

**eUropean Urbanity**  
Identity/Uses/Connectivity

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**EUROPAN**

**Results from Austria, Hungary and Kosovo**

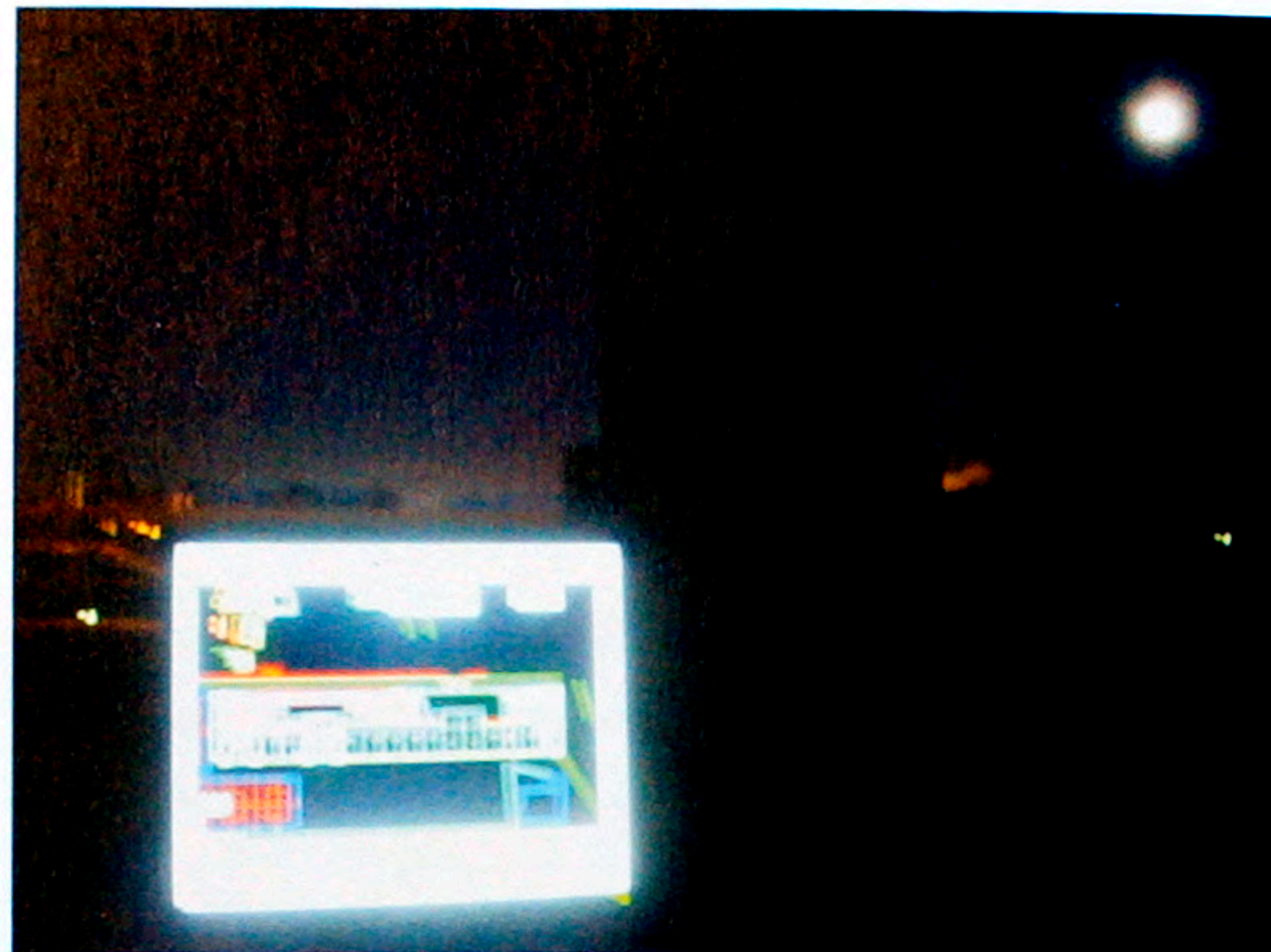
Lina Streeruwitz/Bernd Vlay (Eds.)

