European Planning Studies

ISSN: (Print) (Online) Journal homepage: www.tandfonline.com/journals/ceps20

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To cite this article: Byeongsun Ahn (16 Jul 2024): What changes over time? Planning history and institutional change from a policy design perspective, European Planning Studies, DOI: 10.1080/09654313.2024.2377796

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/09654313.2024.2377796

Published online: 16 Jul 2024.

EUROPEAN PLANNING STUDIES
https://doi.org/10.1080/09654313.2024.2377796

What changes over time? Planning history and institutional change from a policy design perspective

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ABSTRACT

Since the call to take the analytical and theoretical values of historical institutionalism seriously, planning history research has emphasized the enduring legacies of critical moments that structure the developmental pathways of urban institutions, whose changes tend to appear incremental in the long run. Yet, most of this work is less conscious about deliberate – although not always successful – considerations by policy actors in formulating policies and conflates changes in institutional arrangements with changes in policy effects. This article fills these gaps from a policy design perspective, explaining the changing policy effects of the same institutional arrangements over time through design processes such as layering. To this end, it introduces Vienna's participatory urban renewal model, Soft Urban Renewal, highlighting its context-bound design space in which policy actors choose and rearrange existing instruments according to shifting policy objectives and circumstances. Two cases of Soft Urban Renewal from two different points in time are chosen to cross-compare their varying capacities to influence its real-world effect under different contextual constraints. It concludes with some final remarks on the ways in which a policy design perspective can contribute to the current debate on planning history research and comparative-historical analysis of cities and their institutions and policies.

ARTICLE HISTORY
Received 4 August 2023
Revised 2 July 2024
Accepted 4 July 2024

KEYWORDS
Incrementalism; planning history research; policy change; policy design; urban renewal

Introduction

Path dependence typically describes developmental pathways of institutions and policies that are shaped by past decisions from critical moments of contingency. Building on the economic model of increasing returns to scale (Arthur 1989), scholars evoked the idea of institutional lock-in ensuing from self-reinforcing mechanisms, which is said to make the policy path chosen in a critical juncture difficult to change (Pierson 2000). Much discussion on path dependence, therefore, focused on contingent breakpoints in external crises

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giving rise to new opportunities for policy actors to change the future course of development patterns.

In recent years, this conceptual framework of historical institutionalism has been widely applied to the field of planning history research to examine and compare the place-specific trajectories of institutional adaptation, evolution and outcomes in different cities (Dąbrowski and Piskorek 2018). This debate emphasizes the role of the multifaceted conditions, factors and interests behind institutional choices made by political actors that set the direction of change in motion (Dąbrowski and Lingua 2018). Following a 'power-distributional approach' to institutions (Mahoney and Thelen 2010), it perceives that, once a path is set, the patterns and outcomes of the ensuing change process will depend much on the relative power of veto players, and most likely appear as gradual and incremental (Lingua 2018). Accordingly, the contexts, timing, sequencing of choice and the subsequence pace of change that generate differentiated local outcomes become important units of comparison in comparative-historical analyses of urban institutions (Sorensen 2022).

This article takes inspiration from this ongoing debate in planning history research, but approaches institutional change – and its outcome – from a policy design perspective. Although defining institutions as both formal and informal rules and procedures (Sorensen 2018), the current research has rarely touched upon the actual processes in which policy actors choose instruments and pool resources into formulating/implementing policies (*policy designing*), and the substantive/procedural contents (*policy design*) and outcomes (*policy effects*) of those decisions. As a result, it relies on a holistic definition of institutions and policies that conflates changes in institutional arrangements with changes in policy effects, and describes any type of change as an outcome of gradual change process (Capano 2019; van der Heijden and Kuhlmann 2017).

While most institutional changes are indeed gradual and incremental (Torfing 2009), policy actors have varying political and technical capacities to choose, rearrange, patch or package different instruments at their disposal within existing institutional arrangements (see Mukherjee, Coban, and Bali 2021). As shown below, the fit of this design with changing political and structural circumstances can result in widely different policy effects of the same institutional arrangements. The specific ways in which policies and their substances are designed at different points in time under particular circumstances have important implications for explaining patterns, processes and outcomes of incremental and endogenous change in the actual policy-making context.

Against this background, this article asks: how do the shifting contextual circumstances of the policy design space influence the policy effect of the same institutional arrangements over time? To answer, it introduces Vienna's participatory urban renewal model, Soft Urban Renewal (*sanfte Stadterneuerung*), as a research window through which to study the role of policy design and its designing process in critical moments for the path-dependent outcomes of gradual institutional change and their shifting effects over time. It argues that the capacity of policy actors to induce change and influence outcomes lies precisely on their – often limited – ability to choose instruments and mobilize resources within existing institutional arrangements, according to the transformation of contextual circumstances. Two cases of Soft Urban Renewal demonstrate this theoretical reflection, which is representative of the two distinctive periods in Vienna's urban renewal (1990s-2000s/2010s-current) in terms of its objective,

design and effect. This case selection enables not only a historical analysis of the patterned change process through which its design evolved, but also a cross-case comparison between the varying capacities of policy actors to influence its actual outcome under different contextual constrains.

