

Graz

SWITCH ON the swales

Water underlies the relations between all kingdoms in nature, all individuals in all kingdoms, all parts of each individual...Water is consubstantial with us and yet, paradoxically, it is the element most difficult for humans to tame. What if, rather than mastering it, we decided to follow it? To think like water. To circulate, infiltrate, reflect, water and purify. Such is the utopia of our project.

The fragmentation of Gösting's territory leads to a series of ruptures at every scale of life. More and less dynamic pockets of life now feed only on their own resources and are becoming exhausted in a very mineral, very asphalted world. Our project aims to break down the dams, follow the rifts, consolidate the networks, irrigate and innervate the territory.

The network of landscaped ditches cuts through these pockets, the water continues its course and draws a new map of the territory. These pathways, thrown over Gösting as if by the gesture of a sower, fertilise the riverbanks and awaken the sensitive intelligence of the living. The water course itself forces the imagination to project itself into the distance, encouraging us to imagine the furthest, to follow its thread. We want to use this magic to give a new meaning to the territory, to allow for the emergence of a material that men, women and children will want to understand, share and protect. As the swales water flows, all living things come to life and change our perceptions. The buds, the flowers, the colour and changing water flow, the great floods like high tides which command respect and that we want to sing. Another life. The path formed by the swales is punctuated by beacons, like landmarks along the way, reminding us of their unifying force and marking points of conviviality. The swales cut through the neighbourhoods and shake up traditional practices. They will be relayed by the planting of partitioning sites so as to preserve a hospitable green network. They will encourage a new mobility of the human population and a reconstitution of exchange networks so that plant and animal species can circulate and develop. These social and ecological corridors will have to breathe with the rhythm of the seasons and floods. Thinking like water, thinking with water brings with it a renewal of methods, a major factor in environmental knowledge and action. This new landscape, structured by the network of swales, will improve the quality of life for users in terms of ethics, aesthetics and health. Gösting should enhance the heritage value of Graz and highlight the region's ability to meet the challenges of the future.

PLAN GUIDE OF GÖSTING : DEVELOPMENT AXES

The territory of Gösting suffers from its fragmentation into monofunctional areas. The juxtaposition of housing estates, industrial estates and large blocks of flats results in a rapid and continuous flow of traffic passing through or accessing these areas, which itself contributes to accentuating the fragmentation. The railway lines and major through roads help to create this fragmentation within the district. The car dominates daily commuting, as evidenced by the large number of car dealerships. Confined to the private space of their car, residents are blind to the landscape that separates home from work, the car park and the shopping centre.

Mobility time has to be fast, otherwise it becomes stressful. It is not conceived as a time for living; it is a non-time in a non-place. As a result, the region has a major lack of attractiveness.

From our point of view, the development of Gösting should consider contemporary elements in the definition of the landscape as well as reinforcing the functions of natural heritage elements in the dynamics of the area.

Our approach is based on 3 axes: renaturation, inner development and densification

RENATURATE : Landscaping as an agent of the transformation of Gösting

The landscape as a resource and the landscape as a project. We have decided to use the risk of flooding as a fundamental opportunity to develop the entire project. We want to target our intervention so that it responds simultaneously to flooding and to the need for re-vegetation, new public spaces and cool islands, by integrating the living into the heart of urban planning.

To achieve this, we are planning to cool the streets, reduce the impermeability of the soils, transforming existing impermeable areas such as car parks into permeable areas, integrate the blue, green and brown infrastructure throughout the project, guarantee the ecological management of watercourses and offer intelligent water management by regulating flooding and recovering rainwater.

All these interventions to promote biodiversity will be embodied in the design of the public space through which the residents of Gösting pass daily.

Our modus operandi is as follows: The technical system is to use these different typologies to create a storage system at the heart of the district in order to regulate flooding. This system will be developed as a mesh, with each intervention feeding off the other. It's a network that completes itself and works together. Once the minor flows have been filled, they will feed the major flows and vice versa.

We want to use this modus operandi to turn it into a public space project that evolves with the rhythm of the floods. Submersible riverbanks, flood plazas and minor riverbanks can be transformed from shared public spaces into storage areas filled with water. These storage spaces are both technical and poetic.

At a time when the pace of change in our environment is accelerating, and our relationship with time and space is changing, the landscape is a necessary landmark. It contributes to the ecological quality of our environment. It is a factor in the appropriation of the territory in which we live. Finally, it is a vector for the residential and economic attractiveness of Gösting.

