

MENTAL TALES

TUM Sustainable Urbanism

RISKING CONTACT

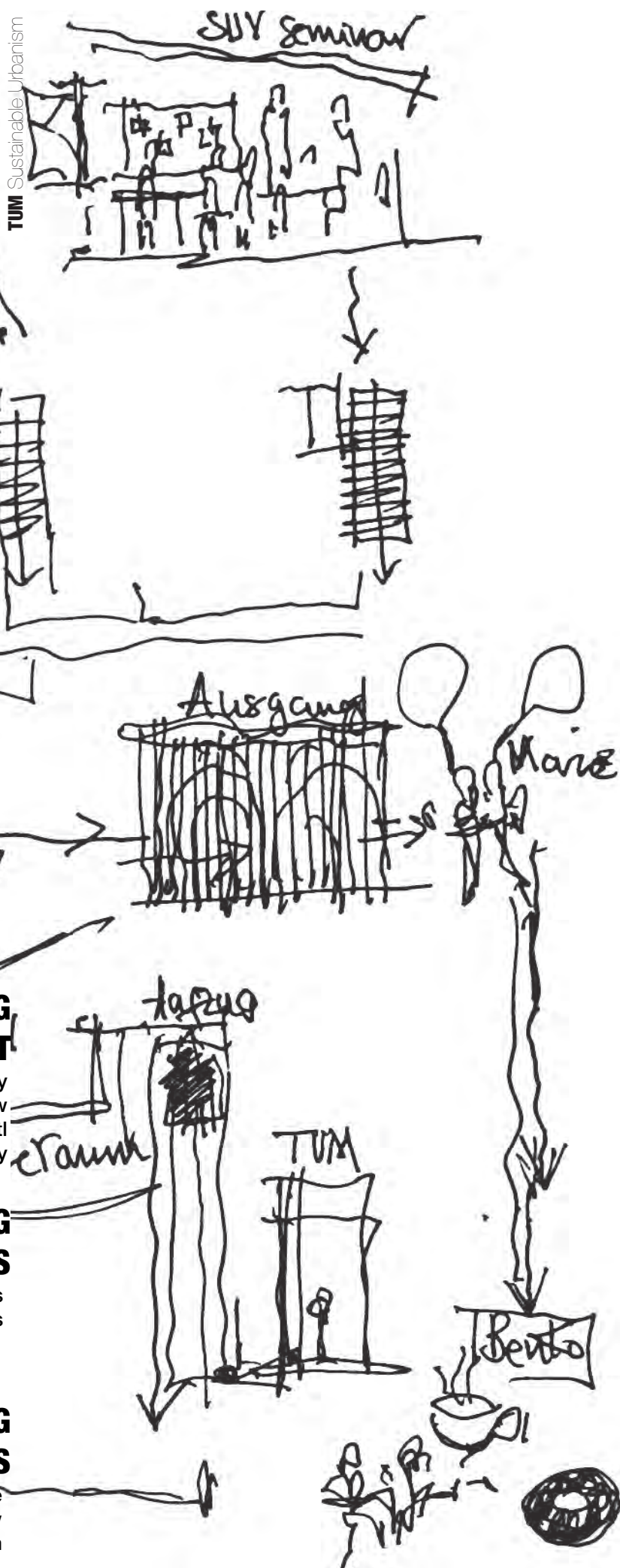
proximity
interview
w/ Dr. Hans Förstl
gated community

STRESSING PERCEPTIONS

mental maps
emotions

EXPERIENCING TRUTHS

atmosphere
cittàslow
green



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EDITORIAL

How does an urban setting affect our psyche? Do mental conditions influence urban decision-making?

Students of architecture, landscape architecture and urbanism, but also of political science and engineering from TUM, left their beaten paths in the winter of 2019/20 visiting the “mentally urban” lecture series, which focused on the interdependence of urban design and mental health – a so far scarcely addressed combo.

Experts from various disciplines shared their perspective on how the mental and the urban interlink: Medical researcher in epidemiology and public health (LMU), **Dr. Jan Stratil**, talked about “**knowing what’s effective**”; professor for urban design (HM), **Prof. Andrea Benze**, about “**perception of space and patterns of use of the elderly**”; the medical scientist and director of the clinic for psychiatry and psychotherapy (TUM), **Prof. Hans Förstl**, postulated: “**no cold feet when thinking about cities**”; geographer and spatial epidemiological researcher in Zurich, **Dr. Oliver Grübner**, lectured on “**geographies of emotions in cities based on twitter**”; Sociologist and Scientific Director at the Institute for Advanced Sustainability Studies (IASS) in Potsdam, **Prof. Ortwin Renn**, on “**risk and evaluating (urban) situations**”. Though each lecture approached the theme with a different focus and the applied research methods were various, all lecture guests shared the same aim: to enhance the wellbeing of people.

In a concurrent seminar 8 students amplified all the exciting lecture input in edifying discussions with us. This magazine is the result. **Issue #1**

is a collection of written articles, interviews, reports of site visits and movie reviews, stating first thoughts, gaining knowledge and making observations on the topic “mentally urban”. Among many new insights, we also picked out **three toeholds** for further research. **Risking Contact, Stressing Perceptions and Experiencing Truths** became the three main features structuring the contents of this first issue.

While finishing up issue #1, the world’s situation suddenly changed dramatically. Our three main features were ultimately challenged by harsh actuality: Social distancing, stay at home, lockdown – do not risk contact. Empty streets, closed schools/universities/theatres patrolled parks – a very new way to perceive the fragile public realm. How do we react to these truths we read about in social media, newspapers, online magazines – depressed, scared, unsure? Contact in times of no contact puts new impact on spatial effects on our mental wellbeing, momentarily and even more in the future.

Issue #2, due in August 2020, was to report about the experience of “**risking contact**”. Students of the urban disciplines were to work on proposals on how to improve the well-being of an urban district in Munich – in mixed-groups – with students of medicine – hands on. Change of plans: we hope to be reporting our experience of the importance of physical contact out of the perfidious real-life-lab of a worldwide lockdown.

**Carmen Duplantier and
Dorothee Rummel**

Munich, March 2020

Cities make people sick. Urban living can be bad for physical and mental health. City life and its spatial conditions affect happiness and wellbeing. More and more, cities are under the cloud of harming their inhabitants not only physically (respiratory diseases because of air pollution, for example) but also mentally (schizophrenia because of negative stress caused by stimulus satiation, for example). In several ways, this statement puts urban planning under pressure and demands a professional reaction. Architecture, landscape architecture, urban design – disciplines that shape cities, organize patterns of use of inhabitants and provide (atmospheric) settings for all groups of our society – should become alert and active. Because if their work has negative impact on the mental state of the civil society, they need to gain better expertise in this topic – thinking of strategies to redesign the ‘living together’ will be necessary. So far only addressed marginally, researching the link between mental and urban aspects must be tackled more consciously in the future, in terms of design, planning and medicine. Understanding the causes of diseases or not-well-being in order to be able to propose proper spatial solutions for relief, is a collective challenge and calls for an interdisciplinary approach.

The mental and the urban have an impact on each other. But how exactly? It is interesting to approach the combo of urban design and mental health from both ends to find out crucial facts of the broad spectrum: Asking from the perspective of the built: How does urban design affect people’s minds and what can architecture and urban settings do with a person’s psyche? Topics like density and over-

crowding, the balance of publicness and privacy, living environments and neighborhoods, working contexts and social networks, infrastructures and accessibilities pop into mind. How we design a city, envision, form and network its sub-spaces, rubs off on the people who use it/them (they can feel overcharged or overwhelmed, uneasy or safe, stressed or relaxed) – and their emotions influence usage patterns, which in turn influence the space. But – now asking the other way – a person’s state of mind also has great influence on urban design: How does our psyche get involved in spatial decisions? For instance the individual handling of risk, lack of knowledge and uncertainty can control planning and political decision-making-processes enormously, changing the pursued image of a city to a great deal. The fear of failure and loss (of control, reputation or even existence) easily leads to short-term, subjective, security-driven decisions, instead of measures that serve the long-term, objective well-being of the general public and a successful living together. And this is true not only for urban development decisions.

Well-being and happiness as common sense. The perspective of planning and the perspective of medicine/psychology pick out different key topics within this complex subject. Their methodological approaches also diverge, but still they have one main perspective in common: they work to ensure and enhance the well-being of the people living together in cities, in the fringe or the rural areas. This is a commonsense, collaborative work can successfully base on. Therefore the next step is to find out: How can the disciplines work together best? What can they profit from each other?

Which knowledge gaps concerning each other’s working procedures and professional insight need to be filled to research more efficiently? Which questions should be solved together, which individually, and is there a hierarchy? Best, a more conscious contact between aspects of the human psyche, the mental and urban development needs to be established already on educational level. Intensifying student collaboration will do good, as unusual interrelations between the disciplines appear by working and by learning together – ideally on one given best practice task.

Can we design urban spaces and architectural layouts that don’t just ‘not make sick’, but that actually produce happiness and wellbeing? Not having symptoms of an illness is defined as being healthy. But being healthy has no direct correlation to being happy, to wellbeing, ‘well-feeling’. Design is often directed towards safety or against the risk of injury, obeying the unavoidable standards – making sure no one gets hurt. Rarely urban design is explicitly dedicated to induce happiness. This will change. Money is a strong driver and according to the WHO charts on mental health, quite a lot of money is needed to react to increasing mental illness. Besides public health, public mental health is becoming an economic factor now, too.

“Brave new world”, Aldous Huxley’s dystopian novel was published almost 100 years ago. The ‘new world’ in it seems perfect. Perfectly safe, perfectly organized, perfectly well. Only few inhabitants of the ‘brave new world’ were aware that they were psychologically manipulated and that perfect is not always good and being well not

designing urban happiness

Text: Dorothee Rummel

necessarily meant being happy. Mustapha Mond for instance has memory of the “old world” experience: “But I don’t want comfort. I want God, I want poetry, I want real danger, I want freedom, I want goodness. I want sin.”

This article uses the terms wellbeing and happiness, well aware, that both terms are interpreted diversely and that their definitions’ range is very wide, depending on personality, culture or actuality. The challenge will be to find the balance and to see a city as a stimulating place, that triggers more positive stress and much less negative stress. Creativity versus depression. Typologies and architectural elements can enhance wellbeing spatially by providing crucial elements: such as incentive and stimulation, or recreation and possibility to retreat. So we are talking about finding solutions that are healthy + x. A mental-urban-interface: An evaluation of the first exchange of knowledge (via the interdisciplinary lecture series and seminar talks) already brought some insight on promising key topics and worthwhile toeholds. What to co-think about next, what to co-work on next:

Risking Contact. Physical contact is key. Contact – person to person – can be cure or prevention of many mental illnesses and cranks up the feeling of happiness. Contact enables exchange and experience, both help to make people more confident in dealing with complicated urban situations. But there aren’t that many places where people have contact with people, they haven’t selected. This “random” contact happens, for instance, within public transportation infrastructures or educational institutions, two fields, urban design should dedicate its attention to. Does contact need to be

choreographed? Which elements can enable more successful contact? More successful in the public realm, within the larger and the immediate living environment and even within a floorplan. Private spaces and public places, that are worth risking contact for, even if one rather not do so, need to be invented. Real involvement and participation – not only ‘likes’ in social media networks – as a remedy against loneliness.

Stressing perceptions. Dealing with orientation has been one of the basic tasks of a human being from the beginning. Finding your way through land-scape (city-scape) and using daily experience to master challenges of the unknown was essential for survival. What we perceive and how we sample it, still educates our talent for orientation today. The mode and speed (pedestrian, bike, car, metro) in which we move through urban fabric, influences what sticks to our memory. Cycling triggers our senses very differently, than the same route driven by car, where scents, sounds and surface feel different and objects pass at different speed. Mental maps tracing the memory would turn out quite different. Urban design and mental health experts can work on connective routes and how possible add-ons can produce space for relaxation after passages of stimulus satiation, for example. Or how places of the daily routine can be better prepared for people of different ages or mental conditions, such as dementia or Alzheimer’s disease. Or how small architectural interventions in floorplans help change the feeling of proximity or density in housing.

Experiencing Truths. Real world contact is essential to make experience. The more experience our senses collect and

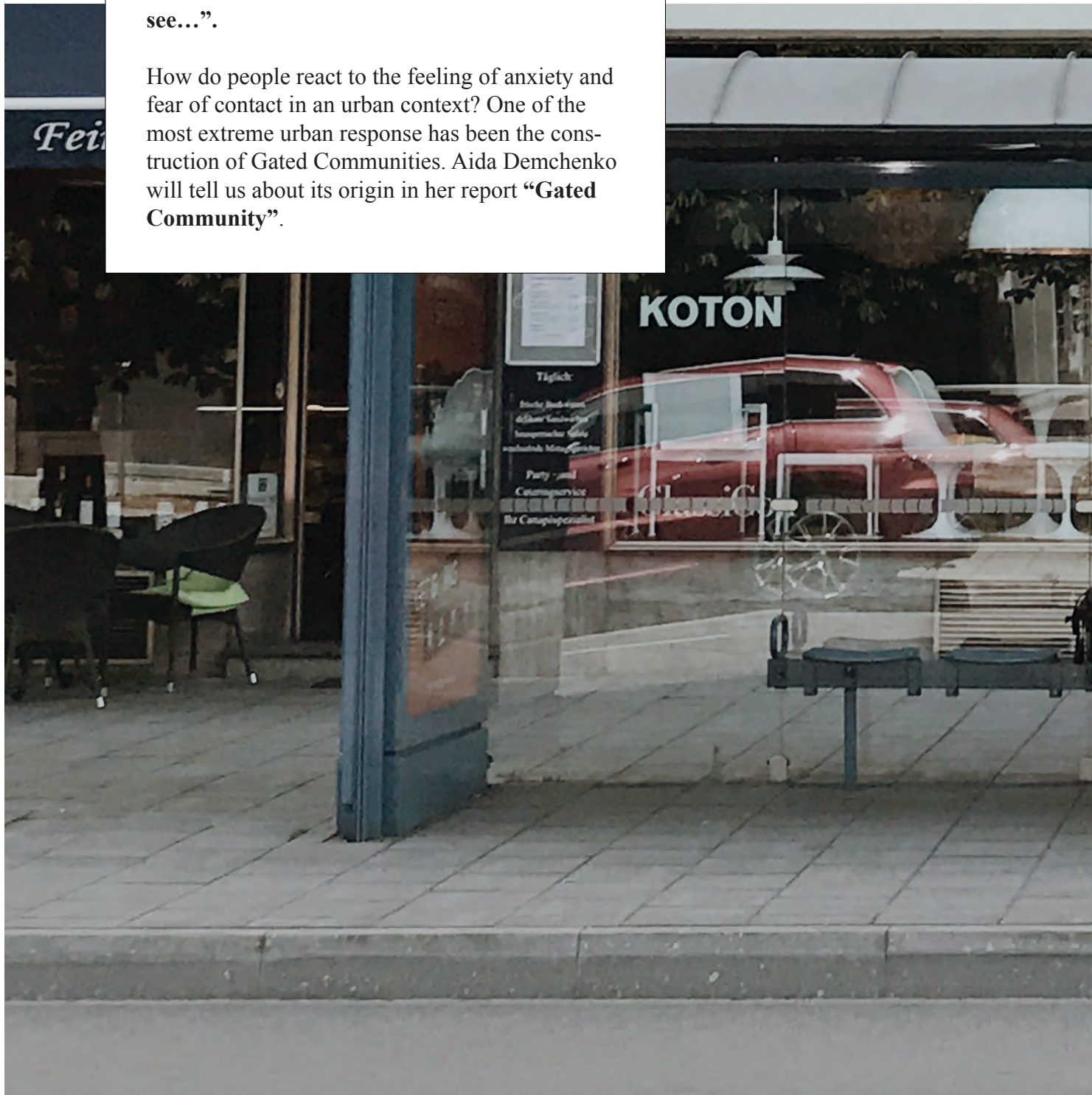
is stored in our brain, the more we know about how the world works, the better we can judge a situation, the less we get negatively stressed by unknown complex situations, the less we get overburdened, freaked-out or even depressed. A poor judgement of urban settings or societal networks can lead to irrational acts or panic reactions and concludes in fear-driven constructs. An exaggerated desire for overall control of one’s own territory (by the way a human instinct), safety and surveillance produces typologies like the gated community. Growing up in a very controlled perimeter, might cause problems later on in life, when leaving this living scenario. Evaluating truths also has to do with being able to judge images. And images of atmospheres sell more than ever! Sometimes so convincingly, the awareness of the true place or what an actual future housing complex will look like gets blurred. Same applies to statements. “Green makes people happier!”. Joint knowledge of urban experts and experts in the fields of psychology, urban (mental) health, geographical medicine can evaluate this statement more precisely and in detail: What is green? As green does not equal green! Which spatial qualities of the ‘green’ exactly make people happier? Is it the color, the plants, visual or recreational aspects? Which role do size or accessibility play? Does the same green make a five-year-old as happy as a fifteen-year-old? How important is the context? Does a field of flowers trigger more happiness than a soccer field?