The remainder of this article proceeds as follows. First, it describes the current use of historical institutionalism in planning history research and the remaining gaps in our understanding of incrementalism in institutional and policy change. Second, it outlines the methodological framework that guided the research process. Third, it introduces the political and social antecedents to the first inception of Soft Urban Renewal that set a developmental trajectory of a participatory urban renewal model in Vienna. Fourth, it illustrates the institutional evolution – and the sequence of instrument choices – of Soft Urban Renewal to its current form. Fifth, it explains the varying policy effects (complementarity/fragmentation) of two Soft Urban Renewal cases (Brunnenviertel/Sonnwendviertel Alt) in terms of their respective designs (co-production/top-down) and designing processes (layering/drifting). Lastly, it discusses the ways in which a policy design perspective can complement the current application of historical institutionalism in planning history research, and its value added to comparative studies of urban institutions and planning policies.

Current issues and gaps in planning history research

Since the call to 'take path dependence seriously' (Sorensen 2015) in planning history research, there have been growing efforts to explore the conditions and mechanisms that sustain urban institutions in the cumulative change process and influence their distributional consequences in the long-term outcome (Dąbrowski and Lingua 2018). Scholars in this line of debate apply the core concepts of historical institutionalism, such as contingencies, critical junctures and path dependence, to study critical moments that set developmental trajectories of urban institutions in motion, and the surrounding contextual elements that structure the future change processes (see, for example, Blanc 2022; Choi et al. 2019; Grodach 2022; Martino 2020).

To this end, they locate the source of institutional application and adaptation in external crises within the local institutional and political context, featured by the distinctive administrative and technical capacity of policy actors for discretion in interpretation or enforcement (Lingua 2018). As a result, the different conditions from which institutional change emerged in different cities, the different timing and speed of the ensuing developmental trajectories and their subsequent path-dependent outcomes all become important units of comparison in planning history research 'that examine the impacts of and responses to … shared pressures in different cities' (Sorensen 2015, 33).

The main tenet of the historical institutionalist perspective on institutional change is that the past matters, because it explains not only how institutions change, but how and why such change and its outcome are structured. However, the current application of historical institutionalism in planning history research presents a few limitations to a better understanding of the nature of incrementalism, the agency-structure relations within and, most importantly, its actual outcome in the context of the policy process. The major issue relates to the use of a loose definition of institutions and policies that

conflates processes and outcomes of change at different levels and components of policy-making (see Capano 2019; see also Holsen 2021).

The causes of this problem can be traced back to the limitations of historical institutionalism itself, notably the contingent model of path dependence and the power-distributional approach to incremental change. First, the notion of critical juncture, which focuses on the role of permissive and productive conditions for institutional choices, does not fully describe the conscious and deliberate – although not always successful – attempt of policy actors to choose instruments and design policies in the actual implementation of those choices (Howlett and Goetz 2014; Howlett, Mukherjee, and Woo 2015). In turn, its overemphasis on contingency tends to underplay their specific degree of freedom in the policy design process, which is embedded in not only contextual conditions, but also previous policy legacies (Capano and Lippi 2017; Howlett 2009).

Second, the current understanding of incrementalism in planning history research lacks analytical rigour that captures the empirical reality of policy formulation and implementation, in which policy actors may pursue their goals through different – as well as multiple – modes of incremental change in the same policy sequence over time (van der Heijden and Kuhlmann 2017). This conceptual ambiguity results in the stretching of incremental change as the final outcome of institutional transformation – or any type of change at worst, obscuring the difference between actual changes in existing institutional arrangements and shifting policy effects in terms of its delivery (Barnes 2008; Capano 2019; Howlett and Cashore 2009).

Although some decisions can be made in a more contingent and irrational context, empirical evidence for purely politically driven institutional choices is, in fact, thin (Howlett 2018). In contrast, scholars in policy studies perceive that institutional choices follow deliberate – despite being highly constrained – attempts of policy actors to pursue effectiveness and efficiency in practical terms (Bobrow 2006; see also Cairney 2021). Even in contingent moments, choices require a special awareness of the instrumental ways in which chosen policies are expected to produce their anticipated effects in accordance with their stated objectives and contextual circumstances (Howlett, Mukherjee, and Woo 2015).

An implication is that the scope and extent of change that policy actors can pursue depend much on the policy design space of a particular policy situation, which feature not only a specific level of competences, skills, knowledge and resources, but also different individuals, institutions and policies in a multi-dimensional context (Capano and Lepori 2024). Given this complexity in policy formulation and implementation, clear definitions that separate different scales of this design space help to better understand such capacity issues that condition the true ability of policy actors to pursue change.

While often used interchangeably with institutions (see Streeck and Thelen 2005), policies refer to interrelated decisions made by individuals and agencies within government to solve identified problems, which include goals and the means to achieve them (Howlett and Cashore 2020). Policy designs, on the other hand, describe a set of specific instruments and tools that are mixed together to deliver intended outcomes and specific activities through which those decisions are formulated into policies (Howlett 2018). This substantive and procedural understanding of policy formulation and implementation implies that not only already existing institutions, policies and

instruments matter for achieving certain outcomes, but also the specific ways in which they are (re)designed and evolved over time do (Howlett 2019).

Therefore, the capacity of policy actors to overcome the constraints of both the reality and history of the specific design space, in which they make decisions, matters significantly for the type of change that they are able to achieve (Howlett, Mukherjee, and Rayner 2018). In fact, most activities that policy actors undertake to pursue changes are incremental to existing institutional arrangements, but in the sense that their capacity is largely limited to redesigning the present instrument mixes (Chindarkar, Howlett, and Ramesh 2017). It may however wield varying effects depending on its 'goodness of fit' with changing circumstances (Howlett and Rayner 2014). In other words, incremental changes, such as layering, might be better described as a mode of design, which affects the outputs of existing institutional arrangements and their effects over time, rather than a mode of change, which affects the institutional equilibrium as an end outcome (see Capano 2019; cf. Sorensen 2015).

