relevant to the city's physical appearance as well as to the usability of public space. The authors identified those effects and developed criteria according to which the different installations can be assessed, evaluated, and approved or rejected in a simple way. The resulting checklists will be available to both applicants and the municipal departments and are to be applied by the municipality in the future.

The installations covered in the study – kiosks, parklets, adverts, and pavement cafés - can be seen as indicators for the political position of how to ensure an inclusive public space. All of them have a clear impact on public space and are literally using common ground. It is therefore necessary to avoid fragmentation or disruption of public space. Further, it is crucial to determine how sufficient space free of consumption can be maintained and how commercialisation tendencies can be reduced. To administer this policy of representing the interests of the general public, the city must translate the political intentions into understandable instruments, in this case checklists.

Before giving an insight into the elaborated criteria and the formulation of these checklists, the following chapters cover the usability of public space in a theoretical discourse and consecutively depict the political position in relation to the inclusiveness of public space in Vienna. The checklists are consequently a result of a formulated political position of what public space should be brought together with planning and urban design principles.



FIGURE 2 Pavement café in Vienna. Pavement cafés in Vienna can be either placed alongside the pavement or can use the parking space in front of the restaurant. Transparent but clear borders, as well as discreet colours, make this installation appropriate to its urban surroundings.

Public space is under pressure

Public space, as referred to in this paper, includes all community-owned areas such as streets and squares, parks, forecourts, and passages. All permanent and temporary interventions that take place in it must be aimed towards the benefit to the community, building upon the definition by Häberlin et al. (Häberlin & Furchtlehner in Hauck, 2017, p. 172). Even if, in principle, public spaces are accessible to everyone, this accessibility and usability has to be secured through political and administrative measures. The installations subject to this study are placed in public space that is community owned and managed by the municipality. This means the municipality is responsible for their assessment and can decide upon permission and private use of public space.

We further share the definition of a number of authors that public space is to be considered as the space of representation and expression of a society; it is then in its use and symbolism a relational space that is produced and reproduced within social processes. Public space is an ongoing process in transformation by individuals and groups who appropriate and use it (Lów, 2001, pp. 155ff; Municipal Department 18, 2006).

Public ownership is a basis for public space as is its character as a collective infrastructure of social encounter and interaction. It may be doubted, as sociologist Andrej Holm puts forward, that it is truly accessible to everyone without restriction (Holm, 2016, pp. 2-3). Processes of exclusion have always been omnipresent as sociologist Walter Siebel supports: "Different cities in different epochs differ mainly in who is kept out of which spaces in which way" (Siebel, 2003, p. 252). Nevertheless, public space, as envisioned by Vienna's current politicians, can be defined with social scientist Jan Wehrheim (2011, pp. 173-174) as being generally socially and structurally accessible with real presence of different social and cultural groups; as space owned by the city and therefore at the public's disposal; and as a space that offers a range of optional activities (Gehl & Svarre, 2013, p.16) some of which might be supported by installations. When aiming at a just city, public space has to support spatial justice in a compact and mixed urban fabric: people of different socio-economic status should be able to benefit equally from their cities in physical, economic, environmental, political, and social terms.

This public space "of unconditional, non-discriminatory and unrestricted access" (Holm, 2016, p. 2) is in demand most in places where it is rare. Commercial uses put more and more pressure on public space (Ritt, 2016, pp. 8ff). They are generally articulated, designed and promoted by their operators, who are often supported by a strong economic lobby. Increasing commercialisation, where the paying user is welcome, can bar or suppress other public activities (Zukin in Vroom, 2006, p. 260). For non-commercial use and weaker user groups, the city administration must take over advocacy, as a lobby for public space in order to keep an inclusive, democratic, social space for all citizens (Bork et al., 2015, p. 25; Häberlin & Furchtlehner in Hauck, 2017, pp. 172ff), a real "publicly usable space", as Peter Marcuse puts it (Marcuse, 2003). Additionally, liveliness through enabling a variety of activities in public space is a key asset for the quality of life in the city (Gehl, 2010, pp. 12f, 61ff). Provided that third parties are not endangered or burdened and their use does not cause any damage to the public space itself, there is no such thing as too much non-commercial use, as some authors claim. In contrast, too much commercial use occurs when important public functions like mobility, ecology, and safety are endangered (Bork, Klingler, & Zech, 2015, pp. 39-40).