# E8 VIENNA/ SUBURBAN BLOCK/

**SITE: LASTENSTRASSE, WIEN LIESING**  
**MALARCHITECTURE**

BASED IN Oslo, Norway  
WEB [www.malarchitecture.com](http://www.malarchitecture.com)

“MALARCHITECTURE was established as a consequence of the first prize in European 8 competition in Vienna in 2006. Today the office counts two permanent members Mirza Mujezinovic (masters from Columbia University) and Nora Aursand Iversen (masters from Aarhus School of Architecture). Mirza Mujezinovic teaches at the Oslo School of Architecture, where he also conducts the doctoral research on the large-scale developments in Norway. During the course of the last six years the office has done several projects: Student Housing in Trondheim (honorable mention, competition, 2007), Porsgrunn urban development (invited competition, 2008), City of Inverted Values (exhibition, Oslo Triennale, 2007), The White House revisited (competition/exhibition, Storefront for art and architecture, NY, 2008), Myhre Family House (Oslo, 2009). The first project is currently under construction: Kuća Anestezija (summer house, Hvar/Croatia).”



## PROJECT TEAM

COMPETITION	Mirza Mujezinovic with Sinisa Lecic and Bendik Aursand
IMPLEMENTATION	Mirza Mujezinovic with Minna Riska and Nora Aursand Iversen
IMPLEMENTATION IN COLLABORATION WITH	Aterlier 4 Architects with architect Peter Scheufler Knoll Planung & Beratung with landscape architect Thomas Knoll Schreiner, Kastler Büro für Kommunikation with architect Gerhard Kastler
PROJECT PARTNER	Atelier 4/Peter Scheufler

# CLIENT/ WIEN SÜD GEMEINNÜTZIGE BAU- UND WOHNUNGS- GENOSSENSCHAFT

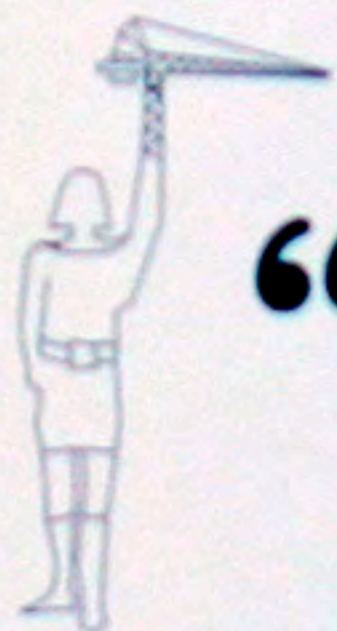
Walter Koch, executive board WIEN SÜD

“Why have you decided to cooperate with Europan on this site and how has this cooperation come into being?”



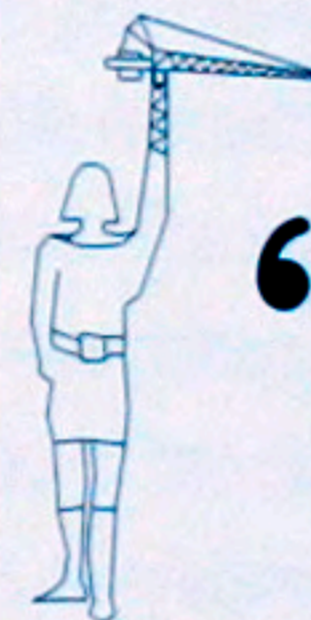
“It was not us who decided about this cooperation, because we only joined the project after WWFF (current name: Wirtschaftsagentur Wien) had already concluded the competition.”

“What are the qualities you appreciate in the winning project?”



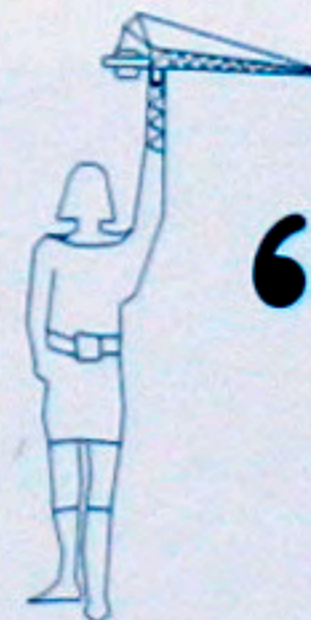
“The right response to a complicated site: introverted atrium houses in the form of a wedge between the railway on one side and an ugly access balcony on the adjacent plot on the other side. The wedge shape attains two goals: first, to get over the height up to the footbridge across the railway; second, to create an attractive housing environment on an atrocious site.”

“What is your contribution to the implementation process?”



“To contribute our experience in housing construction, for example with the observation of target costs in subsidized housing.”

“Where do difficulties/obstacles arise? Furthermore, how can such a process be improved?”



“A clear definition of framework conditions is necessary. For example: the financing of the bridge crossing the railway was not ensured even before the competition. A comment by architect Mujezinovic during the revision process sums it up: “If I had known all this when I worked out my competition project, I would have submitted a different proposal.” A two-stage process would be better: as a first stage, a competition of ideas based on the framework conditions, and as a second stage, a common design process together with the winner of the first stage, the urban department and an investor/developer.”