Methodological framework

The following analysis employed an explaining-outcome process-tracing method (Beach and Pedersen 2013) to infer the patterned process of institutional change in Vienna's Soft Urban Renewal. It established a temporal sequence of the institutional evolution of Soft Urban Renewal in its current form (i.e. institutional arrangements) by reverse-tracing key historical events back to the antecedent historical conditions of its first implementation in the early 1970s (see Figure 1).

The process tracing took the following analytical steps. First, a content analysis of the city's major planning documents captured the key contextual information behind the shifting problem-framing, goal selection and tool choices of policy actors. This included: (a) the institutional contexts and structural circumstances from which the policy goal of citizen participation emerged; (b) the anticipated political and social gains from expanding citizen participation; and (c) the specific empirical contents and activities behind its design and designing process in the actual renewal examples. The evidence gathered in this phase served as the empirical basis for making a causal inference about the presence of both institutional and structural mechanisms behind the diverging effects of Soft Urban Renewal.

The data from the document content analysis was used for organizing the follow-up expert interviews with commissioned professionals, grassroots activists, and planners at different governance levels of Vienna's participatory development (13 in total). The

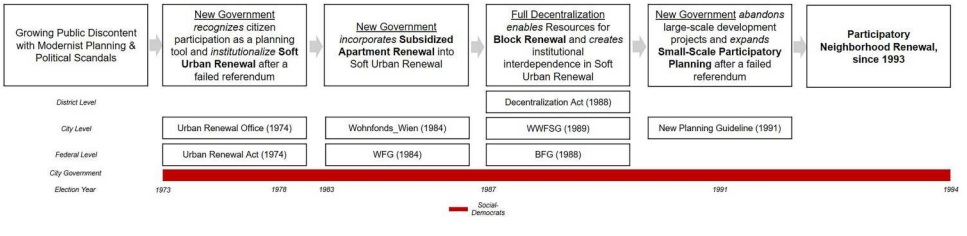

Figure 1. Institutional evolution of Vienna's 'soft urban renewal' between 1974 and 1996.

interviews elicited account evidence from the primary actors within Soft Urban Renewal and added their divergent interests, motives, and goals for promoting citizen participation in the renewal of both neighbourhoods. Building on the historical facts gathered in the earlier data collection phase, the general thematic guideline for analysing expert interviews focused on the circumstances, experiences, and processes surrounding the key decision-making moments for Vienna's participatory governance in general, and Soft Urban Renewal in particular.

Antecedent conditions of Vienna's post-war urban planning

Despite the frequent treatment of critical junctures as stand-alone moments of crises opening up major path-altering opportunities, these are also largely influenced by the antecedent preconditions and other intervening contexts, which may limit or expand the range of alternative choices that are available to policy actors (Slater and Simmons 2010). Given that the key breakpoint putting the policy sequence into motion is in itself the 'intersection point of two or more prior sequences' (Mahoney 2000, 527), this implies that institutional choices made in critical junctures are not entirely random or contingent on the initial conditions of the starting point. Because policy actors cannot respond to all problems and provide fitting solutions simultaneously, the histories of the previous policy responses – and their results – have important consequences for their problem-framing and -solving, which give particular attention to the neglected aspects of enduring problems in the prior sequence (Howlett 2009; Howlett and Goetz 2014).

After the end of the Second World War, the immediate task of the City of Vienna was to recover from the heavy industrial- and residential housing damage, which left around 87,000 of its total dwellings fully or partly destroyed (Pirhofer and Stimmer 2007). Regarding this housing shortage, the early post-war reconstruction plans under the chief urban planner, Karl Heinrich Brunner (1948–1952), focused on re-establishing the progressive planning and housing programmes of 'Red Vienna' in the 1920s (Diefendorf 1993). However, Brunner's 'from social housing to social urban planning' approach, envisaging a car-centric planning model based on separated industrial- and bedroom suburbs, found little support in the City Council[1] in favour of urban industrial agglomeration (MeißI 2005).

Following the post-war economic growth in the late 1950s, the City Council regained interest in large-scale urban development projects, and chose a functionalist urban model by the new chief urban planner, Roland Rainer (1958–1963). Rainer's architectural concept focused on regulating housing density in the city's inner districts and expanding residential areas to the fringe districts that were linked by an extensive public transport network (Bihl, MeißI, and Musner 2005). While the construction of large-scale public housing projects in the city's expanding suburbs ensued thereafter, much of Rainer's plans were met with the disapproval of the City Administration, which saw his planning ideals to contradict the traditional values and norms of the governing Social-Democrats (Suitner 2020). Subsequently, the City Administration shifted the authority over urban development from commissioned architects to the Municipal Department for Urban Development and Planning in 1963, and, following the Vienna state election in 1969, to the Administrative Group for Planning. This ultimately transferred the

planning responsibility from third-party professionals to a politician from the governing party.

Prior to this administrative reorganization, the city's modernist urban policy had already begun facing protests against its top-down approach to urban development in the mid-1960s. An increasing number of grassroots initiatives mobilized against the city's large-scale infrastructure projects, criticizing its growth-oriented infrastructure modernization. In this period, the transport infrastructure development for the growing outer districts led to the demolition of historical landmarks, such as Florianikirche (1965) and Lobkowitzbrücke Station (1969). Increasing public attention regarding urban expansion began shaping a new public discourse on participation and sustainability in urban development. This was most salient in the discussion on the revitalization of the dilapidated inner districts, which rapidly declined following the suburbanization process (Pirhofer and Stimmer 2007).