The (re)design of public spaces can follow a maxim of 'ideal use' in terms of functionality, hierarchy, heterogeneity, separation, or exclusion. Politics and subsequently planning can influence the extent to which a place is designed to be inviting or exclusionary, whether it enables or impedes certain forms of appropriation. It contains current social preferences and rules as well as individual ideas of the planner and a professional understanding of "good public space" (Häberlin & Furchtlehner in Hauck, 2017, p. 176). Installations placed in public space become part of this composition. Their position, form, materiality, and colour form part of the overall image of the space. These visual aspects have been dealt with in former permission processes, whereas the overall impact was less regarded.

When dealing with all these different installations and their assessment, a number of aspects needed to be considered: As we argue, all installations can be a means to further activities in otherwise anonymous public spaces, specifically the streets. They can complement the city's functional program, promote identification with the environment (feel good, feel responsible), improve communication and social exchange, and allow appropriation. As physical objects – often agglomerations of objects – placed in urban space, they can not only evoke activity, but possibly alter the image, ambiance, and character of space – in a positive or a negative way. They can also be obstacles, occupy and clutter valuable space, intercept important view lines or cause distraction (Mehta, 2013, pp. 133ff; Häberlin & Furchtlehner in Hauck, 2017, pp. 172ff; Kreutzer, 1995; Bork et al., 2015, pp. 40, 44).



FIGURE 3 Kiosk in Vienna. Kiosks are 'typical' installations in urban public space. They complement the functional programme of a city but also use common ground for private, commercial interests. It is the municipalities' role to control privatisation tendencies and safeguard a sufficient amount of publicly usable space, as well as make decisions on the placement of such installations from an urban design perspective.

Vienna's public space - How to strike a balance?

As in most cities, in Vienna a large share of the public space is streets of which around two thirds "are used for the flow of motorised traffic and parking" (Municipal Department 18, 2015, p. 10; ILA, 2015).

In the past, most public space was primarily defined and designed as a traffic area. Zoning, crossings, proportions, and rules are based on a traffic-systemic approach stemming from a modernistic, techno-centric view. The requirements of motorised transport often still determine the distribution and use of public space. This dilemma is also reflected in the legal foundations. Road traffic regulations only insufficiently legitimate required uses such as stay, play, and seating. All non-traffic uses in Viennese streets are considered 'special uses'. They require a license or a private law agreement from the city (Pichler, 2016, p. 88). In Vienna, the legal basis for this is the *Gebrauchsabgabengesetz* [utility tax law] (GAG, 2016). It defines for which purposes and at what costs public space may be used. Such purposes may be pavement cafés, kiosks, or others.

Being aware of the above, Vienna's green party deputy mayor, head of urban development department, and therefore contractor of the study at hand, has initiated a political programme to enhance individual as well as communal use and appropriation of public space. Vienna, as one of 8 European Human Rights Cities (whose policies refer explicitly to international human right standards and programmes) announced in the government agreement that within the framework "priorities are being taken, especially in the areas of inclusion, distributive justice and social security" (Stadt Wien, 2015, p. 100; Human Rights Cities, 2018).

To secure spatial justice, corresponding necessities have been formulated by decision makers, administration, and planning professionals in order to meet the different demands to balance appropriation interests and mitigate conflicts of use. Official studies and publications by the city administration include the following commitments which relate to the concept, design, use, and exploitation of public space (Municipal Department 18, 2008; Municipal Department 18, 2014):

- Contact and encounters are important components of life and play a role in mitigating the problems of increasingly small flats, an increasing singular society, and loneliness (Municipal Department 18, 2006, p. 4).

- To increase liveliness and usability of public space, by day and by night, the mix of uses, diversity of activities, and new forms of use (such as public viewings) have to be secured (Municipal Department 18, 2014, pp. 21, 48).
- In an affordable city, consumption must not limit participation. The balance between commercial and non-commercial uses is highly important. (Municipal Department 18, 2014, p. 122; Bork et al., 2015; Wiener Charta, 2016).
- The fullest possible participation of all people should be ensured and secured in the future (Municipal Department 19, 2010). A fair balance of available space is sought.
- Provision of public space is to be secured in qualitative and quantitative respect. Public space can be necessary to compensate not only for built densification but also for people who can't afford a garden or a holiday outside the city. (Municipal Department 17, 2014, pp. 192 ff.)
- In order to enhance liveliness and appropriation, informal bottom-up initiatives for alternative uses of public space should be enhanced and facilitated (Municipal Department 25, 2016; Municipal Department 18, 2018).