In order to summarise our actions, the interventions are as follows:

- a. Developing a network of landscaped ditches to link the green, brown and blue framework of the site.
- b. Propose a landscaped layout that can evolve over time.
- c. Ensure the ecological management of the watercourses.
- d. Propose intelligent water management through flood control, rainwater harvesting and sanitation.
- e. Highlighting the atmospheres according to the specific nature of each ditch.
- f. Integrate the existing landscape bubbles (residential gardens, parks, the edge of the Wall, etc.) into the overall ecological network.
- g. Highlight the landscape perspectives linking the Mur and the Plabutsch. Rethink access and routes to these two landscape centres.
- h. Create viewpoints for the public and birdwatchers.
- i. Drain the car parks and improve the landscape quality of the parking areas.

INNERVATE : Ensuring smooth connections

The aim of our project is to redefine the district's function as a real gateway to the city. The challenge is to make the site both accessible and visible to all. Initially, the project consists of healing the infrastructural fractures described above using a natural network to reconcile the living and the human, nature and infrastructures. To achieve this, we will be using the green, blue and brown frameworks to serve this healing process.

The importance of the transport network is obvious in terms of connecting the site, and we want to offer a wide range of services to target as many visitors as possible. It will be possible to come to Gosting by foot, by bike, by car, by bus, by tram or by train.

A second challenge is to draw the residents of Graz to Gosting, transforming the district into an attractive place to live and visit. This objective will be achieved by making use of the area's natural heritage, with a new programme for the different areas, including the Hub, the incubator, training courses, the ornithological museum and new housing, so that Gosting will no longer be a place for passing through, but a place for living !

As a first step, our guide plan proposes the creation of passageways and tunnels under the railway line to make it permeable and thus erase this infrastructural fracture. These passageways will cross the second fracture of the territory, the major traffic artery (Wiener Straße). These 3 passageways (2 new passageways and the extension of an existing one) will enable the three transverse axes to irrigate the district from the hill to the Wall. The guide plan targets a major development axis linking milieu 1, milieu 2 and milieu 3. This axis, common to the three areas we are developing, will extend beyond the Wall to the opposite bank. On the other side of the district, the guide plan proposes a new departure point for hikes, with an information shelter in a disused building that will be renovated. Beyond these three main axes, pathways will be created along the swales. These secondary axes may be used for jogging and trail running.

To summarise our actions, the interventions are as follows:

- a. Enhancing the district's role as a gateway to the city.
- b. Providing spaces that encourage people to stop and slow down (small shops and local businesses, spaces for relaxation and contemplation).
- c. Increase the number of public spaces on offer and link them together.
- d. Carry out a neighbourhood-wide traffic analysis in order to :
 - i. Reconfigure traffic routes and reduce car traffic as much as possible
 - ii. Propose cycle paths
 - iii. Improve pedestrian comfort and safety
- e. Rethink the perimeters of the site :
- f. Strengthen the link with the town centre via soft traffic routes

DENSIFY : Densifying and diversifying the range of activities and services on offer

Built heritage as a resource for densification. Gosting's urban fabric is dominated by detached houses and industrial warehouses, which means that the area is not very densely occupied.

We want to structure the existing layouts in order to restore a hierarchy in the areas of full and empty spaces. To achieve this, our project focuses on two major interventions: firstly, we want to densify the major axis, recreating a built-up front on the main Wiener axis, and secondly, we want to create an urban centre, a real hub of activity and conviviality in milieu 2, served by the major axis.

Densification will make it possible to restructure the area to give it a clear urban layout. This will make it possible to identify shared public spaces, transport zones and residential areas, with the aim of making the area legible for the residents of Gosting.

This densification will make it possible to launch new programmes, and thus contribute to Gosting's new attractiveness.

To achieve this, we are installing buildings on either side of the Wiener's major axis to create a new perspective that is significant on the scale of the district. This perspective will be a new urban landmark, and will help to make the overall design of the district more legible. The plan is to create an active base for shops and local services on the ground level, while the upper levels will be used for housing, with the dual aim of meeting the high demand for housing in the district through the built-up front .

Another major densification operation will be carried out in milieu 2, where the current Interspar uses a very large surface to offer little density. Our project will therefore involve densifying the two upper levels to create a 4-storey building, including the parking level. We want to increase the density of the block only on the existing surface so as not to further seal off the ground.

The challenge of this densification is to recreate a town heart, a new focal point for the residents of Gosting, in order to give a hierarchy to the overall urban design, which is currently lacking in this area on this site.