At the same time, the rescaling of housing promotion down to the regional level in 1968 took place, which institutionalized subsidized housing renovation in 1969, and historic preservation in 1972. However, the city's continuous top-down approach to infrastructure modernization was further met with local protests across Vienna in 1973. Furthermore, a series of corruption scandals and mismanagement of public funds in this period led to intense media criticism of the governing Social-Democrats, eventually leading to the resignation of the mayor, Felix Slavik (1970–1973), after the plan to repurpose a large green space (Sternwartepark) fell through in the city's first-ever referendum. In light of the growing unpopularity of the governing Social-Democrats, opening up participatory channels for community-oriented urban development became a pressing issue for the City Administration under the newly elected Leopold Gratz (1973–1984). This led to one of the city's first participatory renewal processes, namely in a former red-light district (Spittelberg) in 1973 and an inner-city public housing complex (Planquadrat) in 1974.[2]

This chain of reactions and counterreactions that engendered community-oriented neighbourhood regeneration in the following decades was rooted in the deeper political and social contexts of Vienna's urban governance. First, the power struggle of the governing Social-Democrats attempting to maintain political control over urban development led to a chain of ad-hoc responses to the rising backlash against its modernist planning policy. Their dominance in the City Council enabled the Social-Democrats to implement administrative reforms in times of political crisis, delegating full planning authority to an elected government official within the City Administration, on the one hand, and decentralizing renewal activities and resident participation at the neighbourhood level, on the other.

Second, growing public awareness towards social and environmental issues of urban development since the mid-1960s led to the mobilization of grassroots activism, which began to wield substantial influence on the decision-making of the City Administration. While the past protests against modernist urban design were limited in scope, a new generation of civic activists in the early 1970s drove an era of socio-political change, calling for greater citizen participation in the co-creation of 'liveable communities' (Feuerstein and Fitz 2009).

The timing of the intersection between these two preceding sequences had an enduring consequence for the city's urban renewal paradigm. In addition to growing awareness

towards sustainable urban development in both the City Administration and civil society, the institutionalization of citizen engagement that laid the foundation of Vienna's urban renewal paradigm came after the Federal Urban Renewal Act in 1974 amid speculation over mass demolition of substandard housing stock in Austrian cities (Eigner, Matis, and Resch 1999).

This rescaling process shifted the responsibility of urban renewal to the regional authorities, providing the legal basis for public intervention in subsidized housing renovation and resident participation in community planning through the decentralized Urban Renewal Offices (*Gebietsbetreuungen*). As a result, the City Administration was able to launch a community-oriented renewal model across Vienna's deteriorating *Gründerzeit* residential areas[3] without losing planning power to growing grassroots initiatives and worsening the declining public trust in the city's urban development strategies (Berger 1984). The birth of new urban institutions and policies in 1974 marked the key breakpoint for the institutionalization of Soft Urban Renewal that triggered the expansion of citizen participation in the localized planning process (see Figure 1).

Sequencing of instrument choices in soft urban renewal

From a policy design perspective, the specific trajectories of instrument choices and their mixes through which policies evolve over time have important implications for the extent of their robustness to adapt and resilience to change (Howlett 2019). Indeed, different elements that constitute a policy are not chosen as a whole at once, but added and subtracted in a piecemeal fashion at different points in time (Howlett and Rayner 2014). Such temporal and sequential dimensions of policies have consequences for their outcomes in the long run in the sense that the goals, the instruments and the techniques of their use may wield different effects according to the shifting contextual circumstances. In other words, timing and sequencing of choices matter not only for the patterns of change in future events, but also for the capacity of policy design in terms of delivering outcomes that meet its stated objectives.

Following the implementation of the Federal Urban Renewal Act, the City of Vienna launched its first-ever Soft Urban Renewal project in the district of Ottakring in 1978, and gradually expanded citizen participation in neighbourhood regeneration to 7 other designated renewal zones until 1984 (Berger 1984). The earlier model of Soft Urban Renewal retained a strict top-down decision-making style, maintaining full authority of the City Administration, on the one hand, and limiting an active role of residents and the newly established Urban Renewal Offices, on the other (Förster et al. 1992).

A new momentum for Soft Urban Renewal came after Vienna's first comprehensive urban development plan (*Stadtentwicklungsplan für Wien – STEP 84*) in 1984. In light of an urban decline in full swing towards the end of the 1970s, the City Administration's new planning concept prioritized reconnecting existing infrastructures to integrate dispersed urban functions into a sustainable urban system. Given that the previous radial-concentric city plan began exacerbating traffic congestion and residential segregation in the inner districts, the task of urban renewal was given priority over urban expansion for the first time in Vienna's planning history (Municipal Department 18 – Urban Development and Planning 1985). The effort to bring social life back into urban centres aimed at realizing the potential of Vienna's historic urban landscape as the city's unique urban

identity through community-oriented neighbourhood regeneration. Contrary to the earlier renewal projects that focused on urban infrastructure rehabilitation, the new renewal model prioritized subsidized partial renovation (*Sockelsanierung*) of dilapidated historic housing stock, preventing resident displacement in case of full renovation (*Totalsanierung*).

This paradigm shift also ensued from the decentralization process that continued into the 1980s, granting the regional governments access to the Federal Urban Renewal Fund in 1982 and providing more generous subsidies for pre-1965 housing stock renovation in 1984. This enabled the City Administration to establish its own housing fund, Vienna Land Procurement and Urban Renewal Fund (*wohnfonds_wien*), responsible for land acquisition and subsidy provision, which have since been one of the central components of Soft Urban Renewal, stymieing land speculation by private developers and supervising housing renewal activities.

