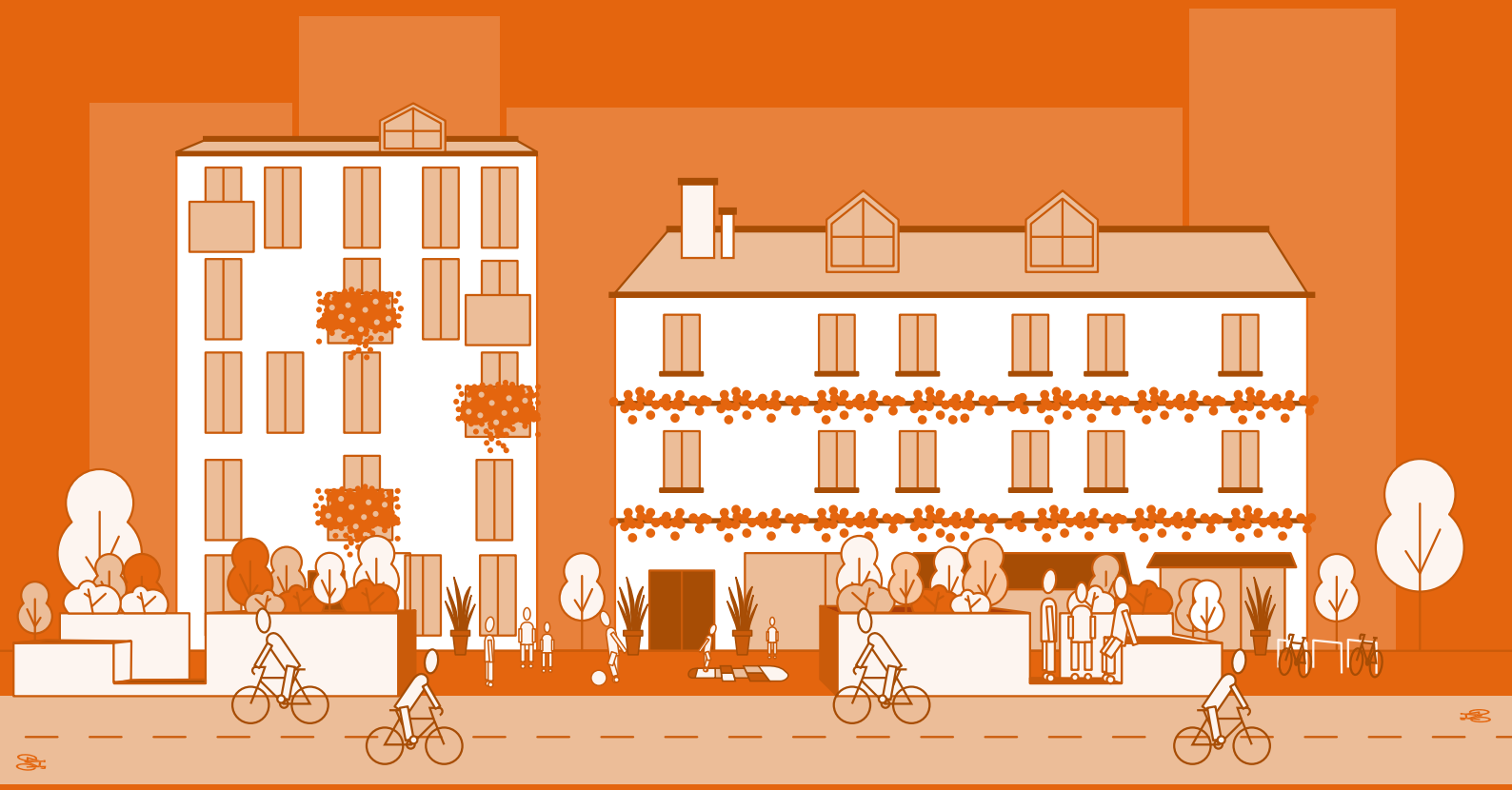