To summarise our actions, the interventions are as follows:

- a. To create an urban centre, a hub of activity and conviviality.
- b. Promote controlled densification of Gösting and develop a diversified range of housing on the main thoroughfare.
- c. Upgrade and create multifunctional public spaces and outdoor meeting places adapted to needs and seasons.
- d. Expand the range of services on offer and bring in new uses, particularly for higher education and research.
- e. Encourage the development of action research and entrepreneurship in the field of ecological transition.
- f. Offer landscaped ditches as open-air laboratories for research into biodiversity and hydraulic management. This will encourage the development of specialised research in ecology and urban planning.
- g. Plan existing watercourses by combining use value with recreational value (strolling, permaculture, educational trails, etc.).

DESCRIPTION OF THE MILIEUX

Dealing with the subject by « milieu » is an opportunity to superimpose a multi-scalar study onto this global approach to the area, without ever losing sight of any of these dimensions, in order to propose an integrated and all-encompassing project, including links with the City and beyond the district. We have chosen to base our proposal on 3 of these environments in particular, from a dual perspective - internal and radiating - in order to generate a genuine centrality. The hub, the incubator and the flood park are interconnected and complementary. The articulation of their activities is the driving force behind Gösting's new centrality.

Milieu I. The hub : gateway to Gösting and to the City

A new gateway to the territory, a belvedere to offer a first reading of the landscape as soon as you step off the train, an invitation to admire this exceptional natural heritage that gives GOSTING its identity, this is the ambition of our design for this HUB.

The idea was to welcome visitors to a space overlooking the tramway and bus traffic, which is the hallmark of the HUB. As soon as they step off the train, users can enjoy a public space with an breathtaking view of the horizon.

Flow management : We decided to build an L-square shape, at the bottom of the plot, alongside the railway line, in order to organise and concentrate exchanges within this volume, and free up a public space linked to the main axis of the district. This L-square shape is built in continuity with the platforms, giving train users access to a vegetated roof that allows them to reach the lower level of the plot via two staircases at the ends of the shape. The project also provides a covered area for the tramway and bus stops. This structure has the dual quality of being both a belvedere and a roof, allowing flows from above and below to be managed

The Programme Pôles : In addition to managing the flows, the project satisfies the programme requirements of users. We plan to install an information booth for the transport services on offer, a kiosk for refreshments, public toilets and a bicycle repair workshop. The definition of these programmes may evolve in consultation with the city.

The hub connects Gösting inwards and outwards, opening up the area, boosting commercial activity and encouraging population densification.

Milieu II. The transition project

The «already there» as the substance of the project is the starting point of our reflexion on the densification of the Interspar plot. The aim of the project is to make the existing supermarket denser, while maintaining visibility between the existing and planned parts. We are building a two-storey ring to accommodate the following programme: an incubator/accelerator to help entrepreneurs develop projects linked to ecological transition, projects related to climate changes, the accelerated biodiversity loss, water management, the circular economy and sustainable food supply.

The programme will include a training centre open to all. In addition, temporary accommodation will be available for entrepreneurs from the incubator and students from the training centre. The programme will be completed with multi-purpose rooms for sporting activities. These will be installed in part of the supermarket's basement (the other part will continue to be used as a car park) and will be open to local residents to encourage meetings and interactions.

The project is ambitious and meets the climate challenge: 5,000m² of space will be dedicated to developing these activities. The building also incorporates a large 1,000m² greenhouse on the main façade, enhancing the visibility of the programme. The building will be connected to various courtyards and terraces on different levels, which can be used by project developers for their experiments. A covered public market space under the suspended ring will enable to create a village centre, a place where residents can meet and interact.

This configuration will ensure the continued existence of Interspar, which is vital for the people of Gösting.

Milieu III. The floodable park

At the heart of the network of swales, we plan to create a floodable park to offer residents a space rich in the biodiversity of the site's natural heritage. This public ecological centre at the heart of the district will become a unique experience in Gösting. Each season will give a unique dimension to the park where the genius of the place will be revealed over time. The flooding of the park will be experienced as an event, an exception drawing many visitors from Graz and beyond..

Outside the flood season, the park offers a privileged recreational area. The facilities are adapted to flooding conditions, including social areas, play areas and sports facilities. The park is intended as a starting point for a number of pathways and walks following the path of the ditches throughout the district

From a technical point of view, the aim of the park will be to manage water in order to deal with flooding on a neighbourhood scale. From an ecological point of view, it incorporates a plant purification system for waste water to irrigate the park, as well as a plant remediation system

to clean up the soil.

In addition to the landscaping, the plan is to set up an ornithology museum that will function as a hub for the ornithological observation post on the other side of the Wall. Round in shape, these introverted spaces overlook a wooded central part that will provide an opportunity to observe the birds that will come to gather there.

