

EROSION – CONTEXT: HISTORY & TERRITORY

This project emerges from a territorial reading of the social, historical, and cultural context that frames it. The history of Graz, and specifically that of the Gries district, is closely tied to the Mühlgang, to the motion and routines that emerge from its presence in the city, some of which have been buried or lost to time. We understand the city as a palimpsest of historical, cultural, and social layers that operate as a pillar for it to function and adapt. Free Mühlgang unburies the traces of the past, to reveal through a process of EROSION the stories, events, and people(s) that have been forgotten, excluded, and silences. Through the materialization of new programs and exchanges, we will honor them and connect them to the present (SEDIMENTATION).

In view of the many voices that consider the canal obsolete and demand its draining, our approach rejects that imposed faith and proposes its resignification into a space for experimentation, and a catalyst of strategies for the city. Thus, the Mühlgang becomes a connecting organism, vertebral column, and bridge between past, present, and future.

Within the project site, the Mühlgang is freed, overflowing and flooding the generated topography. Shaping a new wetlands landscape we have baptized as WATE@EVER. In Waterever, the unchained Mühlgang will allow Graz and its inhabitants to recover the activities, experiences and relationships that existed throughout its history.

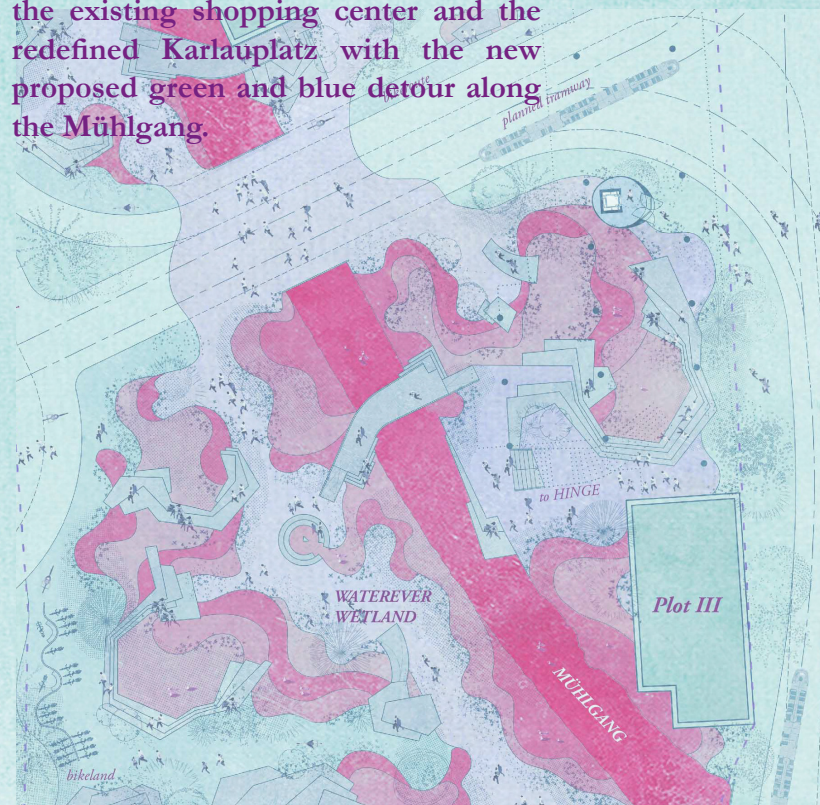
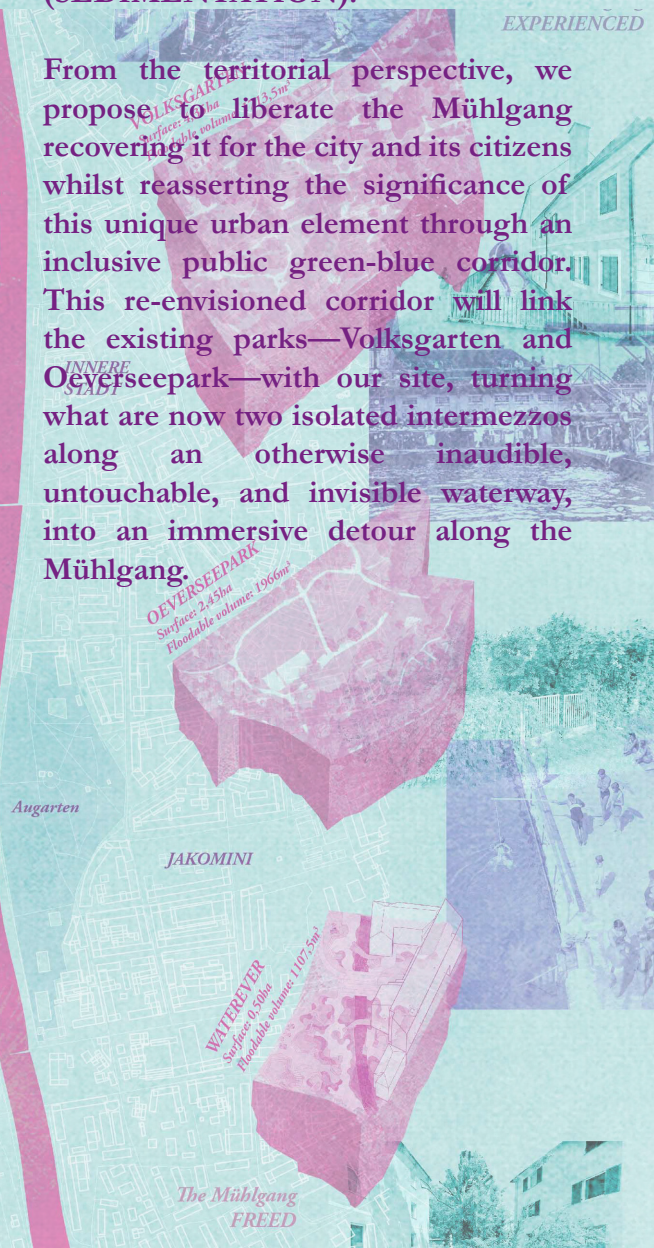
WATE@EVER will filter the existing waterway, producing clean water and rich vegetation.