... are just a few of the question that pop into a planners mind immediately. Solving them interdisciplinary brings us closer to our commonsense: happiness and wellbeing, also by urban design. □ .

Density and overcrowding do not necessarily correlate. How can the perception of overcrowding be influenced by Urban Design? Alesia Prendi will discuss about this in the article **“Proximity & Overcrowding”**.

Loneliness, as a major current problem in our society was highlighted in Professor Hans Förstl's Lecture at TUM. Céline Ortmann and Prayudi Sudianto decided to learn more about it in an Interview with Professor Hans Förstl **“Just wait and see...”**.

How do people react to the feeling of anxiety and fear of contact in an urban context? One of the most extreme urban response has been the construction of Gated Communities. Aida Demchenko will tell us about its origin in her report **“Gated Community”**.



RISKING CONTACT



Photo: Prayudi Sudiarto

proximity & overcrowding

Cities, being the ideal framework, allow for social bonds to establish, connect people together and make urban life possible. But what happens when too many people come together; till what point is a place conveniently dense and when do we perceive it as overcrowded; how can be closer and attain a healthy proximity. The following is a brief introduction to overcrowding and proximity in urban life and how design can alter our perception.

Cities today are becoming denser and the costs of living are going up. As a result, people are forced to live in affordable but smaller places. Psychologists often reason cities being socially toxic because of the overcrowding caused by the significant increase in human density. Significant correlations were found between the high-density population and psychotic illnesses like sleeplessness, depression, anxiety, and nervousness. However, the term high density and overcrowding cannot be interchanged since even if the former can be mathematically calculated and measured the latter still remains as a problem of perception. Hence, overcrowding can be addressed as a problem of design.

Urbanization and the overload that characterizes cities could cause health problems like anxiety or depression. Accord-

ing to urbandesignmentalhealth.com, one of the reasons for this overload is the pre-existing factor due to different individual backgrounds.

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Cities make us mentally sick

One of the reasons why cities are so diverse is that people from different parts come to build a better life for themselves by utilizing the opportunities offered. Also, people may also move in response to their previous lives due to personal problems like family break up, immigration, etc. This part

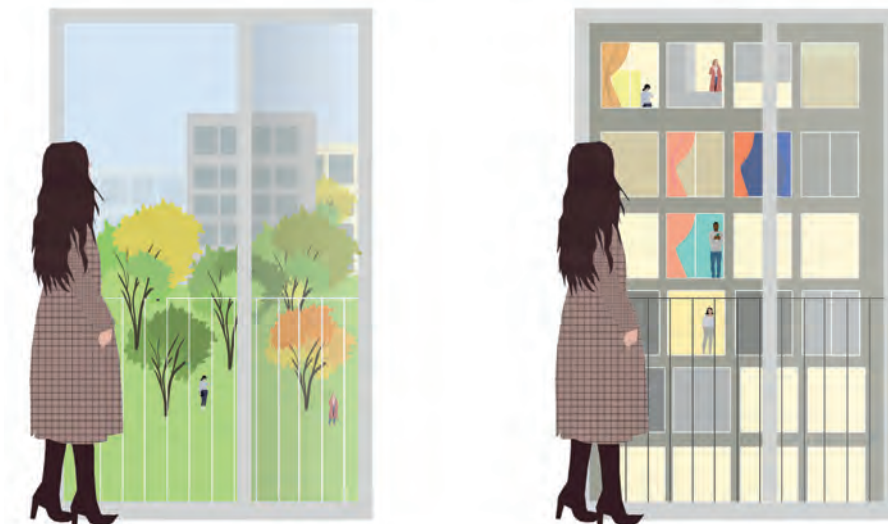
of the population may be in a predisposition to mental health problems thus, rendering the statement “Cities make us mentally sick” false.

As stated by Eduard Hall, every one of us is surrounded by several radially organized zones. He differentiates them into four distinct zones or spaces: the intimate zone, the personal zone, the social zone, and the public zone. These zones are directly related to the physical build environment. Every zone has a different radius which varies from one individual to the other. and it is strongly related to one’s cultural background and personality. Sometimes in crowded urban communities’ other individuals can enter one’s zone due to the environmental conditions around us. Such a “violation” of personal space may cause people to feel disturbed.

For instance, in an elevator, permitting someone in a person’s personal space may cause the person to perceive their surroundings to be overcrowded. Overcrowding may be linked to an overall lack of control standing for example close to the control panel in an elevator may influence the sense of control and make space seem a bit less crowded. People stuck together in an elevator usually try to retain a sense of privacy by just avoiding visual contact. Apart from the elevator example, there are many more instances where design can make a difference in how encounters happen and avoid those that are undesirable.

What we see through the windows of our rooms may also influence

The view from the window and how it affects our perception





Visual social distancing, the new norm in the elevator example.

the sense of how crowded a place is. When windows face for example open spaces rather than other people's windows make people more likely to think there is more space. This doesn't necessarily have to do with the actual area one owns. Charles Montgomery says in his book *Happy City*, how the view we have from our window is not only a connection to nature but more a social device. A lack of visual and acoustical privacy is strongly related to how dense we perceive the place we live in to be as well. This is strongly influenced from personality factors as well.

Overcrowding does affect the psychological health of a person. One might think that bringing more people together in a dense space could only bring people closer to each other or even strengthen social bonds. Unfortunately, quite the opposite is true. Crowding can lead to a deterioration and weakening of social relationships. This, in turn, can lead to poorer mental health. One of the

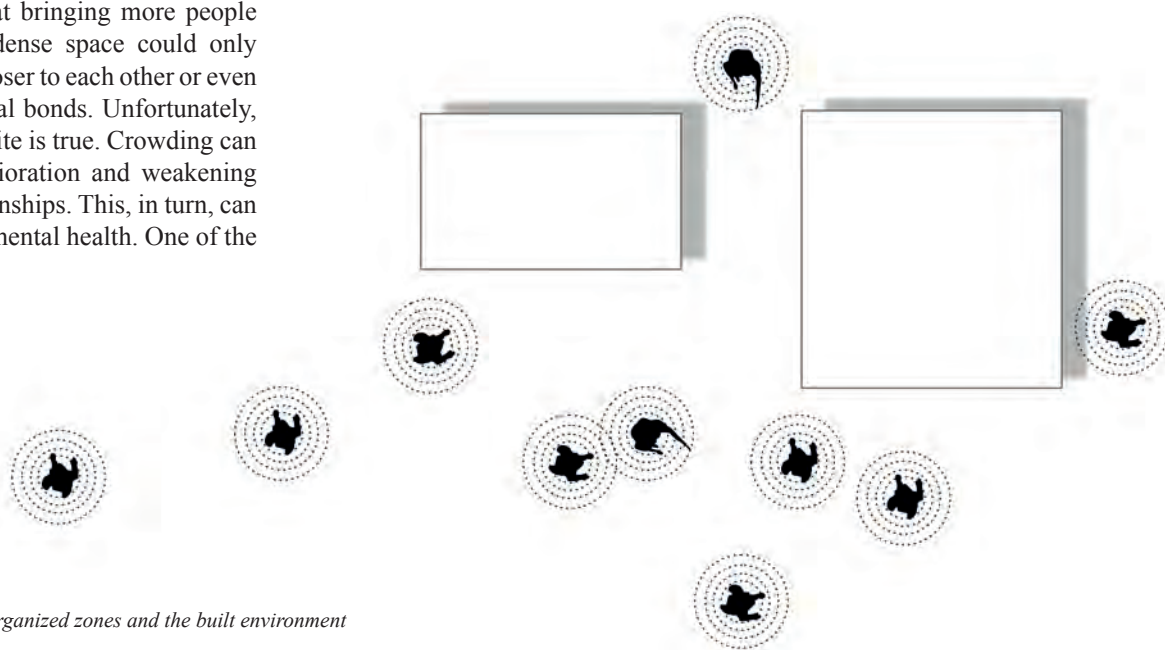
most documented findings is that people that live in high-density areas often report excessive, unwanted social interactions as well as lack of privacy. One of the most evident coping strategies to deal with overcrowding is a social withdrawal; a coping strategy that can be learned and has become the social norm even in less crowded conditions.

One example of how bringing more people together can weaken the social bonds was made by the psychologist Andrew Baum at Stony Brook University in Long Island. He compared the behaviour and social relationship of two groups of students from two different dormitories and was able to come

to some interesting results.

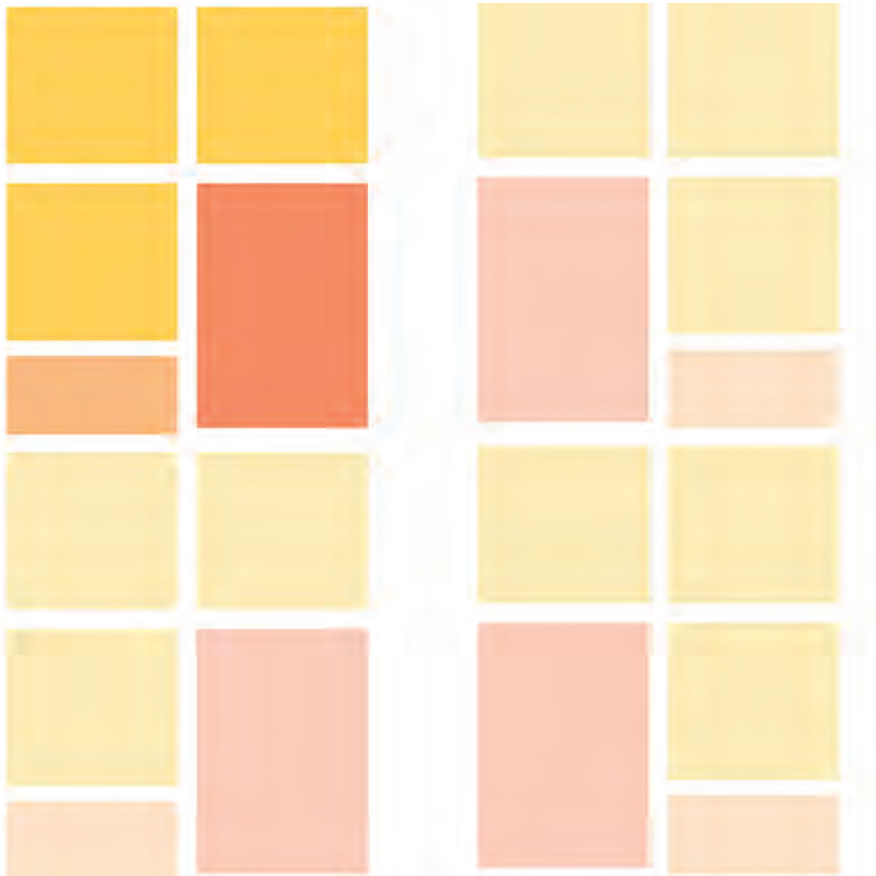
In the first dormitory, there was a long hall and all the rooms were placed along the long connecting hall. There were 30 rooms altogether which shared a long lounge area at the end of the hall. The second dormitory also accommodated the same amount of students but its rooms were organized in smaller clusters with a shared lounge area.

All the students living in the former dorm were constantly stressed, they avoided social contact and complained often about unwanted social interactions. They had no control who they were going to meet with once they



The four radially organized zones and the built environment

Second dormitory: rooms are organized in clusters with a shared lounge area



entered the corridor to go to the shared lounge. Whereas, the students from the Second dormitory felt like they were able to have control over their social contacts and became good friends. They were as well more likely to help each other.

David Halpern was able to explain the findings as follows: The opposite of the subjective experience of isolation is not as one might think to be excessive social contact. Isolation and overstimulation can simultaneously be experienced when we no longer have control over who we meet with. This is usually due to the lack of this semi-private spaces that allow for interaction to happen without an all or nothing experience.