# PROJECT EVOLUTION

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**PARTNERS EUROPLAN 8  
VIENNA LASTENSTRASSE**

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**WIEN SÜD  
Gemeinnützige Bau- u. Wohnungsgenossenschaft  
"Wien-Süd" eGenmbH**

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**WIEN SÜD**  


Wir gestalten Lebensraum

## 1) COMPETITION

The site is in Liesing, one of the suburbs of Vienna. It is exposed to a high degree of railway noise while being captured in a tunnel-like condition: five levels of shipping containers on one side, and a 260 metre long "Unité-look-alike" on the other. The competition programme was 27,000 m<sup>2</sup>, with 75% housing and 25% public functions, and a bridge connection over the adjacent rail tracks. The main idea behind the winning proposal was to offer a condensed urban condition through the execution of a single architectural gesture – one building structure with an integrated ramp that would lead up to the bridge. By absorbing the artificial topographical difference of the site, 17 metres needed for bridging the rail yard, the ramp would yield specific typological situations: a vertical city block and a horizontal patio housing. The superimposition of these two would offer potentials for public and commercial programmes – branch library, retail space, fitness centre, youth club and local café.

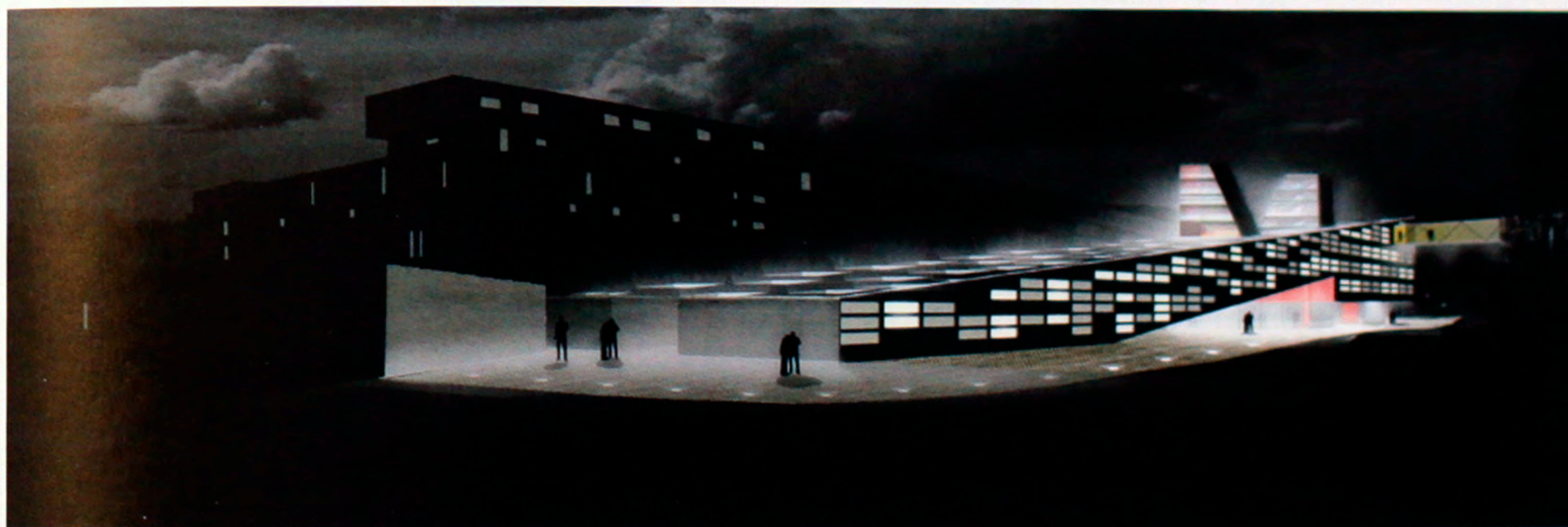
## 2) TO BE OR NOT TO BE

During the implementation process, the bridge connection was aborted while the project was to be turned into a pure housing development. An additional function was introduced: a 25 metre roof top pool while the size of the project would remain the same: 27,000 m<sup>2</sup>. It became

apparent that the project needed substantial reworking: due to the amount of deep areas the suggested volume was highly ineffective as a 100% housing structure. Our team had to take a position: should we choose the path of forcing the new programmatic basis into the building shape suggested in the competition, or should we start from the very beginning? An eventual reworking would strongly erode the competition proposal anyhow. Also, our satisfaction with the winning proposal was not given by the proposal's formal expression – the descending housing block, but by its capacity to translate the programmatic (75%–25% split), infrastructural (the bridge) and contextual (the tunnel-like condition) constraints into this expression. After all, we were the children of 1990s' Koolhaas-ian kick and as such we succumbed to our naivety that programme was a protagonist in space production. We realized that the first option was a lost battle: we chose the second. The heroes were killed and we threw ourselves in uncovering of new potentialities, but we were to exile with us the old ghosts: introduce the promenade as a spatial organizer, enhance the system of public/semi-public spaces and offer housing mix/social mix.

