

The new building and the topographical situation of the University Square

In order to make room for the new university building other buildings had to be razed: the one at the western flank of Jesuitenplatz as well as two other buildings behind it. There seemed to be a tacit agreement that the original function of the square as the centre of the university quarters was not to be changed (see Fig. 3). This urbanistic *sine qua non* and the narrow space available required an unusual design of the “New Aula”. The narrow front facing the square had to be accentuated by the design of the main façade. This new façade was to compete directly with the front of the church, which had so far dominated the square, so that the square was put into a new visual perspective (Fig. 7). The attenuation of the predominance of the church by the new university building symbolises the reorganisation of university teaching, in the course of which – as regards the disciplines of theology and philosophy – the “Societas Jesu” was to be gradually deprived of its influence by 1759.

The originally intended design of the square appears to have been much more radical than the actual outcome. Still existing drawings caused Renate Wagner-Rieger to speak about plans for a veritable “university forum”. An elevation of the

Jesuit College opposite the new building dating from the years after 1773 indicates that it was planned to heighten the College façade by two further five-bay storeys at the centre and to top them with a “Mathematical Tower”.

The building on the fourth side of the square opposite the church was also to accommodate parts of the university. The building was owned by Conrad Adolph von Albrecht (who died in 1751), the famous *concettista* of Emperor Charles VI, who ranks prominently in the cultural history of the Viennese Baroque era as the author of the iconographic programme for the decorations of St. Charles’s Church and the Court Library. The Archbishop of Vienna, Johann Joseph Graf von Trautson (1704–1757), (Prince-Archbishop of Vienna 1751–1757) and Protector of the University, intended to include the building in the university complex and adapt it as residential building for the professors. The idea was only dropped at the end of 1753, months after construction of the university building had started.

As far as we can see from still existing documents and pictures, it was planned not only to erect a single university building but to implement a large-scale project to redefine this part of the town,





which had been used for university purposes since the Middle Ages, in urbanistic terms and give it a clear architectural structure. This project from the years around 1750 got stuck halfway – but at least the central new university building, an architectural masterpiece, has been realised.

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THE UNIVERSITY SQUARE
IN VIENNA, CA. 1758–1761;
VIENNA, KUNSTHISTORISCHES
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(FIG. 7)