Mental health is essential not only for our overall health but also as a crucial factor to design sustainable cities. Therefore, building and designing new cities in the physical terms can no longer be separated from the correlation to mental health and overall well-being. Designing cities in a sustainable way

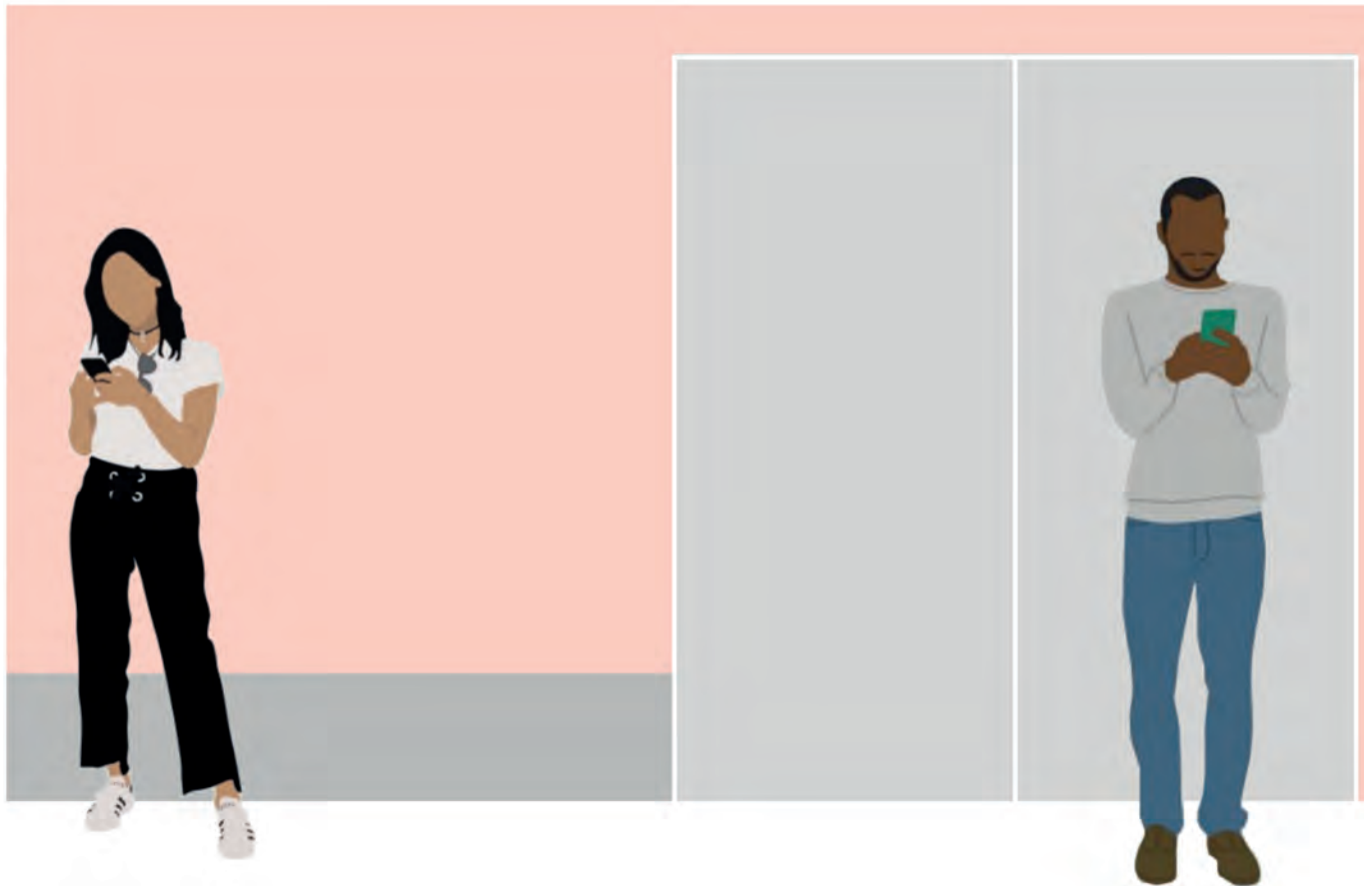
Second dormitory shared lounge area



First dormitory: rooms are placed along the hall with a shared lounge area



First dormitory: Social withdrawal



means designing for the people that will be using the space and taking into consideration all aspects that influence the overall happiness of these individuals.

The main goal of building happier cities is that they not only function and bring together a large number of citizens but at the same time offer high-quality living and a more sustainable environment. Many interventions for future planning as well as for the existing cities can be extracted directly from careful observations from current cities.

This approach is what David Sim follows in his recently published

book *Soft City*. According to him, true urban quality can only be achieved by accommodating density and diversity of different building types and uses in the same place; that greater density of urban life can not necessarily enhance the life quality. The soft city concept is about bringing people closer together and connecting them through design, achieving this way a healthy proximity. Sometimes all it takes is some simple low-tech interventions and gentle solutions to a more attractive healthy city life. □

Text and images: **Alesia Prendi**

just wait and see...

interview with Dr. Hans Förstl

The lecture series “Mentally Urban”, based on speeches of different people coming from various fields, gives students an idea about how urban design influences our mental health in daily life, analysed from different perspectives. To allow ourselves a deeper understanding of the topic, we did an interview with one of lecturers, Prof. Dr. med. Hans Förstl, who has a professorship at the TUM School of Medicine in Clinic and Polyclinic for Psychiatry and Psychotherapy.

In his presentation, he talked about how rooms can be designed in such a way that patients have more contact with each other and with hospital staff. In urban planning, too, the aim is to create more and more „meeting places“. How important are these public spaces for the human psyche? What studies are available on this subject? And when do „meeting spaces“ overtax the residents?

“...hm, important.”

Which three factors do you think are important for the psyche, so that the inhabitants of a city feel comfortable?

“Contact and retreat possibilities, security. Man as a hunter-gatherer needs the opportunity with a certain physical and mental effort to find and collect what is necessary without this degenerating into unbearable stress.”

How does the accelerated life in the city affect the psyche and the well-being of the inhabitants? To what extent has this changed in recent years? And how does this accelerated life differ from the decelerated life in the countryside?

“Oh, I don’t really know. Those are all myths of modernity. I can no longer see any particular rush in traffic jams. If you can’t control and sort the flood of information, you have to learn to.”

What do you think about J.R. Flynn’s

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Just wait and see. Europe is a Gated Community.

theory that future generations will become more intelligent? Do you think that the generations growing up in the digitalized and advanced cities are more intelligent than the people growing up in rural areas?

“I think it is conceivable that intelligence, as conveniently measured by psychologists, may even grow a little bit, „as measured“. Unfortunately, this does not measure the ability to assess one’s own physical strength or the skill of cycling and tree climbing. The global intelligence of homo sapiens is limited, but you can specialize in different fields - but only at the expense of other abilities. If you are trimmed from childhood on for pencil or screen work and lack of movement, you will score better on the usual intelligence tests and have to learn to move skillfully in other areas. The increase in laboratory intelligence has been captured by Flynn; this is the Flynn Effect (not theory).”

Many people feel uncomfortable in cities, due to the confinement in which they live together, but also due to an environment that is polluted. How can we

learn tolerance for such situations and integrate it into our architecture to improve living together?

“Strangely enough, for most modern people, attractive centres have more to offer than the open countryside, which they cannot even read properly. But he knows where to find good coffee, interesting people, warm winter coats, beautiful pictures and so on. The end of urban culture, which has spread across the globe since ancient times, has already begun with Amazon and Zalando.”

The film La Zona that we watched, is about a closed and privately monitored affluent settlement in Mexico. Through a hole in a wall created by a storm, three young men from the slums enter the gated community and kill an elderly lady who catches them robbing her villa. Two of the young men are killed during the night by shots fired by the neighbor and security personnel. One escapes, but remains trapped inside the settlement. The inhabitants of the settlement are so worried about their safety that they want to take matters into their own hands and come into conflict with



Hierarchy

Photo: Prayudi Sudiarto

the police, who want to search for and arrest the young man. For days, the inhabitants chase the young man, accuse each other of being accomplices and monitor every street in the settlement with their cameras. When they caught the young man, the situation escalated and all the frustrated and angry residents went after him until he was killed by their kicks and punches. Can you understand this escalation? What is the basic effect of living in or growing up in a gated community?

“Just wait and see. Europe is a Gated Community.”

With your knowledge and experience: what do you wish for future urban planning and development?

“Beauty - as long as there is still time for it.”

How do you actually live yourself? And how do you ensure that you feel comfortable there and in the surrounding area?

“By chance quite happy so that I almost have to be ashamed, either on the 16th floor with an alpine panorama or completely green in the outside position. Wife, friends, dog and always something to do.”

In conclusion we would say that the way we live in a city is always changing and we should be able to adapt to our surroundings because the urban scape shape affects the way we live. Up until now some of the things we are already know are that we need to create green spaces and public spaces in urbanism. However one of the questions we still can not answer is about the needed quantity of these patterns. When is it becoming too much, does it depend on where we live and where we grew up? A practical mission statement and objective, which were developed together with the citizens, strengthen the sense of community. It forms an important foundation for projects, both for the citizens and the administration. □

Text: Céline Ortmann
& Prayudi Sudiarto



Suburb of Tirana

Photo: Prayudi Sudiarto

gated [community]

The American film „The Stepford Wives“ by Bryan Forbes was made in 1975 based on a novel by Ira Levin. The film is about the Eberhart family, who leave the big city of New York for a new beginning in the quiet town of Stepford in Connecticut. The new place of residence seems to be a well-kept and, above all, safe environment for the family and children. While all the men in town are members of an exclusive club called the Men's Association, their wives are occupied with housework and do not pursue any hobbies.

Urban researchers and sociologists, however, discuss the emergence of the Gated Communities critically. The rental and purchase prices in such residential complexes are considerably higher than in conventional ones, so only wealthy population groups can afford it, which leads to social and societal separation. Inhabitants of such settlements do not understand the criticism, for them it makes no difference whether a fence is erected around a private house or whether one lives in a communally used housing complex, which gives one additional security. The political scientist Volker Eichner describes Gated Communities as architectural isolation and calls on people not to further promote the separation of population groups. On the contrary, they should create opportunities for encounters.

Llewellyn Park

Oldest example of a gated community, Llewellyn Park was built in 1857 in New Jersey. This area was designed by Alexander Jackson Davis and is a 425 hectare gated community with 175 houses and a private retreat with streets. Thus, it consists mainly of villas and has an artificial pond. The settlement served as a model for the development of further private residential areas. The target group is: rich citizens. The main entrance to Llewellyn Park is located on Main Street in West Orange, near Thomas Edi-



Photo: Dorothee Rummel



Photo: Dorothee Rummel

son's factory complex, now a museum and also a part of the Thomas Edison National Historical Park. There is a side entrance to Llewellyn Park located on Eagle Rock Avenue that is electronically monitored and activated by the security guards within the Gatehouse on the Main Street entrance.

China

In China, almost all newly built residential areas are emerging as gated communities. They are always fenced in, but access controls vary in intensity. The new residential areas have their origin in the village structures of ancient China and are socially accepted. Openly accessible residential complexes and detached houses are unusual in China. The planning and construction of gated communities ensures social mixing. It is currently being discussed to open up larger roads running through gated communities to general traffic in order to relieve the main public roads. Chinese citizens are worried about abandoning their usual way of living. Chinese cities are comparatively safe due to police presence, video surveillance and neighborhood inspectors.

Arcadia in Potsdam

Arcadia was completed in 1998 on the border between Potsdam and Berlin. At the time of its completion, the construction was very controversial. The investor went bankrupt. Today, all 45

apartments of the seven city villas are occupied. Gated communities are becoming increasingly popular. They offer not only security, but also all-round service. Population feeling of insecurity is increasing and this is transforming demand on housing. For those interested, however, the focus is not on security, but on comfort services such as concierge, janitor, gardener, staff who take care of the laundry, underground parking, kindergartens, wellness area and sports facilities.

Movies were also made about gated communities that come of course, with dramatization to spice it up with some thrilling actions. But from another perspective, these movies actually give us an idea the downsides of gated communities. One of example is this movie *La Zona*, is about the closed and privately monitored affluent settlement so called „La Zona“ in Mexico City. In a stormy night, a fallen billboard creates a hole in the wall of the settlement. As a result, three young men from the neighboring slum area enter the gated community and plunder a villa. When the landlady catches the men doing so, she is killed by one of the men. Her neighbour then shoots two of the fleeing burglars and accidentally shoots a security guard. The third intruder can escape, but remains trapped in the settlement. The inhabitants of the settlement are so worried about their safety that they want to

take matters into their own hands. They decide to cover up what happened and search for the young man themselves. They get into conflict with the police but the police director is bribed and the manhunt begins. For days, the residents hunt the young man, accuse each other of being accomplices and monitor every street in the settlement with their cameras. When they caught the young man, the situation escalated and the frustrated and angry residents went after him until he was killed by their kicks and punches.

The over dramatization was there only to give the audience a small thrilling sensation to watch. But if we saw this objectively why these things happened, is because of the inequality of economic situations which led to segregations that are underlined by security and one's sentiments that some people are more important than the others. Unfortunately these things are measured by how much power a person had. And our measurement of power from the day that exchange system, currency was invented, is still the same until now, money. □

Text: Aida Demchenko

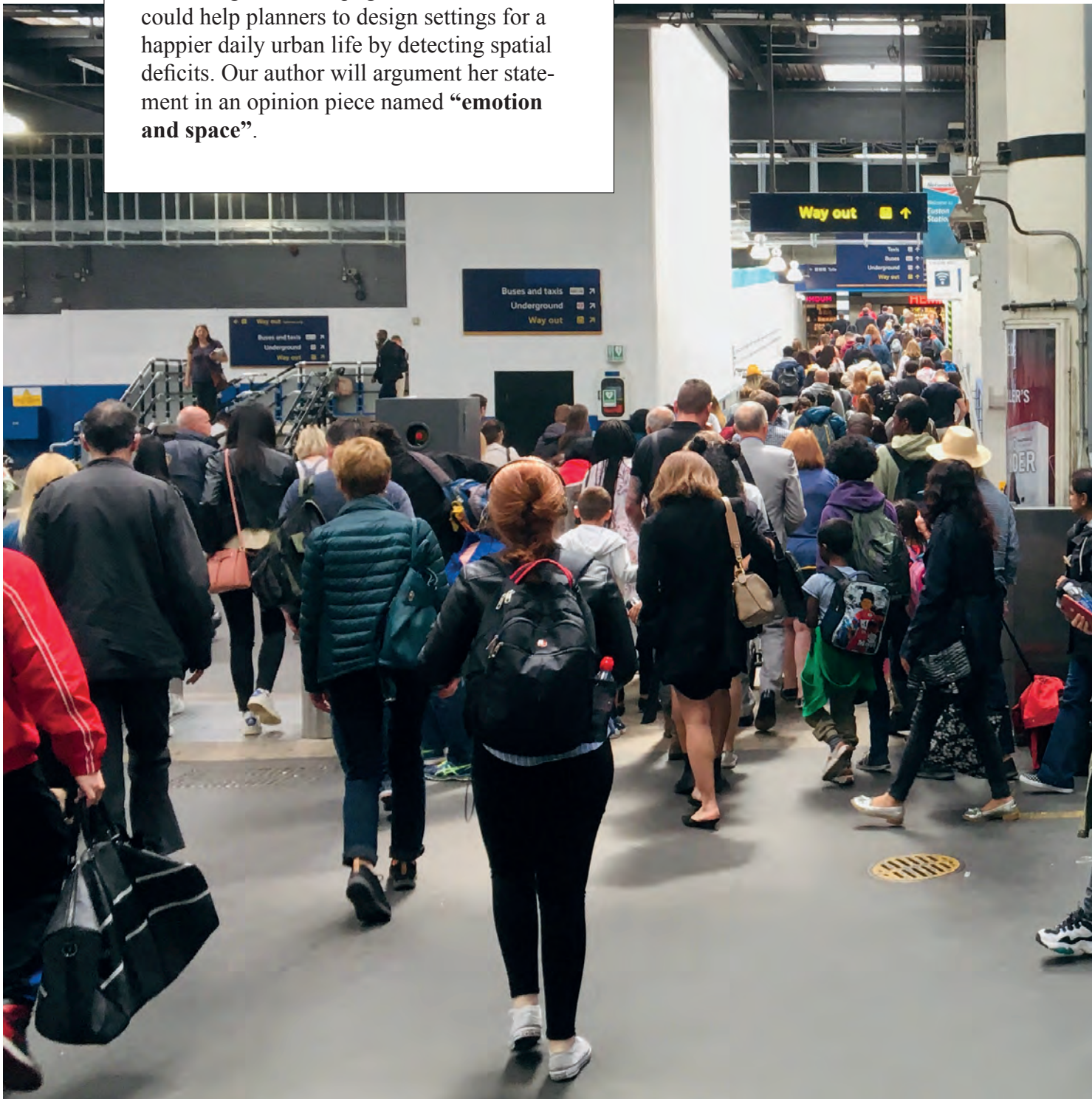


An intersection in Vienna. Where contacts happens and being risked between people.

Photo by Prayudi Sudiarto

What influences one's perception of Urban Space? Xinji Li conducted an experiment of mental mapping together with her fellow students in **"All routes to the metro station"**.