## 3) IMPLEMENTATION PROJECT

The competition proposal was based on the idea of vertical layering: the superimposition of atrium housing onto the block. The implementation would be based on the horizontal layering: the juxtaposition of



atrium housing next block housing. This switch was the consequence of the wishes by the new client, "Wien-Süd", to have a project within a project. The proposal would be based on a clear division between the lamelle (the block) and the carpet (atrium housing), where the lamelle would be subjected to the rules of subsidized housing, while the carpet would follow its own market logic. The extent and relationship between these two types would be based on the calculus that would optimize both the distribution of density and the amount of the open spaces – at the beginning this approach seemed extremely rigid and too simple, but late on this simplicity would unleash its organizational and architectural potential. The project would inherit the promenade as the main organizing element of the ground level: it would be articulated as a meandering street with two piazzettas in the carpet, while it would end in a park next to the lamelle. Additionally, one of the stops on the meandering street would be the vertical connection (the elevator) leading up to the pool placed on the roof of the lamelle.

#### 4) THE ATRIUM HOUSING

The main constraint with the atrium type was that each housing unit was to be completely light efficient – it was to get all necessary light from the atrium itself since none of the façades, neither the one facing Lastenstraße nor the one facing "Unité-look-alike" could have windows: the former due to the noise, the latter due to the proximity to the neighbouring project. The atrium type was developed through the assistance of architect Walter Stelzhammer, the master of Viennese atrium housing. He gave us some valuable advice: do a mathematical matrix to establish the footprint of the atrium types in order to optimize the repetitiveness and density. This resulted in two atrium modules – the "square" model and the "long" module. Both of these had a gross area of some 137 m<sup>2</sup> (net area of 110 m<sup>2</sup>), with a footprint of 84 m<sup>2</sup> (including the open-air atrium of some 20 m<sup>2</sup>). By having these two basic modules, the carpet, which consisted of some 80 units, could enhance a high degree of variation in the public spaces – the meandering street and the piazzettas were introduced.

#### 5) THE LAMELLE

The lamelle was approached as a housing machine: it would offer a wide range of apartments, from one-bedroom to three-bedroom apartments simultaneously as it would supply a wide range of social spaces from kindergarten on the ground floor, communal spaces on the first floor and the open-air swimming pool on the top floor. The distribution split of apartment types was predefined and it followed the subsidy requirements (20% of one-bedroom units; 60% of two-bedroom units; 20% of three-bedroom units). The most difficult aspect to solve was the lamelle's 24 m depth: the lamelle was too deep to have apartments facing both sides, but too shallow to have two rows of apartments facing each side. Additionally, the side facing west, Lastenstraße, could not have direct openings because of the high noise levels coming from the passing trains. Such constraint forced the team, along with our partner office in Vienna, Atelier 4 with Peter Scheufler, to invent a new type, which could absorb all these demands simultaneously as it would fulfil the requested FAR: the lamelle's gross area was to be around 15,000 m<sup>2</sup>. Somewhere in the virtual space between Oslo and Vienna, the concept for the lamelle was born: the lamelle would contain two large atriums that would protect the adjacent apartments from noise, simultaneously as these areas were to function as vertical gardens with integrated vegetation walls. Additionally, the apartments facing the two atriums would contain their own winter gardens. The architecture of the lamelle would accentuate the Janus condition of the site: the façade facing noisy west would be conceptualized as a hard façade with well-ordered gridded openings while the façade facing east and the green park was to be the soft façade relating to the idea of vertical weaved carpet.

#### 6) THE ACTORS

Our attitude was that the project was a collaboration between different yet equal actors: the client, the municipality and the local advisory architects. Each of the actors would contribute to the project with their own local knowledge and experience, while we, as outsiders to the Viennese context, would function as curators that would re-contextualize the local experience and knowledge while translating them

into the architecture of the project. What was clear for us was that our knowledge and experience from Oslo was not completely applicable to the Viennese context precisely because the housing production in Oslo was different from the one in Vienna, mainly due to the long-term socio-political and economic conditions, for example housing production was deregulated in Norway in the early 1980s, and today it is strongly subjected to the definitions given by the private market.