WATE@EVER may remind people of how it was to swim in the Mühlgang, to gather in pleasant public spaces or nurture their own garden.

WATE@EVER introduces a unique new gateway to the CityPark, connecting the existing shopping center and the redefined Karlauplatz with the new proposed green and blue detour along the Mühlgang.

From the territorial perspective, we propose to liberate the Mühlgang recovering it for the city and its citizens whilst reasserting the significance of this unique urban element through an inclusive public green-blue corridor. This re-envisioned corridor will link the existing parks—Volksgarten and Oeverseepark—with our site, turning what are now two isolated intermezzos along an otherwise inaudible, untouchable, and invisible waterway, into an immersive detour along the Mühlgang.

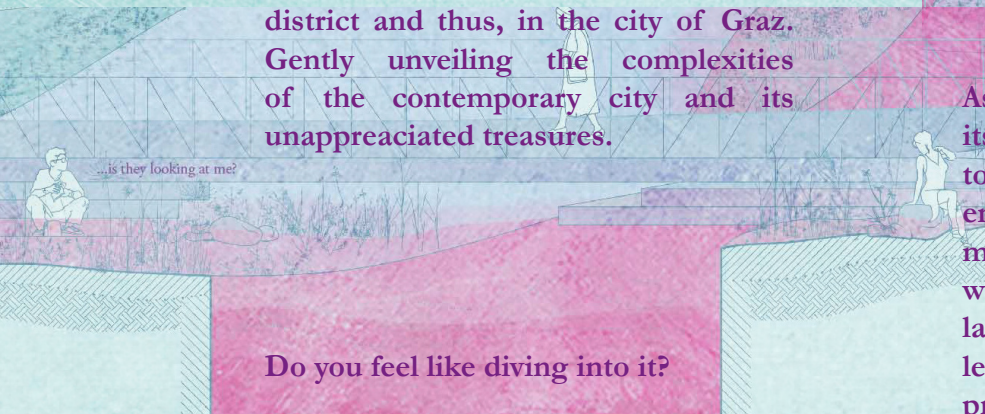
EXPERIENCED



OVERFLOW – WETLAND

The germ of Free Mühlgang is the eagerness to recover the Mühlgang as a social and political engine. Reflecting on its history as a part of the city, from being a medium for trade and commerce to an energy generator for wheat mills or a venue for aquatic sports, allows us to think of the canal as a catalyst element.

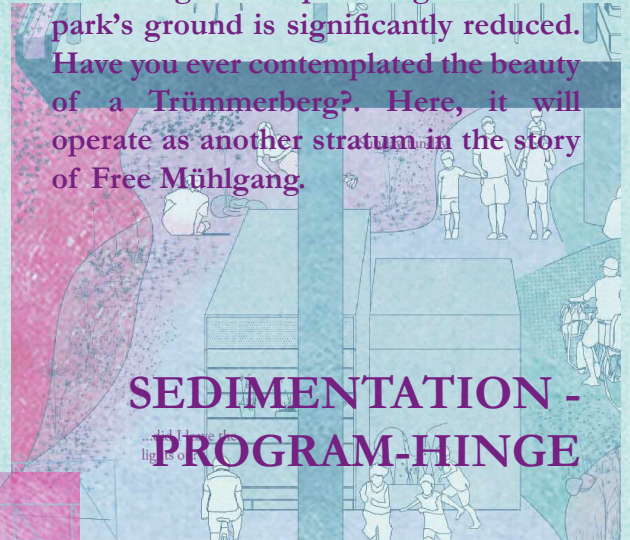
In ancient Rome, the “thermae” was the place where people would gather to socialize around water. Our approach revises the “thermae,” looking to congregate the different realities and becomings that coexist in the Gries district and thus, in the city of Graz. Gently unveiling the complexities of the contemporary city and its unappreciated treasures.