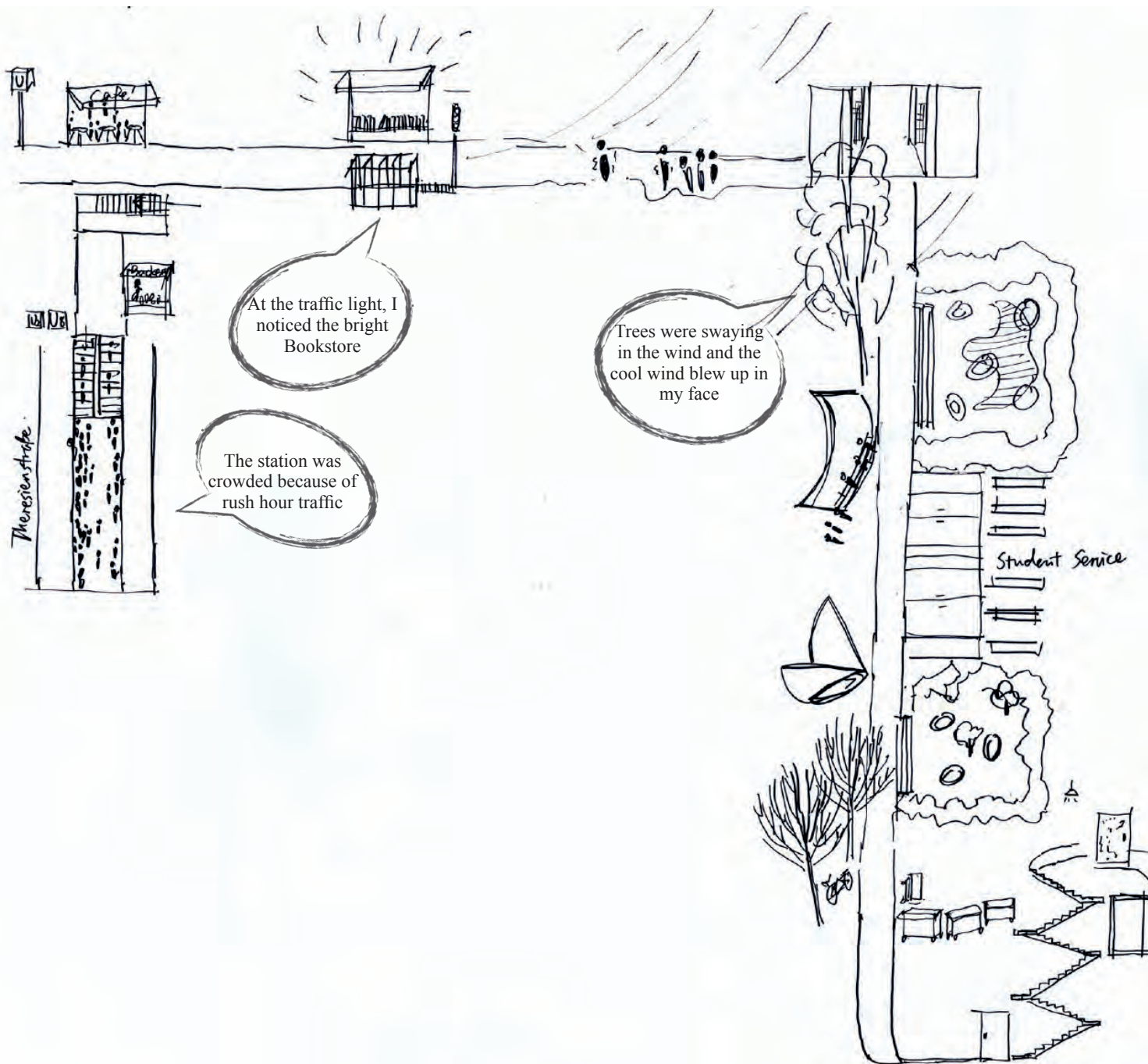
According to Cai Yuqing new social media could help planners to design settings for a happier daily urban life by detecting spatial deficits. Our author will argue her statement in an opinion piece named **"emotion and space"**.



STRESSING PERCEPTIONS



Photo: Dorothee Rummel



all routes to the metro station

an experiment of mental mapping

Urban space can be defined as a livable and perceivable multi-dimensional place which is also affected by time. It consists of various elements such as buildings, streets, landmarks, etc. The difference between people's perceptions of urban space provides important reference values for urban designers, architects and landscape architects to create humanized and beautiful urban open spaces.

There are many approaches to the study of urban space. This article focuses on the cognitive and psychological method of studying the urban space, that is, the mental map. Due to differences in individuals' ability to perceive space and individuals' concerns, people's perceptions of the same space are different, so are their psychological images or ideas about the space. Mental map is used as a research method to turn these abstract mental images and descriptions into drawings. After that we compared, analyzed the mental maps and made a brief summary of the results. Mental mapping, which originated in North America, is referred to in geographic research in German-speaking countries as „Wahrnehmungsgeographie“ or “geographische Verhaltensforschung”. It is usually used to deal with the process that people perceive the environment, the relationship between the spatial behavior of individuals and the real spatial structure.

This study sets the seminar room at TUM as the starting point and the underground station „Theresienstraße“ as the ending point. The participants can choose their own routes and draw their own mental maps on A3 paper within 20 minutes. Some text can be annotated to help us analyze the drawings. We put the generated mental maps together and make comparisons and analysis afterwards. It can be easily found out in the drawings that all the participants draw the stairs to get out of the main building. Secondly, most of the participants draw shops like bakery, café or Turkish restaurant in their cognitive maps. This might be the reason that shops, especially with characteristic smelling or lighting, are easier to be remembered and drawn. People are used to relying on smelling and vision to help themselves perceive the space. Only a few participants have drawn their feeling-, hearing- and touching-related experiences, such as the wind represented by spiral lines. These three senses had little effect on people's perception of space in this experiment, and they are mostly drawn as relative negative experiences. Finally, some test subjects draw the buildings in three-dimensional form, which is also an interesting phenomenon.

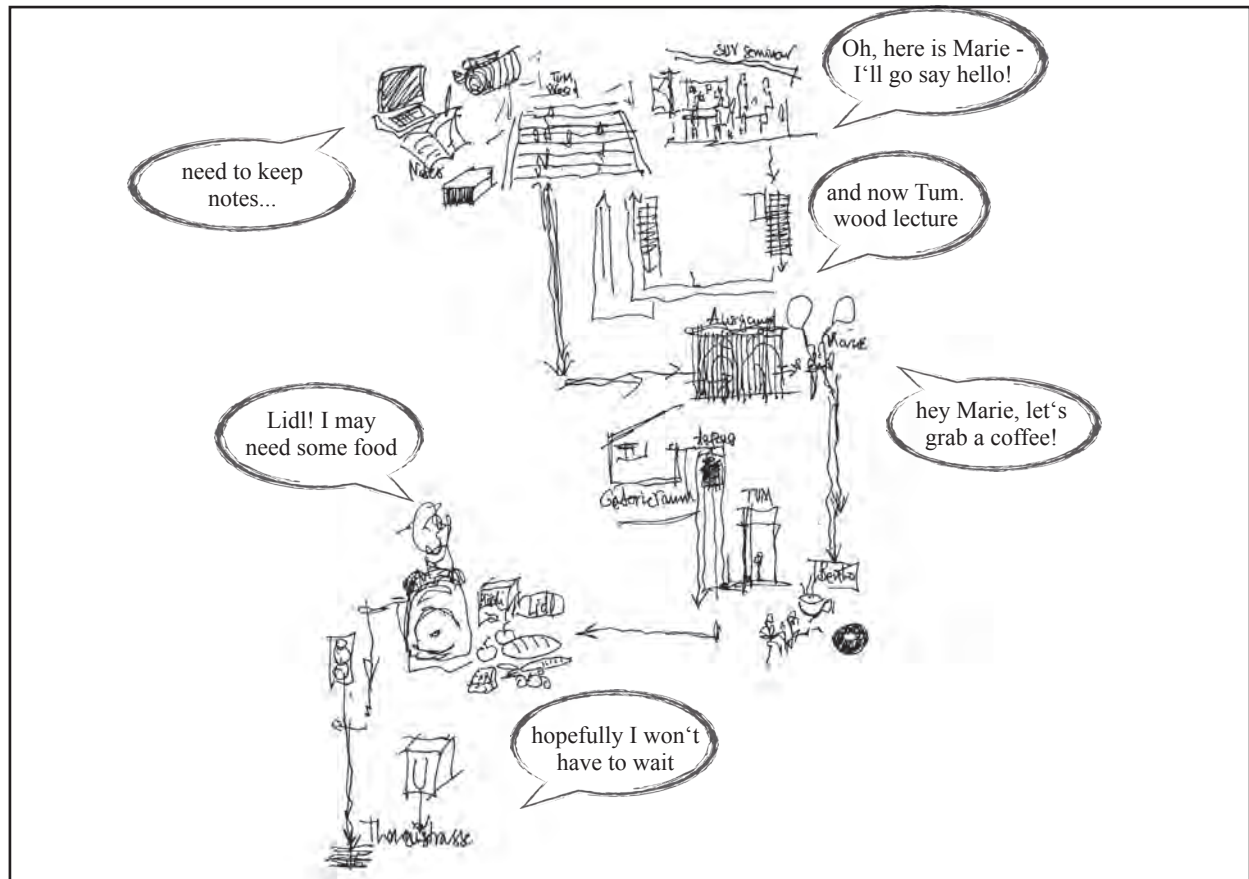
text and/or numbers. They are the most direct mapping of our memories and perceptions of a space. Compared with the traditional questionnaire method, mental map also improves the interest and participation of common people to perceive the open space. People without or don't have enough language skills can also join the experiment. Recording to the global background, this approach will be more helpful to study urban planning among people from different cultural circle.

Meanwhile, this method also has some disadvantages. Everyone has different perception ability, memory, drawing ability etc., which leads to the differences of quality and style of the mental maps. If the samples are not enough, the difference between them are bigger. If we want to use this method, a large number of samples and statistics will be needed to compare and reach to a conclusion. And without description, the drawings can be understood properly or misunderstood. In my opinion, the combination of graphical method and textual description will be more helpful and meaningful. □

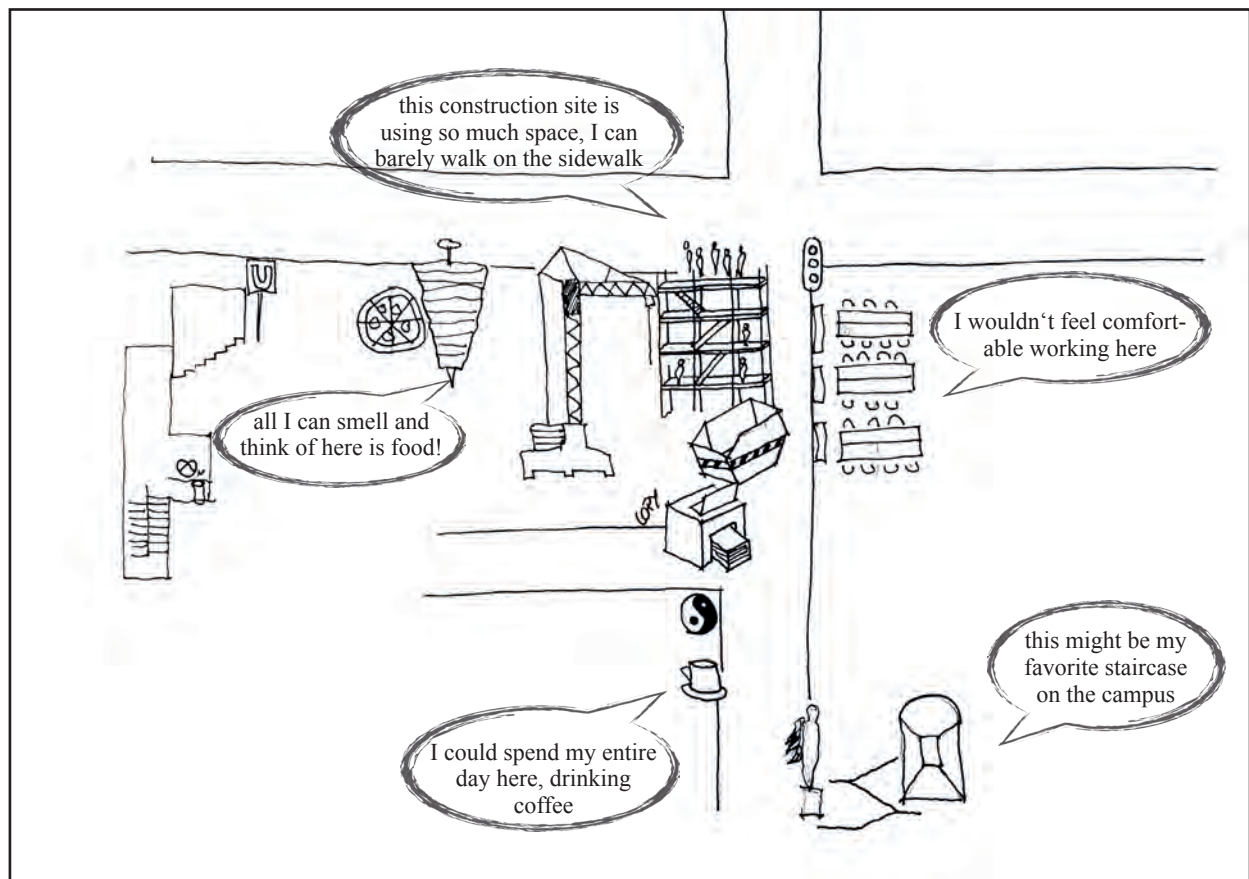
Text and map: Xinyi Li



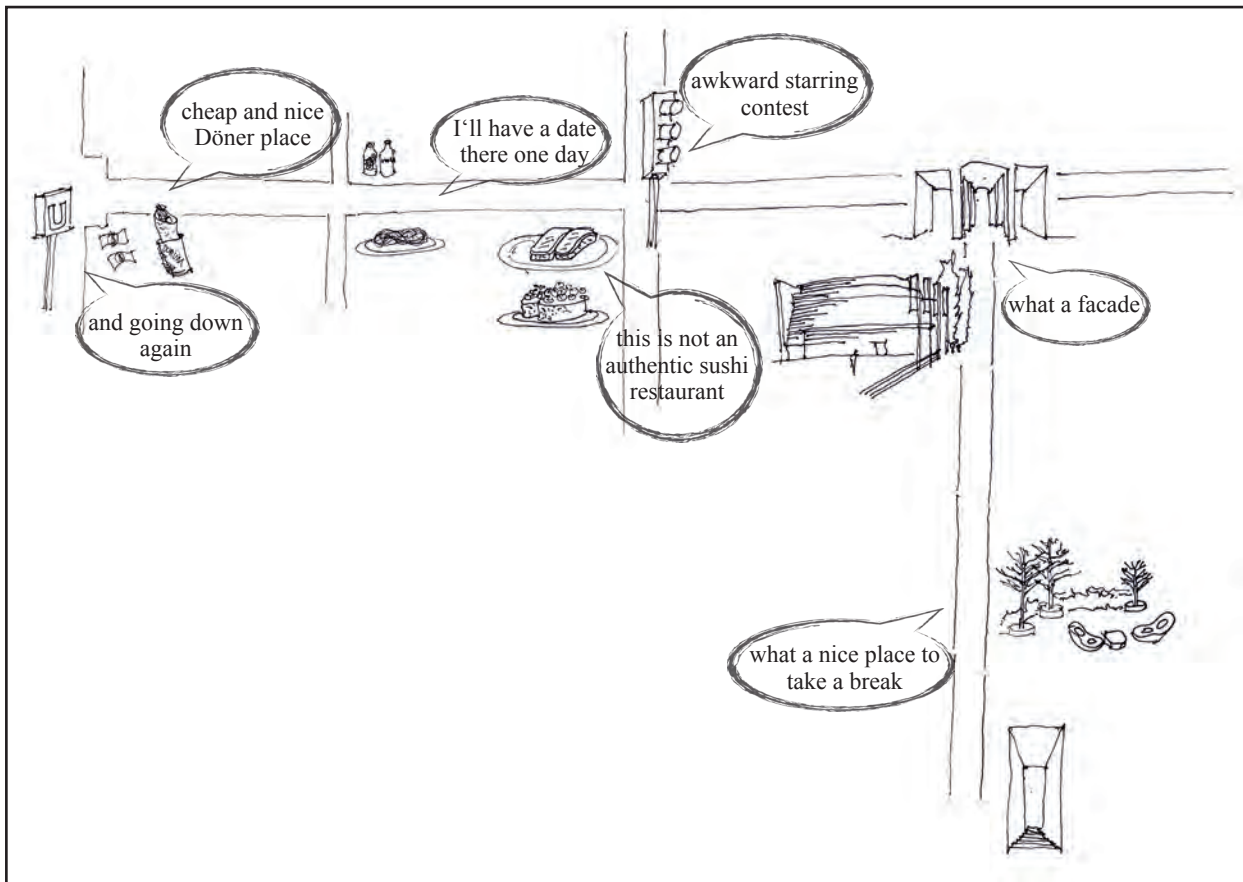
After the experiment, we also made an evaluation of the method 'mental map': One of the advantages of mental map is that the participants can extract and express their experiences from the space more easily and directly. Graphical method can be well suited to the understanding of place meaning and attachment and it offers more information than the method that accomplished solely via