## CHRONOLOGY IN CHAPTERS

**September 2005:** the proposal was submitted. The main idea behind the proposal is to offer a condensed urban condition through the execution of a single architectural gesture – one building structure with an integrated ramp that would lead up to the bridge. The project is inspired by the idea of the large-scale and the notion of the housing superblock (IMAGE 1).

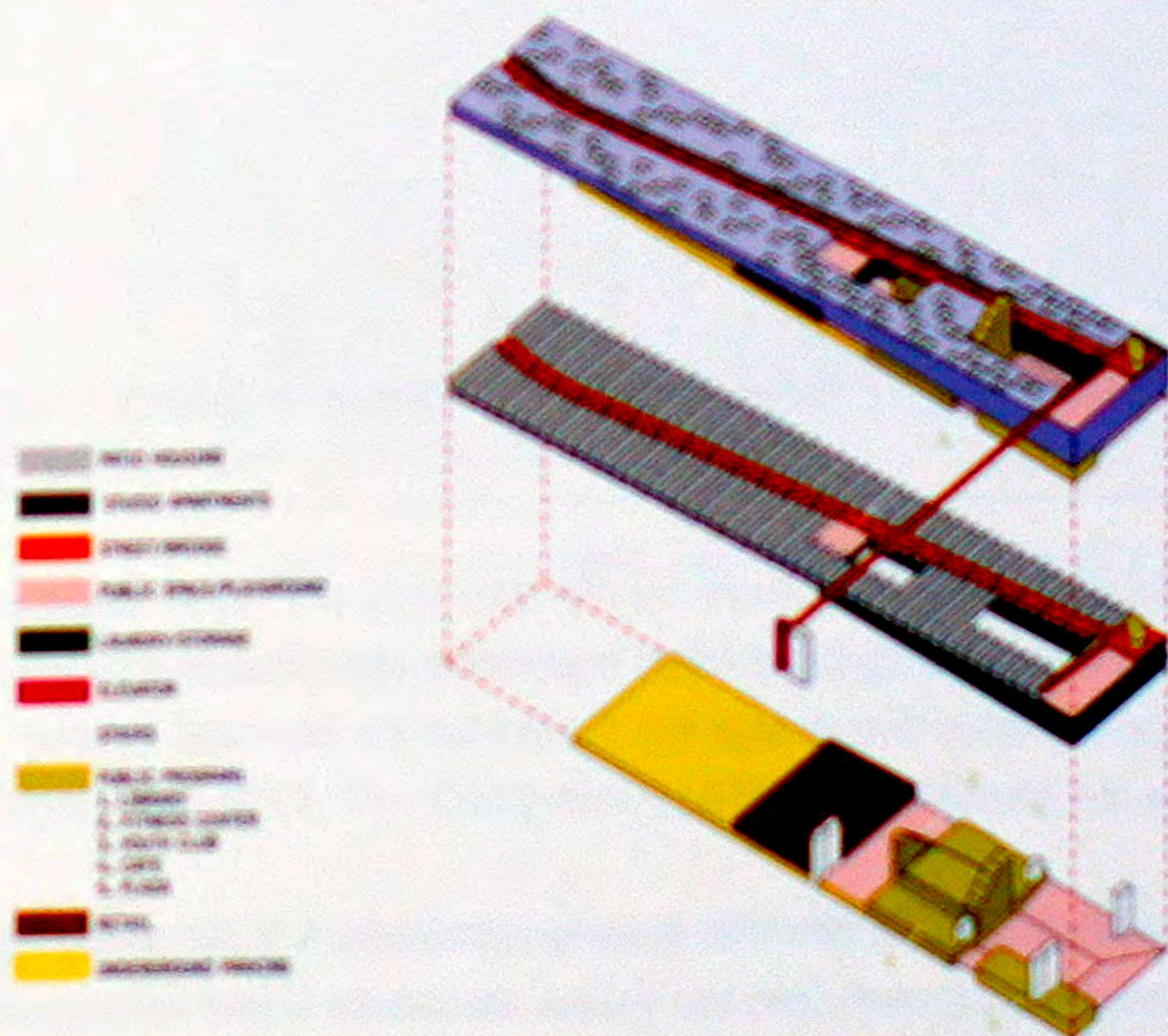


IMAGE 1: The axonometric view, the competition proposal, 2005

**January 2006:** The team receives the call from Bernd Vlay from European Austria: the proposal "Suburban block" receives the first prize. The team is also exhilarated by the jury's reference to the Red Vienna.