In the documents, an emphasis is placed on groups that are stigmatised or marginalised. Furthermore, non-profit activities should have enough space in the city. In the latest version of Vienna's Urban Development Plan STEP2025 (Municipal Department 18, 2014), which was developed collaboratively by several municipality departments, is, for the first time, complemented by a "Thematic Concept: Public Space" which was resolved by the Vienna Municipal Council in 2018. The mobility of children and adolescents should be main topics for future development as well as the general attractiveness of public space. Specific indicators are defined in the concept (Municipal Department 18, 2018, pp. 19-20) which should serve to measure an improvement of the quality of public space in the coming years. These include the number of participation procedures which should enhance the public interest in open spaces. In addition, the number of private-law contracts with the road administration department for informal, non-commercial street use by private actors should increase. Satisfaction with the living environment should thus increase all around. Above all, people who particularly depend on public space should find a place here, as the share of the population which most relies on usable public space in their living environment – like the very young and the elderly – is growing (Municipal Department 18, 2018).

"I invite all Viennese to participate in the design of the streets and squares of their city, to work for 'their' freedom. Thus, the public space becomes a living, cosmopolitan open space, a fixed component of the quality of life in this city (Municipal Department 18, 2018, p. 6)." (Maria Vassilakou – Deputy Mayor and City Councilor for Urban Development, Transport, Climate Protection, Energy Planning and Public Participation)

As stated in the Government Agreement of the Municipal Government, and further formulated in city planning documents, the entire urban area has to be adequately supplied with accessible high-quality public space without mandatory consumption as well as pushing back different commercial interests: "a balance between commercial and non-commercial use is the prerequisite for all people to be able to use public space on an equal footing (Magistratsabteilung 18, 2018, p. 25)." However, these documents basically have the character of recommendation without binding legal status. There is an interplay between political position and practice-oriented implementation on an administrative level. The specific, legitimised city policy agenda is: more accessible public space for all without mandatory consumption and less compulsory consumption (Municipal Department 18, 2014, Stadt Wien, 2015). Therefore, an important aspect of managing open spaces is the regulation of existing and future installations, which have a notable impact on the usability, accessibility, and aesthetic quality of public space. Promoting the diversity and fair balance of uses and ensuring design quality on the one hand, while avoiding overregulation on the other hand should

be one of the municipalities' goals that have also been considered during the elaboration of the checklists for the installations.

The actors who create, manage, maintain, and use these installations differ strongly. Whereas communal (cultural and social) interests such as the availability and functionality of open space are the priority for the city administration, companies and entrepreneurs are predominantly interested in high customer frequency in representative, lively public spaces that increase the value of businesses and property. They benefit greatly from high-quality open space. This would require a city administration with one voice on the view on public space – but in reality, public space is a challenging cross-sectional matter. An international comparison elaborated within the study has shown a noteworthy difference between the city of Zürich, Switzerland and Vienna. While, in Zürich, every public space-related matter is consolidated in the civil engineering department, these issues are dispersed into a large number of departments that are in charge of public space within Vienna's city administration, some of them being general and conceptual, while others are in charge of construction and maintenance. Sidewalks, equipment, lighting, planting, or permits are responsibilities of different departments with their own administrative necessities which form their view on public space.

When compared to the prices of business rents, and to the potential revenues, it is also far too inexpensive to use public space for commercial reasons, as is also the case in an international context. Current pricing is all out of proportion concerning location qualities, visitor frequencies, and turnover that is achieved. For pavement cafés, the highest possible fee is € 20 / m² per month (GAG, 2016). Sufficient financial compensation, which should in turn be spent to increase qualities of public space, can be a way to justify commercial installations, especially when dealing with commercial outdoor media installations that have hardly any benefit for the public, financial compensation seems to be the only solution.



FIGURE 4 Installations examined in the study. The elaborated checklists are available for four different types of installations in public space: kiosks, pavement cafés, outdoor media, and non-commercial private installations like parklets.