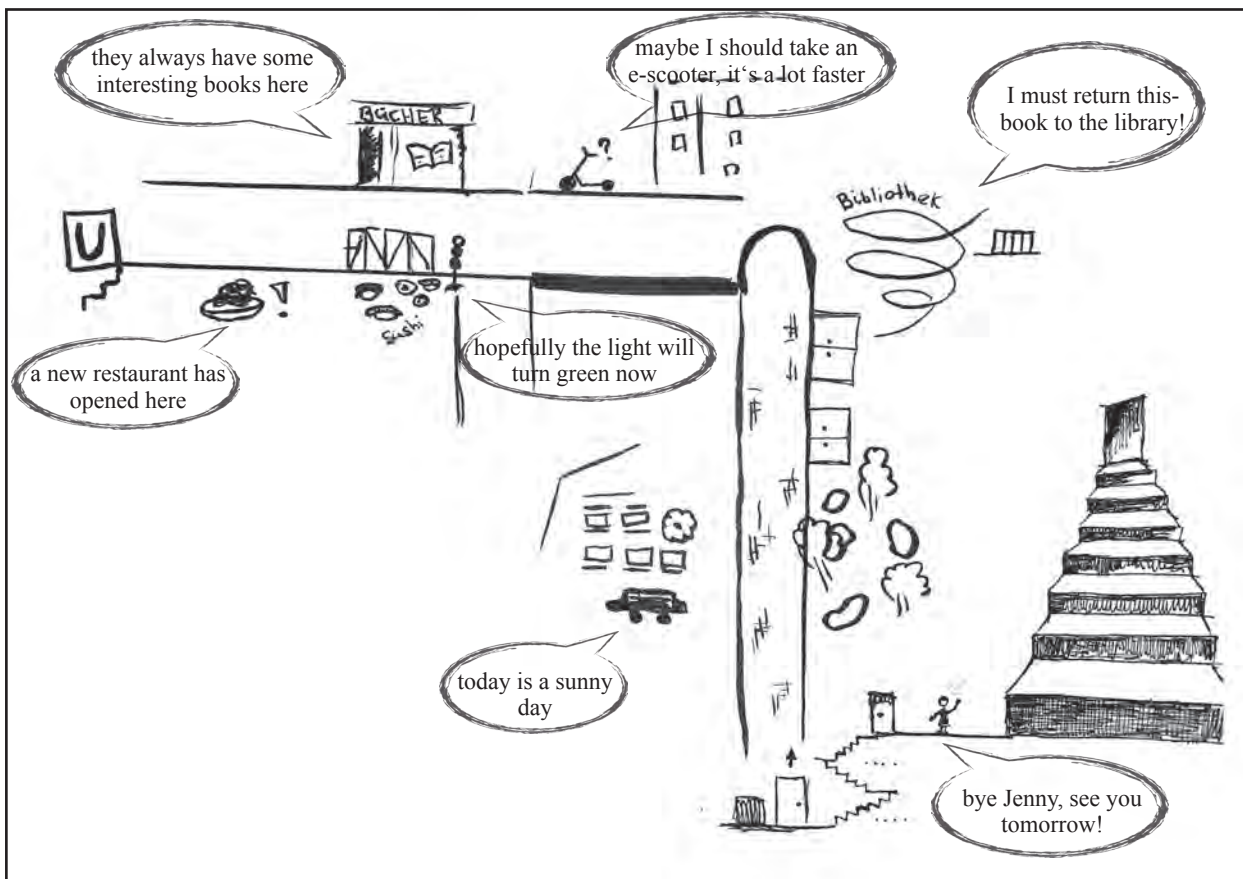
map: Alesia Prendi



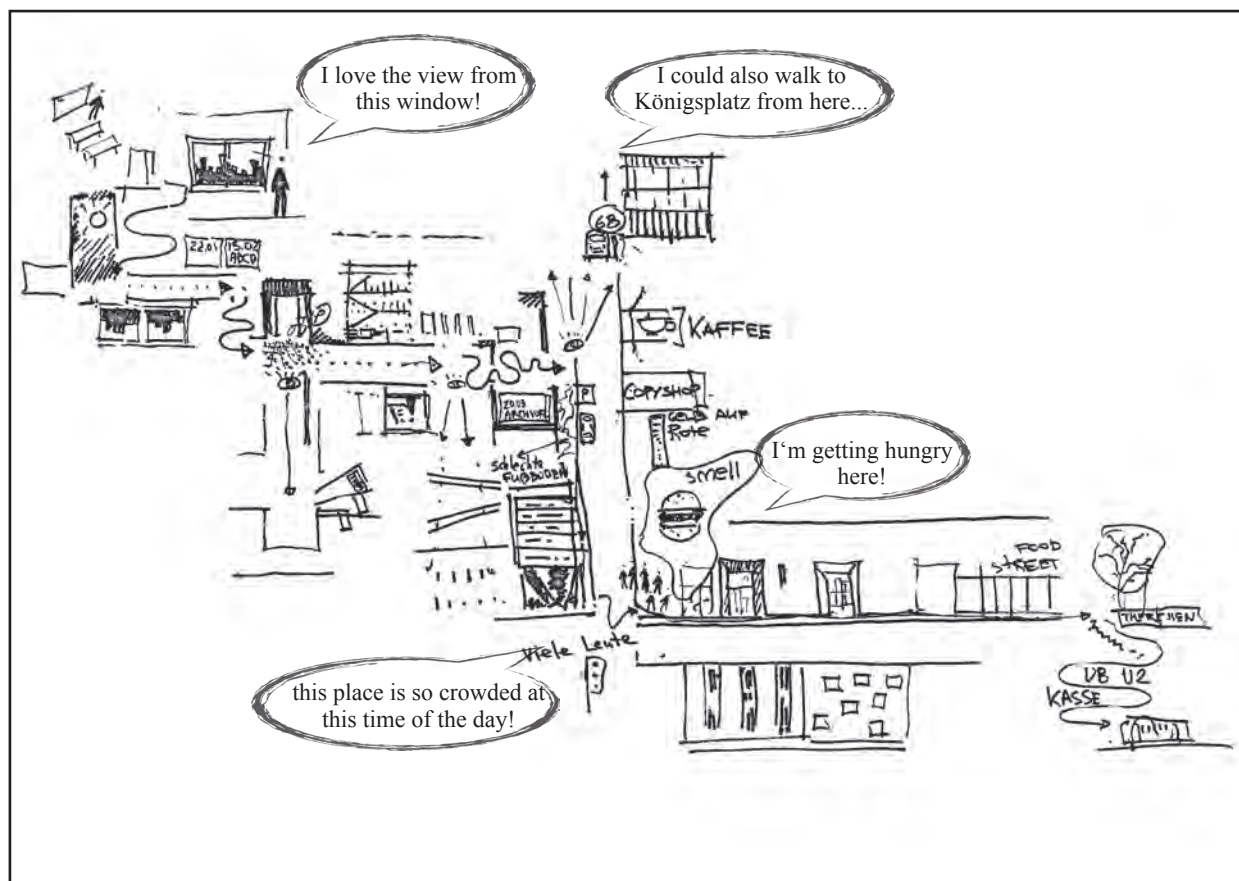
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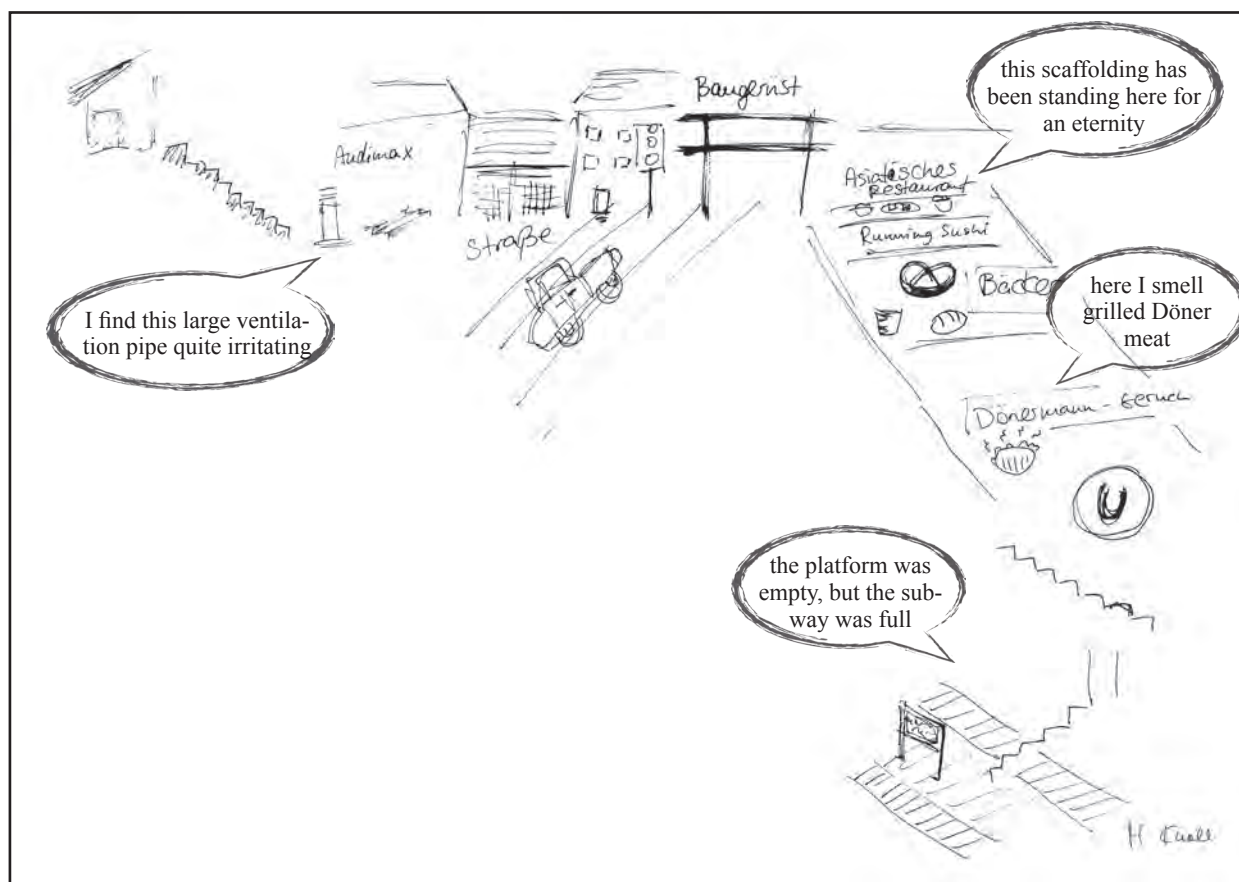
map: Prayudi Sudiarto