We will use the existing building at the entrance to the plot as a reception area for information and ticket sales. The aim of the programme will be to provide information about Gosting's living heritage.

In addition to the perimeter of action, we have decided to treat both sides of the riverbank in order to include the treatment of the car parks within our perimeter of intervention. We would like to rework this strip of parking to remove the waterproofing and integrate it into the overall scheme for the flood park.

Milieu IV. Shopping area

The Wiener Straße axis is being redesigned on the basis of three objectives: to make pedestrian traffic safer and more comfortable; to integrate cycle paths; and to assess and reduce the role of the car as much as possible. To this end, a car-sharing zone will be developed along this route, in order to take account of this means of transport while trying to reduce it.

The car trade can be maintained, but a diversification of the commercial offer and especially of local shops (bakeries, butchers, pharmacies, bookshops, etc.) must be encouraged politically and financially, at least for their installation.

In this section, the flourishing timber trade is integrated into the beacons. These are becoming a showcase for local expertise.

It is along these lines that the densification of Gösting can be assessed and studied. Urban and architectural feasibility studies for the creation of mixed housing (social, home ownership, etc.) are recommended.

Milieu V. Garden City

The identity of the urban fabric of this part of Gösting is in line with our action plan. On the basis of consultation with residents, the landscaped ditches will be able to cross the edges of plots without affecting the private character of the gardens.

As well as promoting biodiversity, the ditches will act as water collectors, which will be used to irrigate private gardens.

REVEALING THE GENIUS LOCI

All the interventions described above have a common objective: to reveal the genius of the site. Identifying the character specific to each of the sites was a valuable entry point in the design process.

Our aim is to provide visitors to Gosting with a unique experience throughout their journey, from one milieu to another, and to achieve this we will be paying particular attention to the design of the ambiances, which will be the common denominator of the journey. To do this, our aim is to capture the elements of life and express them in the landscapes, soundscapes and materials of the projects.

In milieu 1, the idea was to create a seam between nature and infrastructure.

The infrastructure offers this relationship with the sky and the horizon, projecting the viewer into the Gosting landscape. As for the landscaping, it creates the atmosphere of a suspended garden, a calm and peaceful place to arrive and admire the nature.

In milieu 2, the idea was to work on occasional shaded areas in order to keep the void for different types of use, including the market, as previously mentioned. The ground will be semi-vegetated to provide pleasant summer comfort.

In milieu 3, our intention was to take the visitor into a magical place. The genius loci is expressed here by the aquatic identity of the environment, which we reveal through the design of an organic walkway that is more or less immersed in tune with the season. In the heart of the flood park, we are lulled by birdsongs, the sound of water and the rich atmosphere of biodiversity.

SWITCH ON the swales – the new face

Metamorphosing the landscape to give it a new face.

The key idea is to reveal and illuminate the hidden potential of the site through the prism of the issue of 'Water and the City'. The project aims to transform the image of the district by revealing the qualities of its natural heritage. The challenge is to use the constraints of the area's floodability to highlight a new landscape, new perspectives, and reveal the natural heritage that has been forgotten by urbanisation and transport network infrastructures.

Bringing water into Gosting means giving it a new life, irrigating a new dynamic in terms of landscape, planning and economics. Bringing water into the district also means anchoring the project in a living dynamic, that of seasonality.

This way of existing in tune with the seasons will make Gosting an area for events, where everyone will be invited to watch the 'Switched on Swales'. A haven for a new diversity, the swales will be the heart of an unprecedented show. This new colouring of the landscape will redefine Gosting, previously synonymous with a forgotten eco-system, as a uniquely attractive location. SWITCH ON the swales will enable Gosting to shine on a city-wide scale, establishing it as a remarkable place of landscape heritage interest and making it an unmissable place to visit in Graz.

MOBILISE, CONSULT, FEDERATE

The design and implementation of the Gösting urban development requires a wide range of actors to be federated.

Initially, it will be necessary to mobilise the expertise of specialists in various fields: hydrology consultants, landscape architects, biologists/ecologists, town planners, sociologists, demographers, geographers and economists.

This expertise will be used to fine-tune proposals adapted to the area, which will be submitted for consultation with representatives of civil society: local elected representatives, representatives of associations, shopkeepers' representatives, representatives of the various trades in Gösting, and residents of all generations and genders.

At this stage, or at the same time, funding may be sought, preferably from companies represented locally. The aim is for the programme to be accepted, supported and appropriated by everyone. Together in Gosting for Switch on the swales!