'Installations' in the public space of Vienna

All installations, as described in this paper, are physical objects situated in public space for a certain time. These can be commercial – kiosks, booths, or sidewalk cafés, and all kinds of outdoor media installations – or non-commercial, such as informal benches, groups of plant containers or 'parklets', constructed and placed by citizens of the neighbourhood. It was the city administration's intention to prepare a study on how to regulate these installations anew, under the premise of allowing maximum informal appropriation and avoiding a negative functional and aesthetic impact on the city. At present, installations basically have to fulfil requirements regarding their size and form in Vienna. Whereas cities like Basel, Switzerland or Dresden, Germany actively formulate specific zones, locations, and pricing for (commercial) installations, Vienna's administration responds to individual requests on a case-by-case basis.

To support a basis for permission or rejection that is transparent and as simple as possible, the Institute of Landscape Architecture suggested the delivery of an easy-to-handle checklist for the Municipal Department of Architecture and Urban Design who have to decide upon permission on the general placement and design of these objects (traffic related technical issues are treated separately by another department, even though it might make sense to combine it in future). Even though the department's core responsibility centres on the visual, architectural, and spatial impact of such installations, they were fully embedded into the general political, societal, and planning aspects described above. The checklists were based on a case study survey. Each type of installation was analysed to develop criteria for their assessment. A specific number of each type was selected, recorded and analysed in terms of their spatial impact. In an iterative process, crucial questions were identified for each type of installation based on the results of the cases. The research group clarified the objectives for each type of installation based on literature, a comparative research of international best practice as well as in inter- and trans-disciplinary workshops with city administration staff and political stakeholders. The following installations were examined in the study:

PARKLETS



FIGURE 5 Parklet. Parklets can be seen as micro open spaces and complementation for rare usable public space in dense urban surroundings. However, these forms of private interventions must not lead to a new form of subtle privatisation of common ground. Thus, parklets have to be publicly usable and open to everyone without any fee or compulsory consumption.

Parklets or similar non-commercial installations are temporary sidewalk extensions – micro-parks and green sitting areas, most often installed as platforms in parking lanes during summer months. They are open to the public and provide space and amenities for people using the street without mandatory consumption and – per definition – without a profit-oriented background. Around 50, mostly temporary, parklets contribute to a more vibrant walking and sitting environment in Vienna at the moment. They are privately built by residents, collectives, or shop owners. Other smaller informal installations like chairs, benches, or planters in front of buildings have been also considered in the study. There is no fee being paid to use public space for all such individual, non-commercial uses. Still, permission is needed for all of them in Vienna and they have to fulfil technical standards like a maximum length of 10m (Municipal Department 28 – Straßenverwaltung und Straßenbau Wien, 2015). A municipal service called “Grätzloase” (Grätzloase, 2018) supports interested parties, even financially. Within the study, 10 case studies were observed in detail.

KIOSKS



FIGURE 6 Parklet. Parklets can be seen as micro open spaces and complementation for rare usable public space in dense urban surroundings. However, these forms of private interventions must not lead to a new form of subtle privatisation of common ground. Thus, parklets have to be publicly usable and open to everyone without any fee or compulsory consumption.

A kiosk (or “Würstelstand” in Vienna) is a street food outlet situated in public space, where hot dogs, sausages, beverages, and snacks are sold. Other stalls offer doner kebab, flowers, souvenirs, and, in some cases, newspapers. All in all, there are approximately 500 such kiosks installed in the city. To operate a kiosk, permission from different municipal departments is needed. A maximum size of the shelter has to be respected (Municipal Department 19, 2013). This means a base area of 12 m² and a height of more than 2.80 m may not be exceeded. A fee has to be paid to the city depending on the size and location of the shelter. A maximum fee of € 34 / m² is charged (GAG, 2016). The case study consisted of 80 kiosks in Vienna.

PAVEMENT CAFÉS



FIGURE 7 Pavement cafés can be placed on sidewalk (extensions).



FIGURE 8 Pavement cafés can also be placed using the parking lane in front of the restaurant.



FIGURE 9 Pavement cafés can stimulate public space but can also restrict and repel other uses. Land grabbing is one of the most evident issues that needs to be considered in order to sufficiently safeguard usable public space without compulsory consumption.