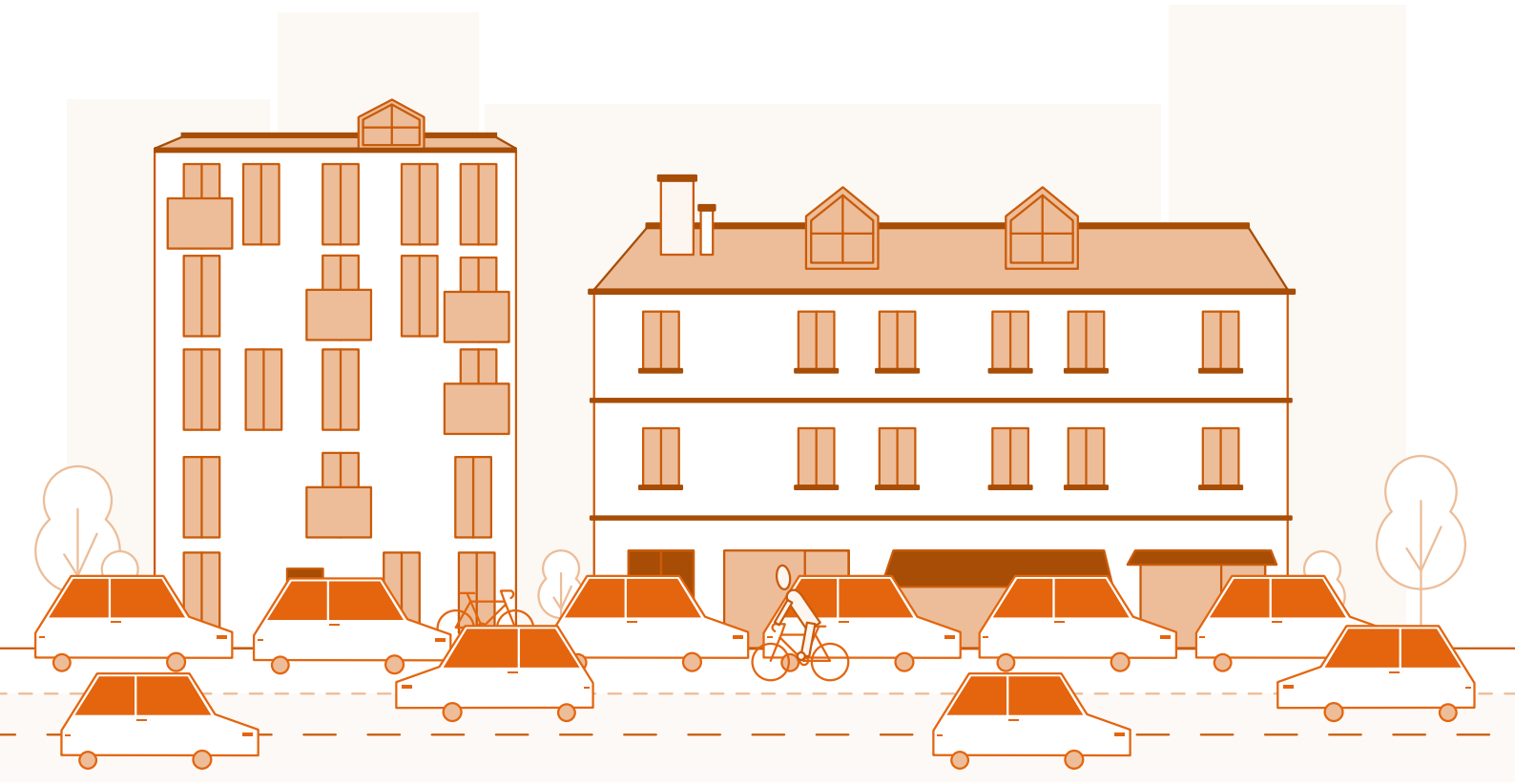