**May–September 2006:** The team reworks the proposal. The programmatic split has slightly changed in favour of housing, but the project still remains similar to the competition proposal. Additionally three options are supplied discussing the possibility of the integration with a neighbouring development (IMAGE 2).

**September 2006:** The team presents the reworked proposal to the client WWFF and the municipality. The project should not be integrated with the neighbouring development. The client is satisfied, the municipality as well. The expectations are high!

**April 2008:** Almost two years later, the project restarts. The new client "Wien-Süd" is in place. The project conditions are changed: it is a pure housing project and the bridge connection over the rail yard is aborted. An additional programme is introduced: the open-air swimming pool on the roof. Our fascination for Harry Glück emerges – we visit "Wohnpark Alt-Erlaa".

**July 2008:** Should we choose the path of forcing the new programmatic basis into the building shape suggested in the competition, or should we start from the very beginning? We go for the second option. The new scheme is presented. The implementation would be based on the horizontal layering: the juxtaposition of atrium housing next block housing. This switch is the consequence of the wishes by the new client, "Wien-Süd", to have a project within a project. The proposal would be based on a clear division between the lamelle (the block) and the carpet (atrium housing), where the lamelle would be subjected to the rules of subsidized housing, while the carpet would follow its own market logic. The team gets valuable advice from architect Walter Stelzhammer in regards to the development of the atrium