Pavement cafés are called “Schanigärten” in Vienna, meaning tables and chairs placed on the pavement or in a parking space in front of restaurants, coffee houses and taverns. Unlike in private beer gardens,

guests at one of the 2600 Schanigärten in Vienna sit on public property. Each restaurant can apply to get permission to open such a sidewalk café for a specific time, usually during summer months. Recently, it has also been possible to apply for winter as well. If permission is given, the restaurant has to erect the installation on their own and remove it afterwards, following technical requirements (Municipal Department 19, 2013 b). The use of sidewalk cafés is for guests of the restaurant only. A small fee has to be paid to the city, between € 2 / m² and € 20 / m² per month (GAG, 2016). Fifty pavement cafés were observed in detail for the study.

OUTDOOR MEDIA/ADVERTISING



FIGURE 10 City Light advertisement. The placement of outdoor media installations can cause fragmentation and limitation of public space alongside the sidewalk.



FIGURE 11 E-Screens. Screens visually dominating the streetscape, blocking sight axis, and fragmenting the space. They do not benefit the usability of public space, nor the general public.



FIGURE 12 Advertising column as obstacle. The advertising column placed on the pavement hinders movement and view.



FIGURE 13 Agglomeration of different installations. Kiosks can form unattractive agglomerations of installations – together with advertisements and many more objects filling public space due to a bad spatial arrangement. Altering appearance, limiting passages, changing front and back sides of urban landscape or blocking views. Either enough publicly available space surrounds the scene, or agglomerations have to be forbidden.

Outdoor media is advertising that addresses consumers while they are in public space. A plethora of more than 25,000 billboards, digital screens, city light posters, and columns can be found in Vienna's streetscape. They are placed and exploited by a small number of national and international companies, who are responsible for their installation, maintenance and – if permission is not extended – for their removal. The percentage of the turnover that goes to the city has not been made publicly transparent. It is widely assumed that it is a minor share. In the study, 300 advertising structures were examined. Generally speaking, all the interventions serve a purpose for their owner – not all of them for the public. Outdoor media installations are generally different. They do not make public space more attractive and they do not bring any direct benefit, their function is basically “one way communication” for commercial reasons only.

Spatial and design criteria of the department's existing practice were rediscussed following the results of the case study analysis and include the following:

- The placement must not hinder any important axes or block any specific views / vistas
- A minimum width of 2.0 to 2.5 metres has to be kept alongside the pavement
- Complete fencing and enclosing, as well as land grabbing effects (privatisation of public space through spatial enclosure), has to be avoided; borders have to be clear kept
- Consumption of valuable micro open spaces for commercial installations must be forbidden
- Limiting the usability of adjacent paths or passages, limiting of usability of the direct surroundings, and a decrease of the usability of public space without compulsory consumption may not occur due to the placement of any installation
- Installation must not cause spatial fragmentation, cluttering of space or be an obstacle in public space
- Sufficient consumption-free public space in the direct surroundings has to be kept free of any installation. No public seating or furnishing must be blocked.
- Agglomerations of installations are to be avoided
- Proportion and placement has to be linked to the adjacent building or property of the initiators, a spatial connection ('spatial anchor') of the installation is needed (e.g. sidewalk café in front of restaurant, parklet in front of initiator's shop or property)
- A visual dominance of the installation in contrast to its surroundings must be avoided
- The masking of historical façades or ensembles has to be avoided
- In the case of parklets and other private, non-commercial initiatives, accessibility must be guaranteed for free for everyone without compulsory consumption.

The authors decided not to work with generalised street or public space categories to allow or reject specific installations, but to develop general parameters that are valid over the whole city and that have to be fulfilled everywhere. Through this equal treatment, the creation of areas of respect and areas of neglect should be avoided. The placement of the object within the context of its immediate surroundings gets major attention. Every intervention creates and changes its own contextual public space, which cannot be

classified and depends on the object (Carmona, 2010). This object should be evaluated in terms of its spatial context as a crucial element, as well as in terms of urban design. It must meet the same standards as any other designed element. That means the checklists still have to be applied case by case.

Checklists – From agenda to instrument

The resulting checklists are to be used by the city administration resulting in the permission or rejection of the installation. This decision has to be clear for the administration, as well as for the applicant. The aim was to keep the questions as easy as possible and the answers clear cut.