What Kind of City Do We Want to Live In?

Link
www.mos.ed.tum.de/sv



Graphics: ediundsepp

In an age of climate change, species extinction and resource scarcity, long-established spatial and traffic concepts are proving to be outdated and obsolete. So, why not try out the alternatives available to us, here and now? That's the idea behind street experiments. An interdisciplinary team at TUM's Chair of Urban Structure and Transport Planning is researching whether and to what extent this concept can be deployed in urban design and development.

Gesamter Artikel (PDF, DE): www.tum.de/faszination-forschung-28

In welcher Stadt wollen wir leben?

D

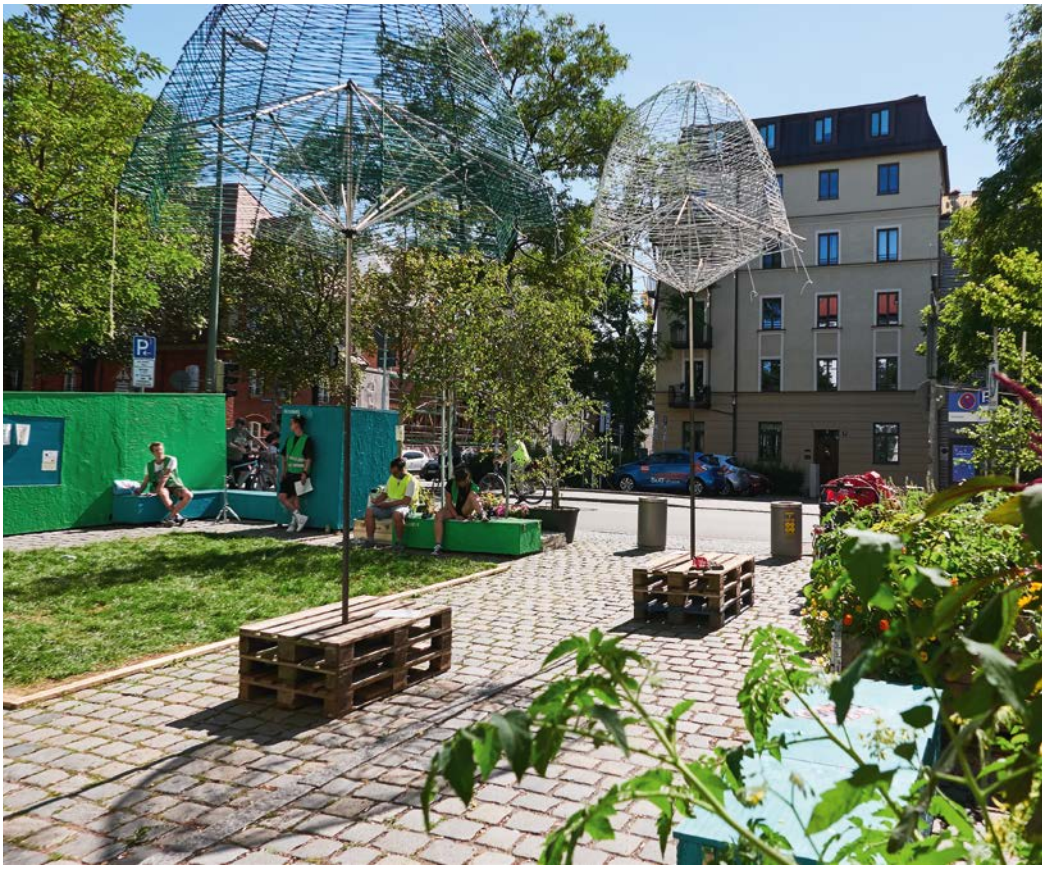
Wie wollen wir in Zukunft leben? Wie sollen unsere Städte aussehen, wie können wir den begrenzten öffentlichen Raum sinnvoll nutzen, wie uns fortbewegen? Viele Menschen spüren, dass es nicht mehr so weitergehen kann wie bisher. Klimawandel, Artenschwund und Ressourcenknappheit zwingen uns dazu, unseren Lebenswandel und damit auch unser Mobilitätsverhalten zu überdenken. Doch welche Alternativen sind sinnvoll und auch realisierbar? Dies herauszufinden, ist Ziel zahlreicher „street experiments" überall auf der Welt. Sie öffnen für einen Moment ein Fenster in eine bessere Welt. Unter welchen Bedingungen sie zu bleibenden Transformationen beitragen und was wir von ihnen lernen können, untersucht ein interdisziplinäres Team am Lehrstuhl für Siedlungsstruktur und Verkehrsplanung der TUM. □

Munich. April 2022. Walking through the city's Schlachthof district, the sleek brick façade of the new Volkstheater instantly catches the eye. Situated directly opposite, Zenettiplatz offers another urban design highlight – though its significance might not be apparent upon first glance. The square is surrounded with plywood structures painted turquoise, inviting passers-by to sit and linger for a while. Large planters provide a base for an entire grove of trees, fringed with spring flowers and culinary herbs. There is a bulletin board peppered with notices advertising second-hand furniture and free training sessions at the nearby gym. A man flicks through the freely accessible book alcove, searching for new arrivals, his two exuberant sons having already snatched a comic book. "My neighbor's elderly mother loves coming here to chat to other local residents," says a woman who has left her electric car to charge at the mobility station over the road. She also confesses that she is grateful for the recently redeveloped "Piazza Zenetti".