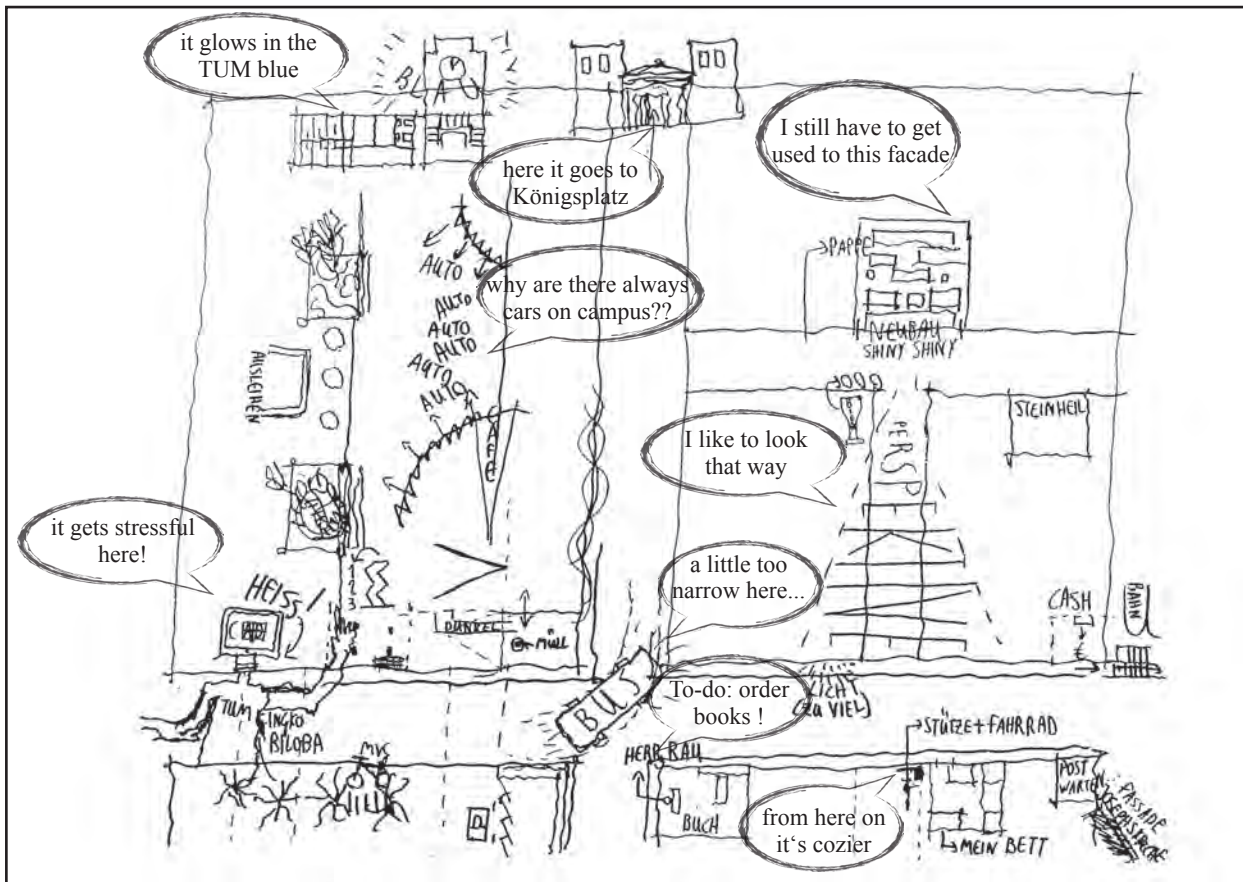
map: Aida Demchenko



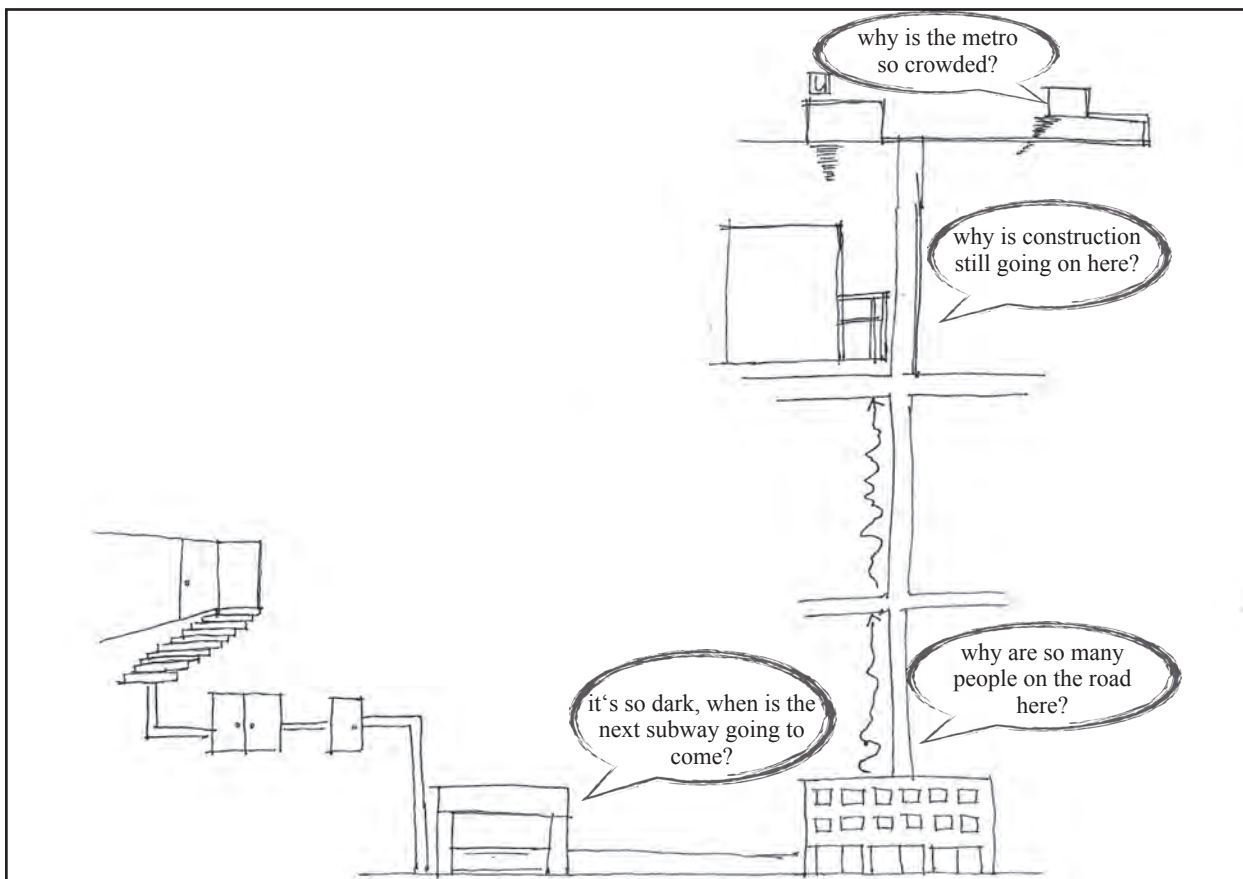
map: Ivan Selednikov



map: Maria Knoll



map: Spyridon Nektarios Koulouris



map: Cai Yuqing

e[motion] and space

Emotional urban space? New social media could help planners to design settings for a happier daily urban life by detecting spatial deficits.

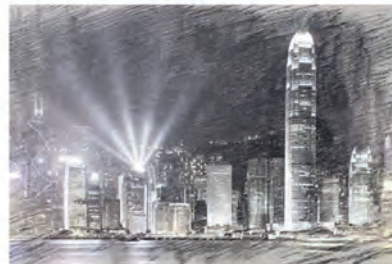
When people use space, they are also engaged in unconscious emotional exchanges to obtain different feelings, such as joy, anger, sorrow and so on. Does that mean, space is also emotional? Space can carry culture, history or certain characteristics, that evoke people's memory or feeling. Normally a transport-hub stands for busy and crowded, while a museum represents serious and calm. For urban designers, only planning the urban space is not enough. They should integrate the human perception of space and the feelings it creates in their design – „people-oriented“.

However, how can people and urban space environment be connected? Just like Friedrich von Schelling said, **“Since it architecture is music in space, as it were a frozen music.”**

In my opinion, the urban space composed of buildings is a complete music score, and the emotional flow between each space and human can make frozen music flow. So finding methods to create this emotional flow is very important.

Daily urban life

Today's urban life is often dominated by work and study, which can be stressful. In addition, concrete urban space seems to increase our stress and make our mind tense and tired. There are numerous reasons for stress: bright lights, busy streets, city noise, crowded traffic, high-density high-rise buildings, and even loud barking of dogs, etc. At the same time, less green space is challenging our patience. People are easily distracted in this living environment, and it is also more difficult to concentrate on work or study. Result is, that people communicate less and less with each other emotionally. We have less time



My kids have never seen the stars in the city because of the dazzling lights.



These high-rise buildings block all the views. I cannot breathe.



Because of the traffic jam I need to drive 2 hours to go home. But it's only 20 minutes walk.



This site is under construction every day. I have a bad rest and headache.

to sit down with friends, to have a cup of coffee and chat face to face. In this case, the emergence of new social media is giving people a good opportunity to communicate with friends. We can share our lives and emotions on Twitter or Instagram anytime and anywhere, and thereby understand the lives of others. Of course, social media cannot replace real contacts and the information shared on Twitter and Instagram are not reliably true, because people usually want to show others their best condition. But there are still many people who are willing to express their true emotions online, because they are already tired of disguising themselves in the real world. So these people might be the target group when researching about spatial deficits through emotions posted in social media.

The role of social media

Research data show that 91% of teenagers use at least one social media. And more than half of teenagers use social media to communicate with friends constantly. As we all know, everything has two sides. Although social media takes up a lot of time from our life and most of it is wasted, nowadays without social media we will miss a lot of information and lose a way to communicate with other people: The world news or gossip among friends. Besides, almost half of the world's population uses the Internet. In “Global Digital Report 2019” surveyed by “We are social” we can know that 57%, or approximately 4.3 billion people, are loyal users of social media, which means the internet takes up half of our lives. With the development of technology we can do almost everything online.

Social media does not only have the function of chatting and making friends.

In the past, people used poetry or painting to express their inner feelings. But in contemporary society, social media played an extremely important role. More and more people are posting their own ideas on social media. Many people share photos during travel, post comments about some new things online, and confide something when they are happy or sad. Unfortunately only a few actually share their feelings in the real world.

When people talk about (public) urban spaces through these new media, perhaps urban designers should also use this new form to understand people's emotions towards these spaces.

Emotions and Space based on social media

If you walk between two high buildings, you might feel uncomfortable and pressured, because a narrow space can make people feel threatened, just like some crimes often happen in narrow alleys. But if there are two smaller buildings with a well proportioned distance, people might feel relaxed. For a walk in the park, you might choose the path that has many trees and benches, than the one that only has low weeds, because there are more possibilities, no matter what you want to do.

Behavior is emotionally guided, but at the same time it occurs in a spatial context. Although the environment cannot completely determine the behavior mode, it can affect people's psyche, thereby limiting the range of behaviors in this environment. And behavior leads to the different environments that decide whether human emotions are released or suppressed in the environment. Moreover the environment is an external force that generates motivation for individual performance and certain attitudes.

We can imagine different social media scenarios: After a busy day of work, you are tired and driving home, but there is a very heavy traffic jam because of the rush hour. During the long waiting time you can only see crowded streets and cars. At this time, would you like to post a tweet that includes your own position to see if there is anyone in the same situation ...

Or you go to a new park on a nice weekend and you also like this wonderful place. Would you like to take a picture in the best place and share it on Instagram? If the answer is yes, then in this case, when we search for users in the same location at the same time, and then analyze their descriptions of the same scene or mood. We can know how people think about this place. Oliver Grübner from the University of Zurich mentioned in his lecture about tracking spatially triggered emotions via twitter, we know that stressful commutes can increase anger, anxiety and hostility, decrease sleep and social opportunity, other commutes can be relaxing, active and rejuvenating. We can work on optimizing urban transport design for better mental health.

I believe, that in this case, what people post online is exactly the emotional connection between the real and the virtual world. Through these comments, data based on a large number of people, could be used as a reference. When urban designers use or evaluate a space, this kind of comments might provide a direction in subsequent designs or transformations.

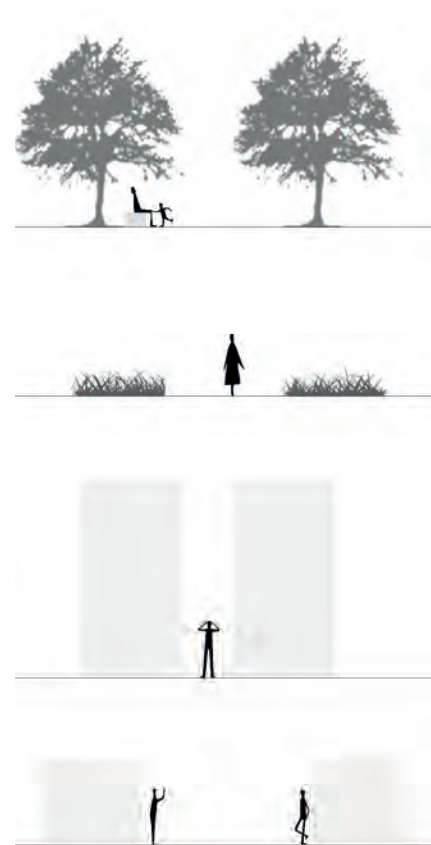
Conclusion

The emotions of people in various spaces are different, some are complex and some are simple. Space that can't evoke real emotional communication is a failure, in my opinion.

Oliver Grübner emphasized that real contact matters and that the use or overuse of social media can cause depression, anxiety and all sorts of psychological disorders. Thus if there is a place where people can really immerse themselves in an atmosphere, instead of looking at the mobile phone and staying in the virtual world, then this kind of urban space will become the aim of design.

However, to find the main deficits of spaces through the social media might be a good option. In the past, designers always designed spaces from a functional perspective, but now they could design from an emotional perspective. To solve problems with the help of new media or new methods by connecting human emotions with space. □

Text and drawings: **Cai Yuqing**



What does atmosphere have to do with the sensory experience? What about the mental aspect of atmosphere? Spyridon Nektarios Koulouris reflects about „atmosphere“.

Cities across the globe tried to respond to hectic rush and globalization by joining the Cittaslow movement. What is it exactly? Maria Knoll went to Berching, a city member of this movement and reported about it in the article **“Cittaslow”**.

Can mental health be improved by green spaces in cities? Could heart diseases be prevented by extending the bicycle paths in our cities? A reflection of „knowing what’s effective“, inspired by Dr. med Jan Stratil’s lecture, reported in the article **“green!”** by Aida Demchenko.



EXPERIENCING TRUTHS



Photo: Dorothee Rummel

.atmosphere

Spatial atmosphere can be understood as a collective term that summarizes all stimuli of material, as well as immaterial spatial elements, that can be perceived by humans. A first conclusion which can be drawn from this definition would be, that the theory of atmosphere is directly linked to the sensory perception of space. Atmosphere acts thus as a connection between the objective, real space and its subjective, mental interpretation.

Atmospheres – between the spatial and the mental. Six questions and six answers:

1. What is a spatial atmosphere?

After studying the different conceptual interpretations of the term “atmosphere”, one comes to the conclusion that a spatial atmosphere is defined as a means (Mittel), or rather a „medium“ of communication between the perceivable space and the human being.

All objective, physical stimuli that can be perceived in space through the senses, can create the atmosphere of a room. The atmosphere is what the space (sender) can communicate to a person (receiver) which is located in it.

This means, that an atmosphere only consists of elements in a space which can be perceived by the human sensory system, and although the atmosphere is not a characteristic of individual objects, it is clearly created by the characteristics of the objects in their interplay. Atmospheres are somewhere between being a subject and an object. As a means or medium, they are not something relational, but the relation itself. (Nicht etwas Relationales, sondern die Relation selbst, Böhme 2001: 54)

2. Is there a difference between atmosphere and mood (Stimmung)?

There is a necessity to define the term „mood“ (Stimmung) and its relation to the atmosphere, since those two terms are often mixed up, in the everyday language, as well as in specialized literature. Regine Heß (2013:124) makes a clear distinction: According to her, atmospheres are closely connected to objectivity: They are perceived as something coming completely from the outside. A person cannot have an atmosphere, at best one can only change

it. On the other hand, the mood can be described as something like an “inner“ atmosphere.

Therefore, one could say that the mood is a state in which one can get into (man kann in einer Stimmung geraten). The atmosphere is something external, it is directly attached to things. It can be perceived by the senses and thus can it influence the internal mood. Therefore it is defined by Gernot Böhme (2001: 47) as a possible „start“ of a mood (“Anflug” meiner Stimmung).

3. What does atmosphere have to do with the sensory experience?

The definition of atmosphere mentioned in the first question, as well as its relation to the mood (Stimmung), show that a spatial atmosphere is only important if it can be perceived and interpreted. Without sensory perception there is no communication between the space and the human being – one cannot speak of an atmosphere. Perception is, so to say, the „tool“ to translate the geometric, Euclidean space to a so-called „corporeal“ space. (“leiblicher” Raum)

Moreover, the sensory experience was introduced in architectural theory long before the mass use of atmosphere as a term. In other words, it was the theory of the sensory perception of space that brought into being the term of the atmosphere, as we understand it today in the architectural or urban context. Spatial atmosphere, which was until then just an abstract term, has found its role as a complementary part and source of different sensory perceptions.

A possible reason for this can be found in Wolfgang Köhler’s (1937) theory. He argues in his Gestalt Philosophy that the organism responds to the pattern of stimuli to which it is exposed. Perception is always a unitary process, a functional whole, which gives, in experience,

a sensory scene rather than a mosaic of local sensations.