The challenge to reduce complex problems down to simple yes/no questions was met in an iterative process. The authors implement three hierarchic thematic ‘filter layers’ as a basic structure. The layers result from criteria identified within the case studies as well as from literature on the usability of public space, and workshops with different responsible administrative departments of Vienna.

These layers – social, spatial, design – allow for the incorporation of crucial aspects beyond the design of the object itself.

Each layer comprises specific questions, which are formulated differently for each type of installation. If all questions can be answered with yes, the assessment is approved, otherwise it is rejected and the installation has to be reworked. The implementation of the first layer covering social aspects of those installations is a new approach that was not previously covered in any municipal checklist.

The new checklists make it easier for municipal clerks to assess applications for installations in public space for existing situations as well as for new applications.

They make decisions comprehensible, transparent, and reproducible for both sides (city and applicant). Moreover, the tool should be valid citywide and offer a basis for future local detailing and should be flexible enough for later adaption and expansion.

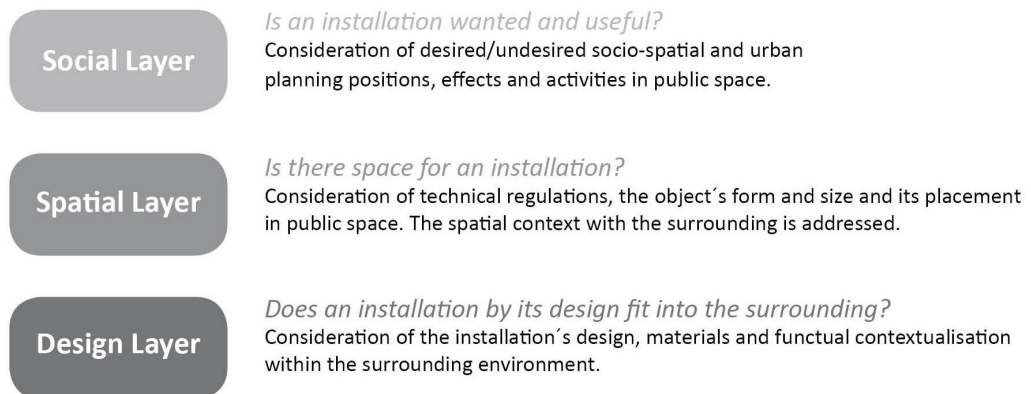


FIGURE 14 Thematic structure of the study. Three thematic layers are a basic structure for the checklists. Each layer consists of different questions. Identified criteria were merged with political and planning, as well as design, objectives.

Preamble:

This checklist covers non-commercial installations such as parklets and furnishings of the open space without obligation to consume. The installation must comply with higher-level planning concepts and guidelines as well as with all technical specifications.

Mobile and temporary micro-installations (planting containers, chairs, ...) do not have to be assessed from an urban design perspective.

No advertising is allowed on the object (a sponsor badge may be attached up to 20x40 cm in size).

Version: Non-Commercial Installations



Explanations and references to individual questions can be found in the attachment.

Social Filter

„Is an installation wanted here? Does the general public benefit from this feature?“

n1 Is the intervention accessible to the public and usable without consumption?

YES	NO
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Spatial Filter

„Is this the right place for an installation?“

n2 Is there a spatial connection to the installation?

<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
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n3 Does the quality of the cityscape remain unimpaired by the choice of location?

<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
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n4 Is the usability of public space maintained or improved?

<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
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Design Filter

„Does the installation fit into the surrounding public space?“

n5 Are structural boundaries kept to a minimum?

<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
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n6 Is the form of the installation integrated into the surrounding urban space?

<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
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FIGURE 15 Sample page from the checklist. The page from the checklist for non-commercial installations, like parklets, covers questions from all three thematic layers. The checklist also provides an explanation to make it easier for the person in charge to use it as objectively and transparently as possible.



FIGURE 16 A pavement café not fulfilling the criteria of the checklist: The used materials look provisory and are aesthetically inappropriate in their surroundings. The minimum passage width of the pavement is insufficient, with the installation is limiting the available space



FIGURE 17 Pavement café. Materials and colours are fitting to the surrounding, the placement in front of the restaurant is clear and does not hinder other functions of the surrounding public space. Consumption-free seating elements are available in the direct surroundings.