Following the initial success of *wohnfonds_wien* in financing *Sockelsanierung* for almost one-tenth of the city's entire housing units (Fröhlich 1992a), the complete rescaling of housing and renewal subsidy provision to the regional level in 1989 introduced the concept of 'block renovation' (*Blocksanierung*), targeting modernization of entire building blocks in *Gründerzeit* neighbourhoods. In light of slow population re-growth in this period, the block renovation model played a significant role in securing and diversifying subsidized – therefore, rent-controlled – apartments in urban renewal zones for increasing housing demand.

Due to the category-based rent regulation[4], however, subsidizing housing upgrades in effect resulted in increasing private investment in underequipped apartments, leading to spatial clustering of low-income tenants in 'affordable' housing along Vienna's outer ring road (der Gürtel) (Eigner, Matis, and Resch 1999). These pockets of poverty reinforced a tendency towards residential segregation, in particular among poor migrant families without access to public housing. This unintended effect of Soft Urban Renewal necessitated its strategic reorientation, promoting manifold urban functions through diversified pathways to participation (Municipal Department 18 – Urban Development and Planning 1994).

Since Soft Urban Renewal and the Urban Renewal Offices were first introduced in 1974, the layering process of new urban renewal goals and instruments onto existing institutional arrangements created a diverse range of participatory platforms for different institutional and private actors, however, with no substantive outcome for empowering non-institutional actors in the renewal process. The implementation of landlord- and tenant participation in subsidized neighbourhood regeneration in the 1980s notwithstanding, the key institutions behind Soft Urban Renewal (i.e. Urban Renewal Offices and *wohnfonds_wien*) had still limited financial and regulatory capacities to produce meaningful results of resident participation. Furthermore, the longstanding process of administrative restructuring shifted the responsibility of public engagement in urban renewal down to the district level in 1989, putting further financial pressure on the Urban Renewal Offices and the district authorities. Without an overarching strategic framework from the City Administration, adding new participatory pathways at different stages of Soft Urban Renewal made coordination between the key institutional actors difficult (Svoboda, Weber, and Knoth 1984).

This reinforced a widening gap between the intentions and the actual outcomes of Soft Urban Renewal, having negative consequences for both renewal institutions and affected residents. First, decentralizing responsibility without authority limited the role of the Urban Renewal Offices to a quasi-subsidiary representing the interests of the City Administration in property development via *wohnfonds_wien*, to whom the role of citizens' participation in urban renewal remained trivial.[5] The lack of institutional capacity among the Urban Renewal Offices, as a result, relegated their function to one-way top-down communication. This vertical structure barred residents from meaningful participation in the decision-making process, and reinforced bureaucratic obstacles for the local planners to effectively and timely respond to emerging needs at the neighbourhood level.

Second, the institutional fragmentation between the Urban Renewal Offices and *wohnfonds_wien*, as well as the Municipal Departments, widened social divides allowing resource-rich landlords to dominate citizen participation in renewal zones (Fröhlich 1992b). Although the opportunities for participation grew with diversified subsidy schemes, the regulatory framework for Soft Urban Renewal had no particular specification concerning tenants' involvement, whose rights and options in the renewal process were often only introduced once the renovation concept was already in the works (Förster 1988).

While layering new actors and rules, the City Administration's rigid top-down approach to urban renewal and the lack of coordination mechanisms between relevant institutions continued into the mid-1990s, exacerbating the participation gap among tenants, small landlords, and the Urban Renewal Offices.

Changing policy effects of soft urban renewal in time and space

An important contribution of historical institutionalism to planning history research lies in rethinking the developmental pathways of planning institutions and their distributional outcomes beyond the binary of 'winners' *versus* 'losers', or retention *versus* replacement (see Mahoney and Thelen 2010). This new understanding of institutional change inspired planning researchers to delineate variegated modes and outcomes of gradual transformation among planning institutions – whether new actors and rules (*Displacement* and *Layering*) or changes in function (*Drift* and *Conversion*) (see Sorensen 2015).

However, there have been growing concerns that these analytical categories are less useful in highlighting the complexity of institutional systems and the multiplicity of interests of policy actors that accumulate – and also differ – at different temporal points (see van der Heijden and Kuhlmann 2017). They view this static abstraction of institutional reality to be less effective in explaining how different modes of change occur in the same path-dependent sequence over a period of time. One of the major concern is that it tends to mistreat a mode of change as the final outcome of institutional transformation, which might be a mere transitional stage leading to further development in a much larger sequence (Barnes 2008). As a result, the conceptual ambiguity in the typology of institutional change may obscure the difference between the resultant institutional arrangements of the change process and the real-world effect of the policy outcome (Capano 2019).

Reflecting these concerns, the two cases of Soft Urban Renewal presented in this section show the presence of multiple modes of incremental change within the same institutional arrangements over time. By doing so, it answers how the policy design and its designing

process *vis-à-vis* the changing temporal and spatial contexts of the policy design space influence the actual content of the policy effects in terms of its delivery.

Brunnenviertel: layering and (transition into) institutional complementary

While the ad hoc layering process of Vienna's urban renewal paradigm in the 1980s engendered institutional fragmentation resulting in a disconnect between policy actors and residents, the reform trend towards collaborative governance and the ensuing addition of new organizational tools began altering the effect of existing participatory pathways in Soft Urban Renewal.

