



AN EMOTIONAL PUBLIC DEBATE

The idea of the transformation of the street into a shared space boulevard stirred a general mistrust among the residents of the city and led to a **fierce debate**. A general disbelief that a car-free shopping boulevard would not only create a livelier public space but would also be good for business, made it into an **emotional topic** that also reached the **national political debate**.

In order to test the idea, to guarantee an open debate and to offer proponents and opponents the possibility to identify with the new plans, the municipality of Vienna together with the involved planners organized an **extensive participation programme within the planning process**.

Information meetings, discussions and a public exhibition about the vision for the street were organized to give people the chance to contribute their individual wishes and ideas. A **street festival** closed a portion of the street to ongoing traffic over the course of half a year. During this testing phase the street was fitted with **prototypes of the new street furniture** in order to give the residents of the city a feeling of the atmosphere of the street as a shared space.

The result was that people immediately took over the street and naturally started using it as the intended boulevard. The street subsequently transformed into a **political space** that was used to discuss the issue of the referendum alongside many other protests, gatherings and celebrations.

This process shows how temporary test-phases and public debates on site are vital to truly let people participate in the transformation process of public spaces and help them to identify with structural change.