Maurice Merleau Ponty (1968: 48) expresses similar thoughts: „My perception is [...] not a sum of visual, tactile and audible givens: I perceive in a total way with my whole being: I grasp a unique structure of the thing, a unique way of being, which speaks to all my senses at once.“

One can draw the clear conclusion that a term is needed in order to describe this „functional whole“, the „sensory scene“

4. Is it all about sensory perception? What about the mental aspect of atmosphere?

Peter Zumthor (2006: 17) asks himself, after describing a specific atmosphere: „What else moved me? [apart from the immediate surroundings] My mood, my feelings, the sense of expectation that filled me while I was sitting there. [...] Meaning: it is all in me. But then I perform an experiment: I take away the square - and my feelings are not the same. [...] I could never have had those feelings without the atmosphere of the square.“

Zumthor thus makes the concept of atmosphere much more complex: it is no longer just a matter of the external impulses that can be perceived, but also a matter of the internal attitude of the person which perceives them.

Kent Bloomer and Charles Moore (1977: 107) describe, that „every place can be remembered, partly because it is unique, but partly because it has affected our bodies and generated enough associations to hold it in our personal worlds“.

This quote is taken up by Juhani Pallasmaa (2014: 73-74) in his book „The Eyes of the Skin“, in which he dedicates a chapter to the connection of me-

mories and space: „Perception, memory and imagination are in constant interaction; the domain of presence fuses into images of memory and phantasy. We keep constructing an immense city of evocation and remembrance, and all the cities we have visited are precincts in this metropolis of the mind.“

This topic is present in the current scientific discussion. The results of the biological investigations come very close to the statements of Zumthor and Pallasmaa. A series of neurological experiments since 1970, partly carried out by the Nobelist Eric R. Kandel, have produced exciting results on the interaction of memory and perception:

It has been proven, that memories cannot be found in any specific place in the brain. On the contrary, they are scattered throughout the brain within its neural circuits, i.e. within the synaptic connections that were originally involved in processing the event. (Mallgrave 2010: 161) In this respect, one of the most dramatic results of new scanning technologies is the realization that per-

ceptual images are often processed in the same areas of the brain as imaginary images.

In addition, the neuroscientist Joaquín M. Fuster (1995) explains that when a new event is viewed in light of previously recorded perception, processing and presentation are practically inseparable at all levels, from the lowest to the highest.

The cortical cell groups and networks that represent previously stored information are the same ones that will process and incorporate new information as it comes through the senses. Fuster thus places all knowledge about the world - objects, facts, concepts and events - under the rubric of perceptual memory.

Lines, shapes, colours and physical feelings are (in this case optical) categorical patterns that may or may not be stitched together from different corners of the brain in order to reconstruct an image. Together with the perceptual input of the other senses and the fantasies, emotions and dreams, these are the elements that are formed into memories. (Mallgrave 2010: 165)

So if we try to adapt the effect of these neurobiological experiments in the field of the spatial concept of atmosphere, we come to two main conclusions: Firstly, that according to its definition, the atmosphere is indeed an external spatial situation surrounding the human being, which can however influence the internal mood (only) in synthesis and confrontation with one's own memories and experiences.

Secondly, it becomes clear, that atmospheres can influence people through their senses, but often without a logical thought process. Our brain can immediately process and judge the received stimuli through the already embedded experiences.

5. Why do I like the atmosphere of the place I'm living in?

The already mentioned findings have an important impact on the relation of architecture to its context: they underline the importance of the place. The term of "place" refers here not only to its topo-



Fountain in front of the Frauenkirche in Munich

Photo: Spyridon Nektarios Koulouris

graphical and physical constitution, but also to its cultural dimension. In addition to history, this includes the attitudes and mentalities of the people who live there and have made the place to what it is. (Eberle and Aicher 2018: 32)

If the users interpret atmospheres according to their memories (including their cultural background), which were mainly created in the place where they lived, then an examination of the place by the planner is at the same time an examination of the experiences and memories of its inhabitants.

Only in this way is it possible for the planner to predict to some extent the so-called acceptance of a new building or urban space during the design process. The reason for this is, that acceptance does not take place only on the level of pure logic, but also on the level of perception. (Eberle und Aicher 2018: 33) As a result, it does not only depend on individual design decisions, but rather on the overall effect of an (urban) space, which the users can perceive through its atmosphere. Negative statements in the public discourse (e.g. in Munich) such as that new buildings do

not meet „the peoples attitude to life“, because they are „boring“ and „grey“, do not really show any specific criticism to individual characteristics or decisions, but rather a low acceptance of the total character, the overall atmosphere, as it is perceived by the users. (According to Wolfrum and Janson 2019: 47, the overall atmosphere is the principle of perceiving a city.)

By examining the term of the “atmosphere”, it becomes clear, there is a need for an examination of the term of “place”, which should not be seen only as an architectural and scenic substance, but, as Christian Norberg Schulz (1979: 8) has written in his „Genius Loci“, as an atmospheric character. The place has already shaped the memories and experiences of its inhabitants through their everyday perception. In this way, they view every architectural intervention in the light of a previously recorded perceptual experience, since processing and representation are practically inseparable and interconnected at all levels in the human brain.

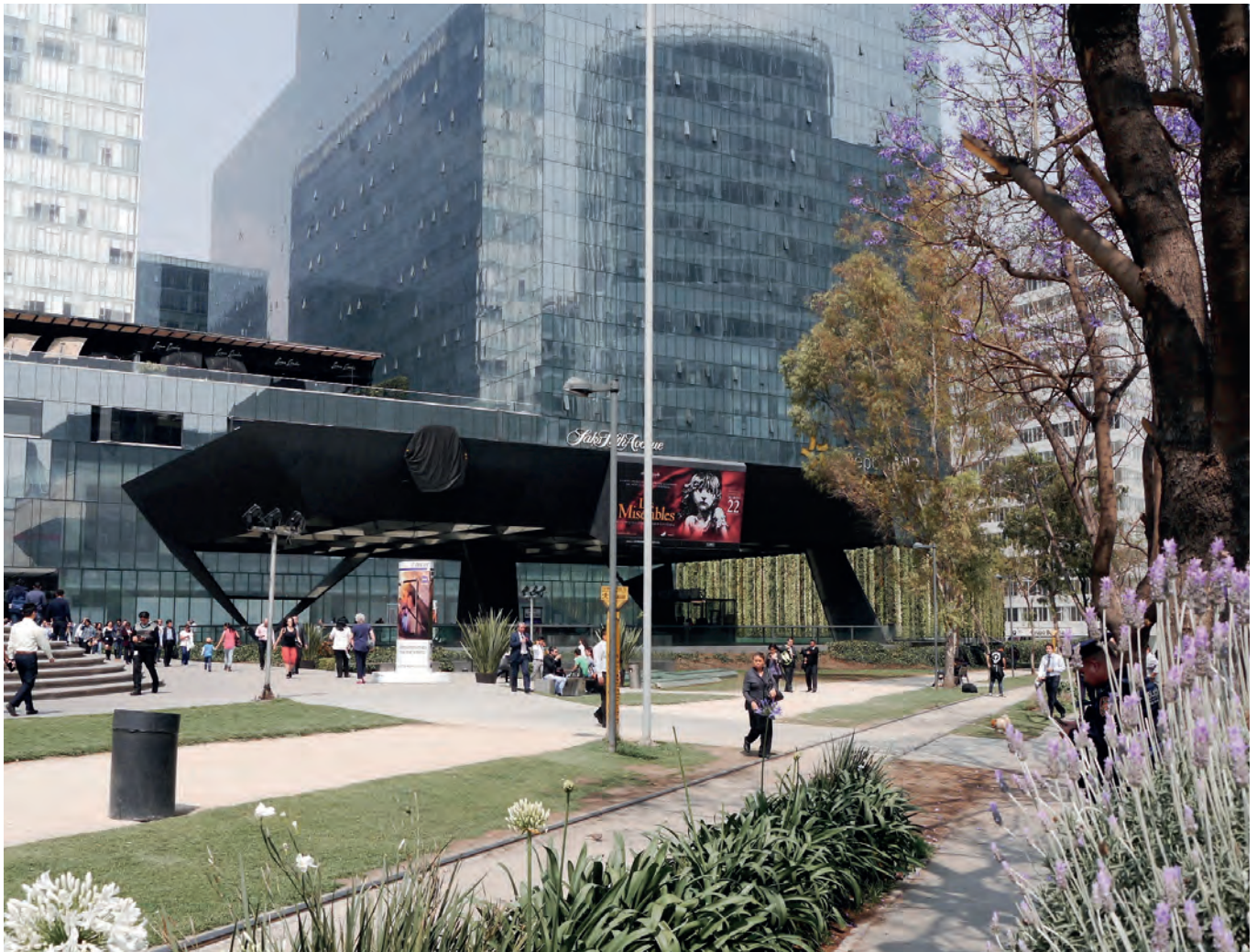
This proves, on a theoretical level, the Interplay between atmosphere and

mood (Stimmung) and is similar to Hermann Schmitz's (2014: 39) statement that spatial feelings (räumliche Gefühle) arise only when their „cause and effect coincide“ (Ursache und Einwirkung fallen zusammen). This happens when the atmosphere can create a mood based on the perceptual memory.

For the planner this causes a necessity of identification with the consciousness and identity of the future users. If she/he wants to create a certain mood (Stimmung) through the atmosphere, he/she must first understand the collective memories of the users, through which every perception of space will be filtered.

6. Can a picture/drawing/rendering act as a representation of an atmosphere?

A picture/drawing/rendering, as a representation of an atmosphere, demands the prediction of various factors that the planner cannot control in a precise manner, e.g. the use and appropriation of the space by the users. An argument that the future reality will look “exactly the same” as in the representation, neg-



Mexico City. Reality or rendering?

Photo: Alesia Prendi

lects all transformative possibilities that could possibly develop in a building during its life.

What is represented in a visualization of a design is actually just a plausible, possible or desired future development. Better still, it is just a probable, specific moment of the future reality, since the atmosphere usually does not remain constant over time (days, weeks or seconds). Of course, this means that the represented “moment” is the result of a selection which at the same time makes a statement about the use and life of the design. It forces the viewer to imagine the space in a certain way.

After all, a visual representation is the first “experience” that one has in an (urban) space, even if this is not yet physically real (for example in a competition rendering). When one actually enters the real space after having seen a graphical representation of it, one will not perceive it objectively, but through the already existing memories that are shaped by the graphics. In this way, a picture is able to shape the use of a room by providing role models which are then taken up unconsciously by the users. As

a result, the user loses the possibility of a free interpretation of the space and is manipulated by his/hers perception.

After all, a picture is very limited compared to the real experience of a room. It can be perceived only by the sense of vision, and this often leads to the use of exaggerated graphics in order to create an appealing “atmosphere” despite this limitation. E.g. noise filters or desaturation. This makes the atmosphere in representation more of a topic in graphics and technology, rather than in architecture or urban planning.

The intensive use of graphic means can of course lead to manipulation, error, or certain role models, and thereby it can even prevent an objective evaluation of a design, e.g. in the context of a competition. There is no guarantee that a design that would possibly lead to a variety of exciting atmospheres will also be represented accordingly, and vice versa, not every atmospheric - attractive representation corresponds to a reality of the design.

This becomes particularly clear when planners can „outsource“ representations of atmospheres, that is, when there

are specialists whose job is to provide complex, three-dimensional drawings or renderings. In that case, the picture as a representation of an atmosphere is produced by a completely different team than the design itself, which dictates the actual future reality. This makes atmospheric representation also a question of the available financial resources. Whoever can spend most money or time or both, might get the “best” atmosphere. □

Text: Spyridon Nektarios Koulouris

Of course, atmosphere is not merely a visual business. It is a synthesis of all senses. Since sounds, scents, temperatures and haptics are crucial for the perception of a space and yet they cannot be part of an image. However, the current mass production of visual imagery puts the sense of vision in a dominant position amongst other senses, a fact which leads to the production of an (urban) space made mainly to be seen, instead of experienced.



Munich Central Station

Photo: Spyridon Nektarios Koulouris

Cittàslow

a response to hectic rush and globalization



Town walls of Berching, Bavaria

Standardisation and sensory overload are common effects of modern globalized cities. The worst results are stressed and depressed urban dwellers, living in big cities, searching individuality. Due to these developments, some councils of smaller cities try to react by strengthening the awareness of the local identity, historic culture and traditions. They joined the „Cittaslow-Movement“. A conscious sense of individual and local values and places for contemplation are meant to support slowed down procedures. „Slow“ contacts in many different parts of their living environment help to relax, support the creativity and slow down thoughts and minds.

A visit to a Cittaslow shows: The examined Cittaslow community and its city members try to unite, emphasize and maintain these aims to be a role model for future sustainable city developments.

Berching: expectations and reality

I visited Berching on a Wednesday morning, on the 8th of January 2020. The day was cold, rainy and filled with a sense of new years soberness after the holiday. Taking an empty bus through grey industrial estates and small sporadic housing areas stressed this atmosphere and mood. During my research on Cittaslow Berching I saw sunny pictures of a small historical town, old half-timbered houses and a small river flowing along the city centre. My expectation of Berching was based on the pictures I had seen and the information I read about the aims of the Cittaslow community: Small and local shops and markets, historical buildings dominating the city landscape, located in a green and unique environment.

Arriving in Berching, I was impressed by the number of remarkable historical buildings and the completely preserved walkable defence wall. As expected, colourful, old buildings and regional shops dominated the city center, but the city centre was nearly deserted – maybe because of the weather. Way more cars driving, than pedestrians walking through the city. I expected to see the Cittaslow-logo (a snail!!) everywhere, but I saw the emblem just once (on the power distributor) and nowhere else in the city centre. I visited the local bakery and understood the actual meaning of Cittaslow: It's not about finding the

logo everywhere in the city, but finding a strongly relaxed atmosphere and friendly community members, who enliven the sense of Cittaslow.

Cittaslow in Germany – how the movement started:

The Cittaslow movement has existed for over 20 years now and has influenced several German towns. But why does a city council decide to be part of the Cittaslow movement?

Veronica Platzek from the city council of Berching and mayor of Bad Schusensried (also a Cittaslow), Achim Deinet, gave answers to this and other ques-

Berching would be predestined for Cittaslow. Let the thought grow.“

So, it was an initiative from outside, that made Berching part of the Cittaslow movement in Germany.“

Achim Deinet:

„The initiator was a councilman, who was also very active in the Slowfood association. He convinced the local council of the idea to become part of Cittaslow.“

Wolfgang Plattmeier, the former Mayor of Hersbruck was the initiator and father of the Cittaslow movement in Germany. Mr. Plattmeier learned about

Info box 1 Aims and facts of Cittaslow

"We are no longer satisfied with similar built cities as faceless conurbations and that it no longer matters in which city we live. Today we discover the importance of historic city centres, restored cultural-historical places and buildings, buy more local products and learn to reshape our social relations." This is how Stefano Cimmicchi, mayor of the Umbrian city of Orvieto and one of the co-founders of Cittaslow, described the awareness of the network in Italy. (cf. Cittaslow e.V. III 2020) Slow city means the literal translation of the Italian-English word combination Cittaslow (citta = city). But behind it stands an international movement that turns the conscious and decelerated handling of important municipal policy issues and decisions into a concrete philosophy (cf. Cittaslow e.V. II 2020). In 1999, "Cittaslow: Rete internazionale delle città del buon vivere." the International Association of livable cities, was founded in Italy. Focusing on smaller cities with less than 50,000 inhabitants, the network aims to preserve and develop local identity and distinctiveness in many areas of life and economy, to develop endogenous potentials and local talents for a sustainable urban development and to achieve a high quality of local life (cf. Eyink et al. 2013, 7). There are currently 176 members in 27 countries worldwide. Traditionally, most Cittaslow cities are in Italy; the first internationalization took place in 2001 in Germany as well as in Great Britain and Norway. Twelve German cities are currently members of the network (cf. Eyink et al. 2013, 7).