Context

Brunnenviertel is an immigrant neighbourhood with a high concentration of substandard apartments in the Gürtel area. It marked the first case of the city's comprehensive urban renewal model based on co-production relationships between politics, civil society organizations and citizens in its dilapidated neighbourhoods that rapidly declined since the 1970s. The idea of a collaborative renewal model first emerged from a protest against the City Administration's redevelopment plan for its dilapidated market square.[6] Soon after, a citizens' initiative was organized by local artists and business owners, whose idea to repurpose the existing infrastructure into a cultural space provided important groundwork for the neighbourhood's renewal activities in succeeding years. Following the election of a new district chairperson in 1996, these grassroots activities gained more political support at the district level and, as a result, saw growing collaboration between citizens and the local Urban Renewal Office in community-oriented cultural programmes (Rode, Wanschura, and Kubesch 2010).

Design and its process

While successfully stopping the initial redevelopment plan, increasing resident participation in communal activities did not produce substantive planning outcomes until the City Administration implemented a wide range of development projects within the framework of the URBAN Community Initiative by the European Regional Development Fund and European Social Fund. In accordance with the funding guidelines giving residents incentives to actively contribute to neighbourhood regeneration and community-building, the Urban Committee, composed of the members of all co-financing institutional partners, granted 33 million Euros to over 60 projects covering around 15,000 participants in total, 8 of which were directly involved in regenerating Brunnenviertel (Municipal Department 27 – European Affairs 2002).

This expansive participatory process spanning over 4 years set forward a new framework for coordination between renewal institutions, cohering diverse pathways to participation on issues, ranging from grassroots housing help for migrants to women's participation in planning, community-building, and infrastructure renewal (Municipal Department 27 – European Affairs 2002). Contrary to the fragmented participation arenas in previous years, the organizational structure of Brunnenviertel's renewal facilitated a collaborative design space in which public actors, grassroots initiatives, and local businesses co-determined renewal objectives and plans, operating throughout the whole policy cycle. A systemic mix of planning tools fostering co-design and co-management of

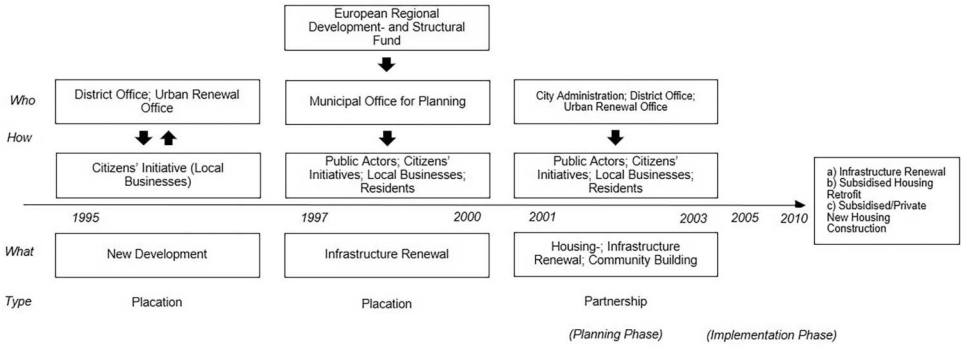

Figure 2. 'Soft urban renewal' process and outcome in Brunnenviertel between 1995 and 2010.

neighbourhood regeneration and community-building aimed to minimize the weaknesses of both top-down and bottom-up approaches to participation, linking existing local knowledge with a formal decision-making structure and formulating a strategic plan that reflects local needs (Municipal Department 18 – Urban Development and Planning 2000).

This preliminary framework was turned into concrete action plans by the City Administration in 2001, of which multi-layered participatory processes resulted in the formulation of small-scale needs-oriented urban projects on three major planning themes: open space creation; market regeneration; and housing renovation (Municipal Department 18 – Urban Development and Planning 2004). The diversified funding structure of the renewal process, involving different Municipal Departments, the district authorities, interest groups, and local businesses, enabled substantial involvement of diverse stakeholders from both the public and private sectors, facilitating a multilevel governance network across institutional domains (see Figure 2).

Effect

Contrary to the capacity deficits at the local level limiting strategic coordination of its fragmented participation arenas in previous years, this collaborative policy design was able to reinforce complementarity between renewal institutions, and create civil-public synergy in the planning process. First, the overarching structure of stakeholder engagement enabled the local Urban Renewal Office to supervise diverse thematic renewal programmes and coordinate interactions between grassroots- and institutional actors, which were previously beyond their institutional capacity. The active role of the district authorities in financing the renewal plan allowed the local Urban Renewal Office to formulate a comprehensive renewal plan that exceeded their formal responsibility (e.g. housing renovation and traffic regulation).

Second, the organizational realignment assigned the local Urban Renewal Office to a steering role, connecting informal grassroots activities with various institutional actors (e.g. the Municipal Departments, political representatives, and economic promotion agencies) in both the planning and decision-making process. This new mode of renewal governance gave different non-institutional actors strategic leverage wielding influence in the outcome of Soft Urban Renewal, reaching the highest rate of subsidized housing renovation

in Vienna, a fifteenfold increase in commercial activities, and a diverse mix of creative industries and migrant businesses on the market square (Rode, Wanschura, and Kubesch 2010).

Sonnwendviertel Alt: drifting and (Back to) institutional fragmentation

Despite the same institutional arrangements, the effect of Soft Urban Renewal in the current neighbourhood regeneration has drifted back to institutional fragmentation, disintegrating key institutional stakeholders and affected residents in the formal decision-making process. This changing effect reflects the currently unfolding structural shift in Vienna's urban fabric and the resultant reorientation of the City Administration's urban development strategies.