Do you feel like diving into it?

WATE®EVER becomes a playful and exciting green and blue scenery. Here, you can do any activities, breathe, experience the open air... This new wetland landscape will filter the Mühlgang waters. The filtering is done by the inhabiting plants. They are the glass slipper of WATE®EVER. Their wellbeing reverberates into the quality of the canal waters, which, at the same time, will make any rambler want to spend there every hour. By keeping the wetland fresh and clean, the flora will bring its own wildlife, that will change with the seasons... Children as well as adults will become part of this cycle, and that way, as soon as midnight comes, they will tie their shoes tightly, so they do not lose any of them...

The debris resulting from the current edifications that this proposal shatters shapes the park's topography. Thus, the ecological footprint to generate the park's ground is significantly reduced. Have you ever contemplated the beauty of a Trümmerberg? Here, it will operate as another stratum in the story of Free Mühlgang.



SEDIMENTATION - PROGRAM-HINGE

As Wate®ever approaches Karlauerstraße, its natural morphology is mitigated to give prominence to the re-envisioned thermae—THE HINGE—materialized in a permeable building with a green façade that extends the landscape upwards. Through four levels + ground floor, with the following program:

Ground floor: Plaza

Its main characteristic is that it is traversed by the new tramway and vehicular and pedestrian accesses to CITYPARK. Therefore, the ground floor of the building may be read as a large covered square. A public space, strongly associated with the Mühlgang, that is perfect to the SOUTH for practicing sports (we must not forget that the arena was one of the areas that constituted the Thermae); and to the NORTH offers a place for itinerant markets. Based on the Supercoop philosophy, this space is offered as a collection point for groceries, as well as markets where a dynamic of barter or circular economy can be proposed. The communication cores lead to the upper floors and two pedestrian bridges connect the two banks of the canal.

FREE MÜHLGANG

Level 1: Cabinet

The discourse that articulates this floor is still historical. We seek to generate an archive for free consultation focused on those documentation / publications / materials that deal with aspects outside the focus - dominant guiding thread in the history of human species. Particularly, the view of the western white heterosexual cisgender man. It will be a capsule that brings together the history in-between, always off radar, which enriches the construct of reality. Preventing those layers of information from being lost and generating a constant dialogue among the members of a community.

In order not to exclusively feed the spirit, the Waste Warriors Arena, a food court, is located on the same floor. Its main supplier will be the CITYPARK restaurants: food that would otherwise end up in the garbage will supply these last call restaurants. Free Mühlgang is committed to a different consumption, and this begins with local solutions that may have a global reading / propagation.

Level 2: Education

Whereas on the first floor a collection of theoretical material is made, on the second floor the broadcast channel is followed to make the concepts accessible through education and the exchange of experiences. This educational program focuses on three main sections: environmental awareness (in which the Wetland will be active part and field of work), gender equality and LGBT Identity Development.

In this case, the different educational spaces are combined with Second Skin, a large apparel store. The main supplier will be, again, the CITYPARK clothing stores. We propose a trade model that comes closer to a circular economy, or at least unearths the whole story behind a garment and what it means environmentally and socially.

Level 3: Legal assistance

The third floor is filled with smaller-scale spaces that allow small gatherings. It will be a legal department leading in real tools and mechanisms to achieve a work insertion based on effective equality, and work and family life balancing. In addition to aid for entrepreneurship.

Level 4: Body crush

The last floor connects with the Ground floor at the point of worship to the body. In this wander through the building, a strong intellectual commitment with the part of reality that does not have a path as clear as desired is sought. However, we must not forget that we are part of nature; we do not live exclusively from knowing. Our body, the material part of our being, also claims its place.

There are three main zones:

- Worship plaza: outdoor exercise area, safe for gender-queer people. It is organised in such a way that it puts you in relation to other bodies. Becoming a social playful exercise.
- Mingling with the unknown capsules: bubbles scattered where SCS (Sexual Consent Spaces) can be experimented. Their deck is accessible from the retractable staircase located inside. Furthermore, they are the crystallization of a healthy and plural sexuality.
- Lover sustainable consumption: an area for experimentation/research on sexual consumptions habits among humans. It is a wake-up call for sustainable sexual consumption awareness.

The Hinge becomes an statement for an inclusive architecture, which involve and integrate a wide range of actants that will inhabit, discover, transform and enhance a new vision for Gries and the City.

-Liberty, Equality, Fraternity or Death-