Social Layer

It is innovative that the reasoning for the installation is taken into account as well as its social and visual impact. Installations were primarily approved due to technical criteria in Vienna. Questions in this filter layer include, for example: Are higher-level strategies and spatial and political concepts considered? Is the installation accessible and usable for everyone? Does the installation generate any benefit for the public space?

These questions aim to transport an attitude, a political agenda, which thereby is made public. This layer ensures that the general public benefits from different installations – a question that promotes informal, privately initiated installations such as parklets (as they should be publicly accessible by definition), and limits installations without additional value for the public. Taking outdoor advertising as an example, it would only have a benefit for the public if sufficient money is being paid by the operator to the city/ community (and used for increasing overall quality of public space) or if the advertising brings any other benefit, such as shelters for public transport or free city bikes.

Spatial Layer

In this layer, questions about the spatial integration in a wider context are asked. The spatial and visual impact of the location (site) and the position of the installation in the urban structure are assessed to prevent a reduction in the quality and quantity to stay or move in the surroundings. Standalone installations must not hinder movement or build visual barriers; agglomerations of facilities must be avoided. These questions also aim to create balance between commercial and non-commercial offers and help manage space consumption. Technical specifications and regulations (minimum passage widths, etc.) have to be considered, as well as mandatory functional links to the surroundings as 'spatial anchors': sidewalk cafés are only allowed in front of the actual restaurant without reaching too far into the surrounding space and not hindering other uses; advertising should be linked to a function like a bus shelter.

Questions in the checklist for this layer include, for example: Is there sufficient space for the installation? Is the usability and spatial quality of the surrounding public space maintained or enhanced? Is the installation linked to a functional/spatial anchor close by? Are any vistas blocked?

Design Layer

This layer covers question about the object's aesthetic properties with regard to design quality, choice of material, colour scheme, proportionality, visual rest and restlessness, as well as the use of third party advertisements on kiosks and sidewalk cafés (such as advertisements for beer or beverages).

Sample questions in the checklist include: Are structural boundaries kept to a minimum? Is the form of the installation integrated into the surrounding urban space and are the used materials creating any visual/aesthetic break in the surroundings?

Conclusion: Regulation as catalyst for appropriation

The underlying study unravels the sensitive role a city has to undertake when dealing with different installations in public space such as kiosks, pavement cafés, parklets, or outdoor media. The corresponding checklists for the assessment of these installations are thought of as instruments that bridge politics, policies, praxis, and reality. The wording, design, and accessibility of this tool are actively helping to spread the planning culture of the city. Whereas the installations should contribute to a diverse, lively, and flexible urban space, they can also be obstacles that lead to visual and spatial fragmentation of scarce public space. Consequently, they have to meet the most diverse requirements and provide the necessary infrastructure and usability for all users equally on fair terms. When elaborating the checklists, the research group agreed on principles such as avoiding overregulation and promoting diversity on the one hand, and ensuring design quality and a fair balance of uses, and safeguarding of remaining space on the other hand.

In order to ensure an inclusive public space, the city must translate its political intentions into instruments that represent the interests of the general public through regulation. The presented checklists are such an instrument. They are consequently a result of a political intention (a formulated political position of what public space should be) brought together with planning and urban design principles. It is a process of how the public character of urban open space can be stimulated and guaranteed by municipal instruments. The authors further show how the evaluation of installations in public space can go beyond mere design to reflect both the political and the planning agendas. The political planning intentions of the city and an ideal image of 'public space' are merged within this process. As a result, both non-commercial as well as commercial installations have to fulfil requirements regarding their size, form, and placement in public space but also regarding their benefit to public space respectively to the general public.

Including a 'social layer' in the evaluation process aims to foster installations that benefit the general public, thus acting as a facilitator for bottom-up and appropriation processes, while at the same time acting as a restrictive top-down player regarding commercial intentions. Questions regarding the communal benefit of standalone advertising installations will rarely be answered positively. Already, advertisers are anticipating the discussion and the need to justify their abundant exploitation of public space – and are coming up with new strategies. They try to build their own functional and societal anchors as claimed in the study in the form of screen-mounted defibrillators and bike repair instruments integrated into advertising columns. This makes clear that there is no way around a general political attitude which has to be expressed and executed and that the checklists need constant adaptation.

A citywide implementation of the checklists as a guiding instrument has not yet happened. However, a discussion process has been started across different municipal administrative departments and political representatives about the value and usability of public space in Vienna.

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