Context

From 2000 onwards, Vienna has experienced rapid population regrowth, which necessitated new solutions for affordable housing construction. Given the limited spatial availability in existing high-density neighbourhoods, the City Administration set forward plans for large-scale housing construction adjacent to new economic development areas and transport infrastructure, especially in former industrial sites and railway brownfields (Municipal Department 18 – Urban Development and Planning 2005).

Sonnwendviertel Alt is a neighbourhood, mostly of post-war housing stock, located in the immediate vicinity of Vienna's largest inner-urban housing development of the same name, where more than 5,500 new apartments for 13,000 residents were built since 2009 on the rail yard of a now-demolished train station. Alongside the construction of private-, subsidized housing, and self-organized cohousing projects, the City Administration launched a renewal plan in Sonnwendviertel Alt in 2013 for block renovation of 16 buildings and 107 housing units by *wohnfonds_wien* and community-building activities by the local Urban Renewal Office, which aimed at integrating existing infrastructure and residents into the new housing development (wohnfonds_wien 2017).

Design and its process

Contrary to the extensive participatory programmes that promote community self-organization in the new development area, however, the lack of institutional

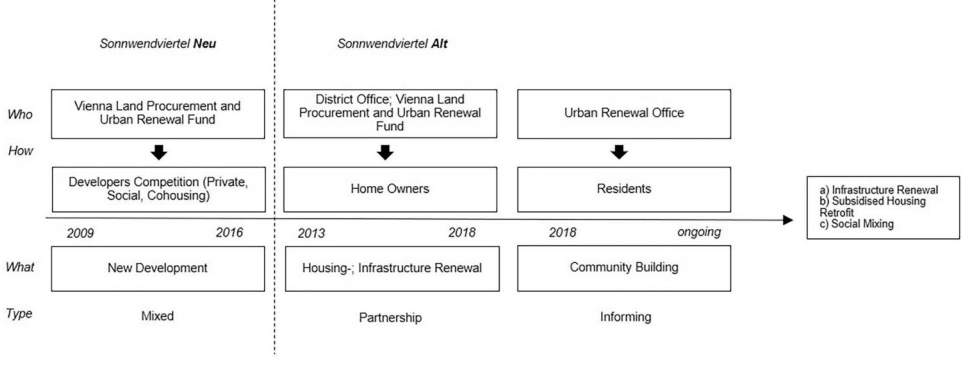

Figure 3. 'Soft urban renewal' process and outcome in Sonnwendviertel Alt since 2013.

coordination in the renewal zone reinforced information asymmetries between relevant institutions and affected residents, failing to mobilize hard-to-reach communities. Similarly, a disconnect between the formal decision-making structure and grassroots-level participation made the inclusion of local businesses in the surrounding commercial areas difficult, whose access to information and resources regarding urban renewal has been limited (see Figure 3). As a result, no subsidized renewal took place as part of the proposed block renovation concept.

The decentralization of urban renewal at the district level in the late 1980s also had a lasting consequence for realizing the infrastructure rehabilitation in Sonnwendviertel Alt, for which the district authorities are financially and politically responsible. Despite offloading political responsibility, a lack of financial resources among the district authorities impeded the implementation of diverse thematic renewal programmes in Sonnwendviertel Alt, failing to realize the renewal activities within the framework of the proposed block renovation concept. This left an institutional gap between subsidized housing renovation by *wohnfonds_wien* and community-building activities by the local Urban Renewal Office in the target renewal zone, fragmenting pathways to participation with uneven decision-making capacities and disabling inclusion of diverse social groups in the overall neighbourhood regeneration.

The drifting process of the incoherence between shifting priorities and existing instruments can be observed in the community-building activities carried out by the local Urban Renewal Office. Currently, most of the participatory programmes are oriented towards connecting the new residents in the nearby housing development, which has a strong emphasis on social mix fostered by a wide range of tenure options. While the competitive tendering process here has intensified diverse bottom-up approaches to social housing construction, the current renewal programs concentrate citizen participation in community-building in the new housing development, running the risk of self-segregation from surrounding Sonnwendviertel Alt.

Effect

Unequal access to community-building also reflects the particular spatial context of Sonnwendviertel Alt and its negative interaction with the current renewal design, which fails to create social cohesion between the residents in both areas. First, a large influx of well-educated and higher-income residents[7] who are drawn into the nearby housing development, due to rent affordability and subsidies for cohousing communities, has compounded place-making practices around their respective dwellings, where existing social dynamics and physical infrastructure in the neighbouring renewal zone bears little relevance to their everyday life. Contrary to Brunnenviertel, where existing urban diversity has been central to its renewal objectives, the stark social and physical differences in Sonnwendviertel became an obstacle for encouraging participation of 'old' – and mostly migrant – residents, and facilitating community-building between the two neighbourhoods.

Second, Soft Urban Renewal, which has had a strong focus on activating the participation of small landlords, has met with homeowners' disinterest in government subsidies, who opted for private home renovation, seeing their property value, soared up simultaneously with the nearby housing development. Given the particular ownership structure of rental housing Sonnwendviertel Alt (ca. 50% tenant-occupied), the citywide

subsidy scheme alone lacked ability to design a needs-oriented activation model that encouraged active participation of property developers and homeowners with relative financial capability. Their decision not to receive renewal subsidies was crucial for the localized result of Soft Urban Renewal.

In light of shifting contextual conditions, the specific institutional and structural mechanisms that had once reinforced the complementary between Vienna's renewal institutions and policies have generated a different policy effect in Sonnwendviertel Alt. While existing institutional arrangements resulting from the layering process in the earlier sequence have remained the same, their shifting effects at different points in time highlight the temporal and spatial constraints of its design space, exerting different – yet, within-path – outcomes stretching over decades.