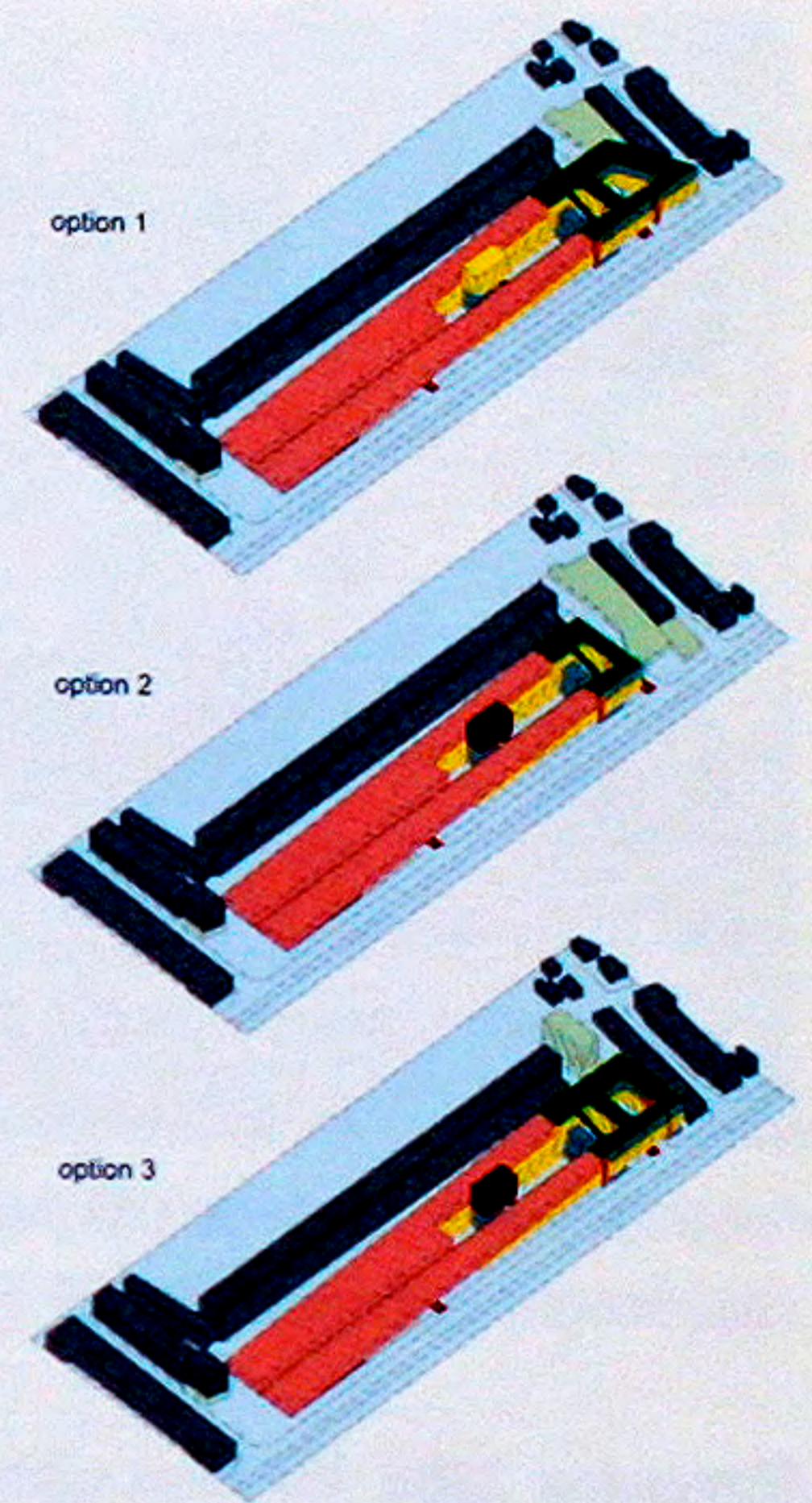


IMAGE 2: Three options showing the potential of integration, 2006

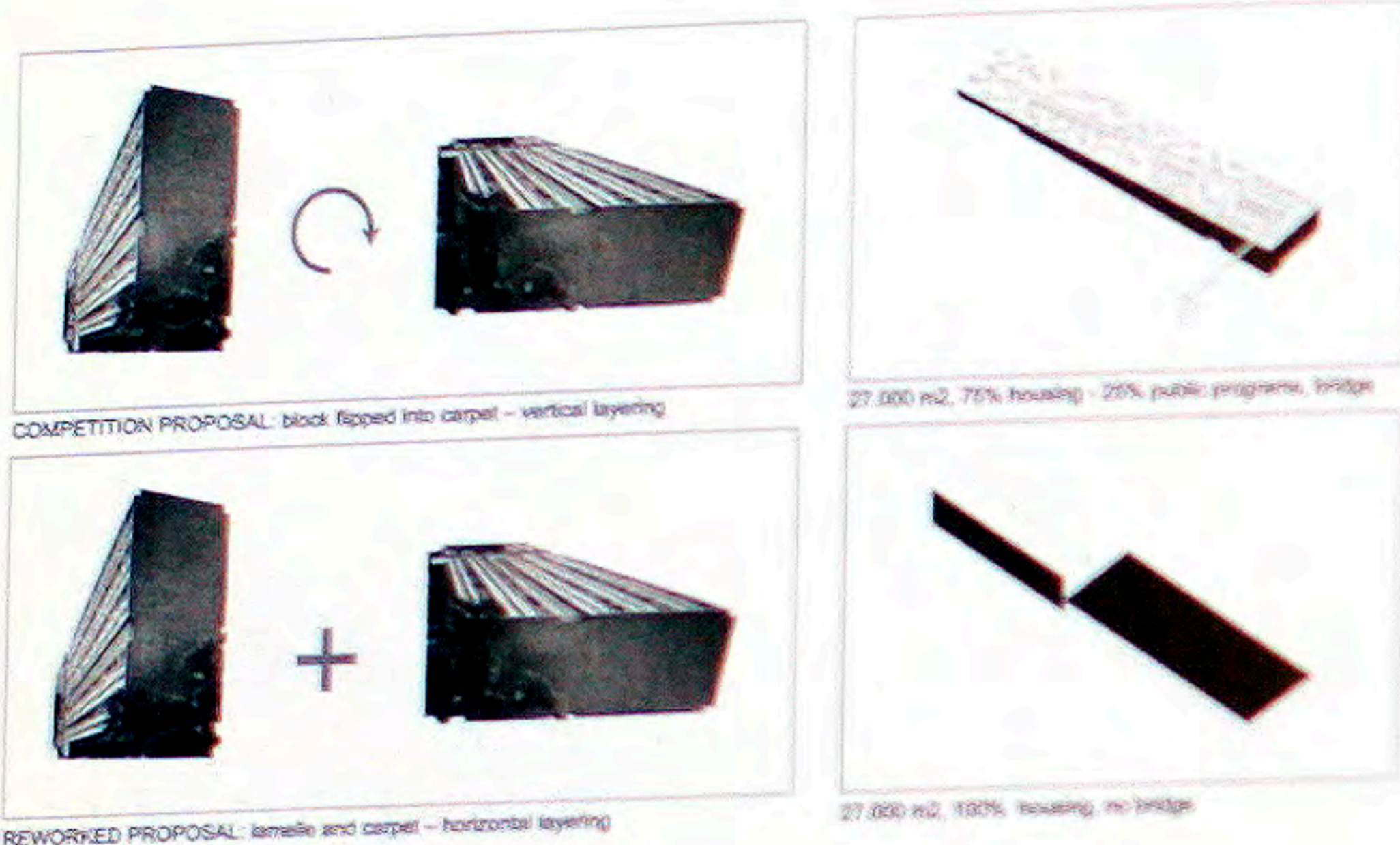


IMAGE 3: The reformulation of the project, 2008

housing. The team also gets an insight into the complexity of the Viennese housing production (IMAGE 3).