Cittaslow aims: (cf. Cittaslow e.V. I 2020)

1. Sustainable environmental policy
2. Characteristic urban structure
3. Hospitality
4. Culture and traditions
5. Characteristic cultural landscape
6. Regional products
7. Regional markets
8. Awareness & Education

tions, emphasizing the importance of guiding concepts in a planning process for both, planners and citizens.

Who initiated, that Berching should join the Cittaslow community and why was this model chosen?

Veronica Platzek:

„The initiator here in Berching was Wolfgang Plattmeier, who was the former mayor of Hersbruck and „father“ of the Cittaslow movement in Germany. On a trip through Norway he met Berching's mayor Ludwig Eisnereich and said to him: „I know Berching and

the Cittaslow movement while traveling through Sweden. He assumed Berching was predestined for the implementation of the Cittaslow aims. Within the framework of establishing an integrated urban development concept (German abbr.: ISEK) the city council of Berching admitted the aims of Cittaslow into the ISEK. After the acceptance of the ISEK, the implementation of the Cittaslow objectives was examined in a bachelor thesis. Due to the positive response, the admission to the city network finally happened in 2013.

Network and Changes

In order to strengthen the network inside of Berching, the Cittaslow concept is promoted through projects and events, like for instance the culinary weeks, where regional and seasonal food is offered in local restaurants; or also the use of local building materials (wood) for public building renovations. In addition, students of a fair-trade school learn to associate Cittaslow with the topic of fair trade. As part of visual marketing, the Cittaslow logo is placed in magazines and marketed nationally in connection with other marketing strategies (e.g. Innehalten Region). Berching is a member of various other networks, such as the Naturpark Altmühltal, which is already an established and popular component of national marketing and has therefore a higher touristic potential than the German Cittaslow network. For Cittaslow it was important to gain awareness and lose its image of slowness and regression. Disregarding of touristic attraction and event marketing, the member network exchange supports to develop innovative marketing strategies and problem solutions. A direct change associated with Cittaslow is difficult to measure. However, an increasing interest and awareness of topics associated with Cittaslow

is appearing. Interest for cooperation from the citizenship could not really be observed at first, therefore, motivating and promoting the Cittaslow idea should be increased. It is very important to have „people in charge“ who attend to the aims of a subject and understandably communicate its meanings to the citizens, Veronica Platzek pointed out. Currently, the external impact of Cittaslow might be stronger than the impact on the residents themselves. The deceleration and relaxation, which is appreciated by tourists, is everyday life for the citizens of Berching and would therefore not be perceived as something special or desirable.

The Cittaslow process

The application process was a top-down movement, and the commitment to Cittaslow was initiated by the municipality, as in all interviewed Cittaslow network cities.

The public participation took place when the ISEK was published, in which Cittaslow had a very high priority. The participants gave positive response to the inclusion of the Cittaslow aims. Nevertheless, it was a challenge for the city administration to promote the logo of Cittaslow. The snail of the emblem

was associated with negative characteristics, such as slowness and regression. Maintaining traditionality, landscape protection and sustainability already existed in Berching for decades. Therefore, the admittance to the network only confirmed the existing concepts. Because of this, a direct change associated with Cittaslow is difficult to measure. However, an increasing interest and awareness of topics associated with Cittaslow appeared from many different directions.

How does your own values of sustainable urban development are reflected in the Cittaslow objective?

Veronica Platzek:

„The goal of every Cittaslow is ,to preserve and develop the local identity and distinctiveness in many areas of life and economy in a globalized and increasingly hectic world.‘ That is the subject of globalization, a hectic world. We have a very strong local identity, which we want to preserve. We have no other chance, but that is a good thing. We always come back to the beginning. After all, we have a lot of traditions and customs, that are maintained one way or another, like the stubborn Upper Palatinate head. It’s just like that. I’m from Franconia, I can say that, but that’s



Berching, Bavaria

nice. It is regionally specific and we, here in Berching can distance ourselves from the big hectic world and breathe through. So, everything is pretty much in line.”

Achim Deinet:

„I’m a graduated forester. In our discipline the internalization of sustainability is genetically fixed regarding to urban development. I think that a consistent urban development policy (viz. for me especially spatial planning), can alleviate many problems or prevent their appearance at all. In addition, this has an economic advantage, too.“

Guiding concepts help to make decisions for citizens more understandable. In addition, it is easier to work out important projects based on the recommendations for action in order to achieve the aims (function of coordination). A practical mission statement and objective, which is developed together with the citizens, strengthens the sense of community and forms an important foundation for projects, both for the citizens and the administration. □

Text and images: **Maria Knoll**

”

The goal of every Cittaslow is to preserve and develop the local identity and distinctiveness in a globalized and increasingly hectic world.

Info box 2

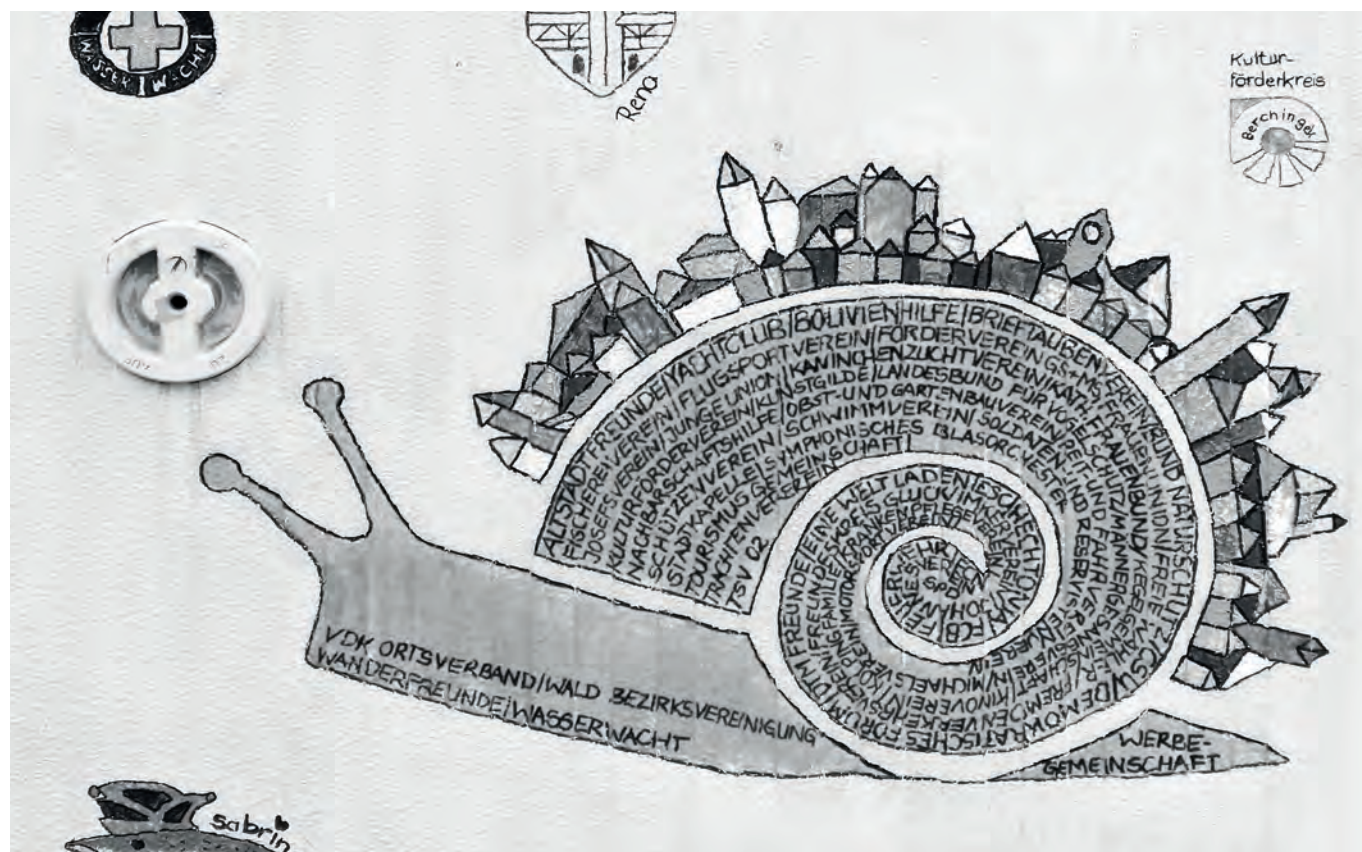
The member town Berching

Berching is located 120 km north of Munich in the district Neumarkt in der Oberpfalz. Currently there are living 9,145 residents in the 131 km² big town (cf. city of Berching II 2020). Berching’s origins can be traced back to more than 1,100 years ago. It is one of the oldest towns in the region and has been deeply influenced by history and tradition. Its medieval townscape is characterized by four ancient gates, a fully preserved wall of the 15th century, which rings the oldest part of the town and is partially accessible, and 13 sharp fortified towers. In the centre there are colourful middle-class houses, half-timbered houses and old barns, wide paved squares, narrow and winding lanes and a streamlet flowing through the centre. (cf. city of Berching I 2020)

Since March 2013 Berching is a member of the Cittaslow community. Cittaslow is taken up in many city events like the culinary weeks and the use of local building materials. In addition, students of a fair-trade school learn to associate Cittaslow with the topic of fair-trade. As part of visual marketing, the Cittaslow logo is placed in magazines and marketed nationally in connection with other marketing strategies (cf. Platzek 2020). Besides that, through creating “Slow-Spots” instead of “Hot-Spots” the city council offers restful and historical places, to get inspired and let one’s mind wander (cf. Stadtentwicklungsverein 2017, 5).

General mental facts:

While people daydream often remarkable things happen. It allows the head to switch to a special mode, which is characterized by subconscious thinking. In this state, the right hemisphere of the brain, which is responsible for creative thinking, works. The environment therefore has a significant influence on whether we can activate the creative mode or not. (cf. Stadtentwicklungsverein 2017, 6-7)



Junction box in Berching

green!

Can mental health be improved by green spaces in cities? Could heart diseases be prevented by extending the bicycle paths in our cities? Should our eating and sports habits be anchored in our early childhood? Dr. med Jan Stratil deals with many questions concerning public health and the connection between health and mental well-being. A reflection of „knowing what’s effective“.

When planning public health concepts, sufficient information should be collected and analyzed to determine whether the planned intervention will have positive effects. Whether the financial resources will be invested correctly at the planned location should be checked, and it should be made certain, the planned intervention doesn’t cause harm.

Example: In the context of a public health intervention in Bangladesh, numerous wells were drilled in order to reduce diarrheal diseases. The groundwater, however, showed a high level of contamination by acreage. On the one hand, the people had better water, which massively reduced the rate of diarrheal diseases. On the other hand, as a result of the public health measures implemented, around 40 million people in the country today suffer from chronic aspergillosis.

How can we analyze in advance whether the planned green space is a sensible intervention or whether undesirable side effects will occur? There are a number of instruments available to check this question:

1.
The ‚PICO‘ format can be used. Pico is an auxiliary scheme for the formulation of a researchable question in the health care system, which helps to estimate the effectiveness of the intervention.

2.
Observational studies can be carried out. Spatial correlation studies can be used to investigate the relationship between

existing green spaces and mental health. A critical point here is that it is not clear whether the correlations are real or sham. Calculating a simple correlation has difficulties with regard to content and the strength of the effect of the green space can only be done to a limited extent.

”

Will more green spaces improve people’s mental health?

3.
In an intervention study, in which residents are interviewed before and after the improvement of green spaces, good results can be obtained, but it remains unclear if the good results are due to the improved green spaces or to other factors, such as social or political factors or other data processing, that have influenced the mental state of the residents.

4.
A before-and-after study can reveal an improvement or deterioration in mental health but not the underlying trend.

5.
To determine natural time and, if necessary, to identify other factors, one uses „interrupted times series“. This means

that the survey takes place several times before the study itself and several times after the study. In this way it is possible to determine whether the change was sudden or whether the trend has changed.

The solution would be to conduct a cluster-controlled study. This would involve changing a large number of parks and then looking at the change in entire districts rather than at individual people. The difficulty of carrying out such an extensive study is due to the high financial resources and the long time needed for implementation. How do changes, in our case improvements of a park’s green space, affect the overall system? People who have consumed intoxicants in the park before the intervention are no longer seen in the park after the intervention. This could mean that socially disadvantaged groups are further displaced.

Unfortunately, the changes to the overall system cannot be measured. But one should try to estimate them. Each location is uniquely shaped by its individual characteristics such as culture, climate, mentality or religion. This makes it difficult to transfer and compare a study carried out on a certain location to another one.

Will more green spaces improve people’s mental health? Probably. Maybe. But you have to analyze each place and each intervention individually to make the right decision. □

Text: **Aida Demchenko**



English Garden Munich, Bavaria

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Dorothee Rummel is an architect and urban designer, happy to be teaching at the Chair of Sustainable Urbanism of TUM since 2011. Connecting the urban with other disciplines has always been her pet subject, as she is convinced, that interdisciplinarity makes sustainability. The mental adds another piece to the puzzle.



Carmen Duplantier is an architect teaching at the Chair of Sustainable Urbanism of TUM since 2018. She is interested in the interactions between density and well-being and is wondering how the current sanitary crisis will question the relevance of our Metropolises.

TEAM!



Xinyi Li studied landscape architecture at Beijing Forestry University. She is doing a Master of Landscape architecture at the TU Munich now. All projects of architecture, urbanism and landscape architecture are aimed to serve the human beings. The approach of 'Mental Map' could help us to understand the feeling and thoughts of users.



Cai Yuqing studied landscape architecture at Beijing Forestry University and she is now doing a Master at the TU Munich. As people increasingly rely on social media, she is wondering how urban design can really meet the needs of human through this new method.



Céline Ortmann studied architecture at the TU Munich and the UPM Madrid. Since she is also very passionate about psychology, being able to bring architecture, urbanism and psychology together in our „Mentally urban“ project was truly fascinating for her.



Prayudi Sudiarto studied Architecture at the TU Munich and ETSAM at the UPM Madrid. At the moment he is continuing his Master degree also in architecture at the TU Munich and interested in how to densify a city with qualities so that the urban scape help our mental health to reach the well-being condition.



Spyridon Nektarios Koulouris studied Architecture at the TU Munich and the IUAV University in Venice. He is now doing a Master in Urbanism and he is wondering how urban space can affect the mood of its users. He thinks that the term “atmosphere” could help in finding an answer to that question.



Aida Demchenko studied Architecture at HS Bochum and she is now doing a Master in Urbanism at the TU Munich. She believes that there are no universal solutions to design problems, and that each case must be separately analyzed before any intervention can take place.



Alesia Prendi studied architecture including EU-Professional Accreditation at the Constance University of Applied Sciences (HTWG) and is currently pursuing her master's degree with a focus on Urban Design at the Technical University of Munich. She is confident that architecture and urban design interconnect to a more comprehensive range of topics and that only by applying an interdisciplinary approach we can design better cities while positively affecting our well-being.



Maria Knoll studied landscape architecture at HS Osnabrück and is now doing a Master in Urbanism. After a long and difficult journey by train and bus to a member town of the Cittaslow network, she is wondering if this might be a good way to slow down stressed urban dwellers.

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Take a break and breathe.

Photo: Prayudi Sudiarto