Conclusion

In recent years, historical institutionalism has inspired scholars in planning history research to consider the conjoined effect of historical contingency and context sensitivity on institutional change patterns, processes and outcomes at the urban scale. Growing popularity notwithstanding, the current application of historical institutionalism in planning history research has a few limitations to fully realize its potential analytical and theoretical values. While taking critical junctures and path dependence seriously, much of the focus in the extant research lies on power-laden decisions of powerful actors that emerge from the chance-like conditions of critical junctures, of which change appears gradual and incremental in the long run. Most of this work seldom reflects upon the presence of deliberate – although not always successful – design considerations by policy actors in formulating policies and the temporal processes through which their effects change over time according to shifting contextual circumstances. As a result, the empirical application of its core concepts and approaches obscures the important difference between actual changes in existing institutional arrangements and shifting policy effects in terms of its delivery.

This contribution fills these gaps by taking a policy design approach to incrementalism and path dependence, explaining how policy actors choose policy instruments and formulate policy solutions within context-bound policy design spaces, of which effects change over time through incremental processes such as layering. To do so, it introduced two cases of Vienna's urban renewal model, Soft Urban Renewal, and addressed the multiple dimensions of its change process and their joint influence on change outcomes from two different points in time. It showed the historical legacy of the incremental additions that are made to Soft Urban Renewal, which has gradually transformed into ineffective instrument mixes that reinforced institutional fragmentation over time. This temporal process, featuring a chain of ad-hoc policy responses in times of crisis, resulted in inconsistency between the core institutions and policies of Soft Urban Renewal and incongruence with changing contextual circumstances, which undermined their abilities to deliver the anticipated outcomes of subsidized housing renovation and community-building in the long-run. While these arrangements once produced a positive effect in a particular temporal and spatial context, the tension between the multiple policy layers that have cumulated over a length period of time ultimately drifted their effect, of which components are simply 'stretched' to fit new objectives and circumstances (see Table 1).

Table 1. Changing policy effects of soft urban renewal.

	Policy priority				
Case	Political	Technical	Designing	Design	Effect
Brunnenviertel (1995–2010)	Urban decline	Neighbourhood renewal	Layering (patching)	Co-production	Complementarity
Sonnwend. Alt (2013–current)	Urban growth	New housing development	Drifting (stretching)	Siloed top-down	Fragmentation

A policy design perspective can complement the application of historical institutionalism in existing literature in the following aspects. First, it situates the practical capacities of actors to choose instruments, (re)design policies and pursue outcomes within the context-bound policy design space that entails place-specific change opportunities but also constraints. By doing so, it highlights their potential and limitations to drive transformative change within the on-the-ground governance arrangements. Second, it provides a useful analytical lens through which to view institutional change as changes in institutional arrangements by separating them from the changing effects of policy components and their delivery over time. Third, it offers a more robust understanding of the spatial dimension of institutional change, which influences the capacity of policy actors to affect the status quo through policy design and its designing process according to shifting contextual circumstances. Lastly, it adds to the contribution of planning history research to a better understanding of urban policy and governance issues by suggesting realistic solutions to urban problems within the actual capacity of policy actors that emerged from a long historical process.

This design approach also presents new research opportunities for comparative-historical analysis of urban institutions and planning policies, revealing the internal dynamics of the long-term change processes and outcomes – and their logics – at the urban scale. While we observe similar planning ideas, policies and institutions that travel between cities and regions, their capacities to respond to emerging problems and formulate solutions depend much on the specific ways in which policy actors add substantive policy instruments to their designs under particular contextual constraints. Given these conscious and deliberate design efforts can result in significant change in their effects, the specific activities and the sequence through which planning policies are designed and redesigned to meet anticipated objectives can inform research about the nature and roots of institutional change processes and outcomes that are truly unique to the unit of observation. Learning from such temporal processes that unfold in different moments and manners with particular intentions and considerations adds a new dimension to our comparative understanding of urban transformation and its divergent outcomes across cities.

Notes

1. The City Council refers to the elected legislative body of the City of Vienna, as opposed to the City Administration that serves as the city government. The latter is composed of 57 Municipal Departments and 3 public enterprises within 7 Administrative Groups. Each of these groups is led by a nominated politician from the governing party.

2. Vienna's urban renewal in the 1950s prioritized demolition of the existing buildings and infrastructures (e.g. Alt-Erdberg and Lichtental), and the revitalisation of Blutgassenviertel in the 1960s lacked participatory elements.
3. High-density monofunctional housing blocks in working-class neighbourhoods built before 1918.
4. Since 1982, the Federal Tenancy Law (*Mietrechtsgeset*) regulates the rental market based on the equipment standards of the dwellings, meaning category upgrades by private renovation were subject to higher rents.
5. Previously, two of the three directors of *wohnfonds_wien* (Walter Hofstetter and Fritz Hofmann) were mainly involved in real estate activities of limited-profit housing development companies (*Bauring* and *Sozialbau*). Both were Social-Democrats with no prior experience in urban renewal or participation (see Karinrath 1986).
6. The original renewal design drafted by the commissioned architects in 1993 envisioned replacing the market square with a high-rise building for apartments and offices.
7. Despite means-tested loans, the cost of down payment remains an access barrier for low-income households to subsidized social housing.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Funding

This work was supported by Austrian Science Fund [Grant Number P 30617]; Literar-Mechana Copyright Collecting Society; and Vienna Doctoral School of Social Sciences.

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