**November 2008:** The team submits the proposal within which the carpet is solved while the development of the lamelle still awaits. The carpet consists of two atrium modules (the square one and the long one, but both follow the same footprint and massing logic), which give a possibility of spatial variation. The meandering pedestrian street and piazzettas constitute the system of public spaces (IMAGE 4).

**April 2009:** The restart meeting with the client and the partner architect Atelier 4 with Peter Scheufler. The lamelle is on the agenda. The most difficult aspect to solve is the lamelle's 24 m depth: the lamelle is too deep to have apartments facing both sides, but too shallow to have two rows of apartments facing each side.

**May 2009:** The team submits several solutions for the lamelle, mostly based on our Oslo experience. We are searching for a way to expand the length of the façade while remaining within the same build-



IMAGE 4: The reformulation of the project, 2008

ing envelope – the zig-zag solution is preferred, but all proposals are disregarded since they diverge too much from the Viennese building codes and standards (IMAGE 5).

**May–July 2009:** The team collaborates with Atelier 4 in the reworking: somewhere in between Oslo and Vienna, the lamelle is born as a super-block containing two large atriums – two vertical gardens with integrated vegetation walls. The architecture of the lamelle would accentuate the Janus condition of the site: the façade facing noisy west would be conceptualized as a hard façade with well-ordered gridded openings while the façade facing east and the green park was to be the soft façade relating to the idea of vertical weaved carpet (IMAGE 6–8).

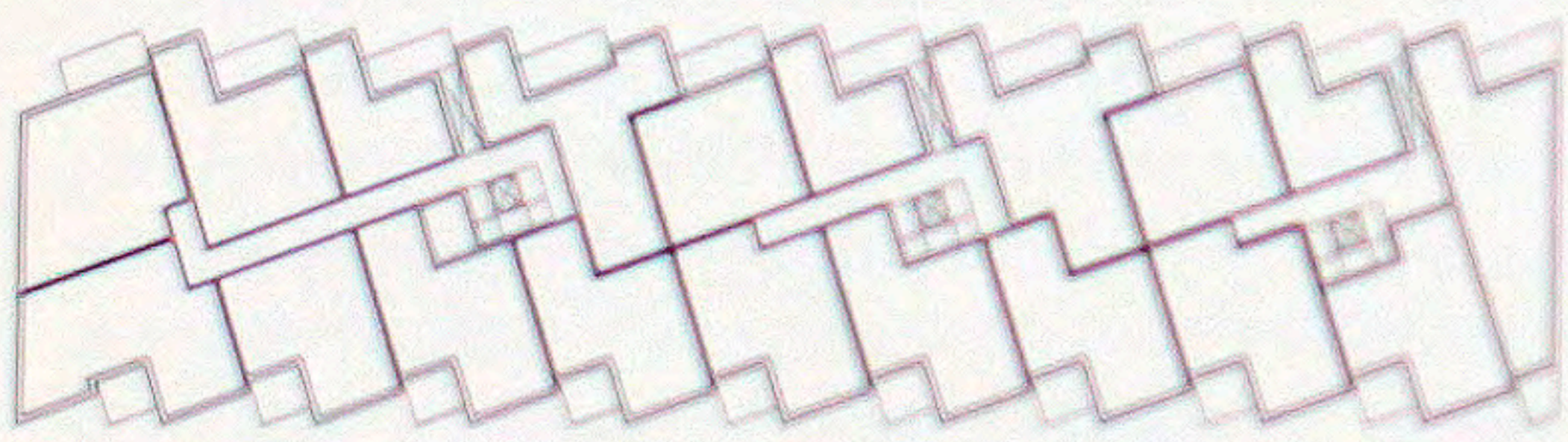


IMAGE 5: The zig-zag option for the lamelle, 2009





IMAGE 6: The lamelle as a superblock with two atriums, 2009

**March 2010:** Meeting in Vienna with all involved parties. The project is presented and the basis is fixed for the start of the rezoning processes.



IMAGE 7: The lamelle atrium – the vertical garden, 2010

**October 2011:** The local elections in Vienna. The new administration is in place. The rezoning continues.

**September 2011:** The zoning plan is approved.

**February 2012:** The project is presented to the neighbours, and is subsequently consented.

**May 2012:** The restart meeting is scheduled. To be continued ...



IMAGE 8: The soft side of lamelle facing the park, 2011 (image by Schreiner-Kastler)