Four years ago, this was nothing more than a parking lot for private vehicles. Its transformation into a place for people to meet, dedicated to local residents, started in the summer of 2018 by order of the City of Munich. The square was completely transformed as part of a research project called city2share, which involved local residents and was supported by a landscape architect. The parking spaces in the northern section made way for a place designed to allow people to relax and meet others, while the parking area in the southern section was converted into a mobility station with car and e-bike sharing services. The grand opening was attended by the mayor of Munich as well as representatives of the Federal Ministry for the Environment, the municipally owned transport company Münchner Verkehrsgesellschaft, and the project's industry partner, BMW. The whole project was originally conceived as an experiment and only scheduled to last six weeks. During this initial period, however, something clicked. A citizen's initiative formed and organized a series of street parties in the subsequent two summers along with activities focused on the new "piazza", which ultimately led to the change being made permanent.

Pandemic emboldens citizens with desire for change

The "Piazza Zenetti" is a prime example of successful transformation of the public realm. It is also far from an isolated case, from Milan to New York, Barcelona to Bo-



gota, urban residents are turning to ciclovías, “play streets” or “summer streets” to enable their vision of a better world to run free. Although no two projects are alike, they are all connected by a shared longing for change. People sense that things cannot continue as they have been to date. Climate change, environmental pollution, species extinction, resource scarcity and, of course, the coronavirus pandemic have all forced us to rethink our way of life, including our mobility behavior. But what alternatives exist that are both reasonable and practically feasible? Numerous street experiments are underway around the world with the aim of finding out. From an academic perspective, street experiments are “deliberate, time-limited changes in street use, regulation and/or form with the aim of researching systemic changes in urban mobility”. The project at Munich’s Zenettiplatz is just one example.

“The coronavirus pandemic was a veritable booster for these initiatives,” highlights Gebhard Wulfhorst, who leads the Chair of Urban Structure and Transport Planning at TUM. “It suddenly sparked a great willingness in society to challenge and question many things, to give new ▷

Global connections – participate!

Street experiments depend on an exchange of experiences. Ana Rivas and Benjamin Büttner, supported by the TUM Institute for LifeLong Learning and the EIT Innovation Community in Urban Mobility, provide an introduction to the purpose and nature of street experiments in a massive open online course (MOOC). The Street Experiments Tool (SET) offers a brief guide to planning and evaluating street experiments. Participants can further their expertise in a two-week bi-national summer school in Munich and Rotterdam.

Visit www.streetexperiments.com to learn more!

MOOC Street Experiments for Sustainable and Resilient Cities: https://www.coursera.org/learn/streetexperiments

Installation: Raumzeug - Atelier für Landschaftsarchitektur, Felix Lüdicke (TUM); Picture credit: Johann-Christian Hannemann

“Piazza Zenetti” is one of several street experiments in Munich. The installation was designed and built by landscape architects who also work at TUM’s Chair of Landscape Architecture and Public Space (Prof. Regine Keller). “Piazza Zenetti” is the case study in Felix Lüdicke’s dissertation about street experiments in that Chair.

What makes a street experiment successful? Ana Rivas has examined:

150

street experiments

38

countries

3

each in Munich and Amsterdam

Acceptance, communication and citizen participation

are the criteria that determine the success of street experiments

things a try, and even to buy into very strict restrictions at many levels for temporary periods. The pandemic has also had an extraordinarily positive impact on the willingness and courage to pursue change." For many years, people have been resigned to the fact that streets – particularly in urban areas – are dominated by motor vehicles, whether parked or driving. "But we have been forced to reflect and realize that streets are not primarily made for cars but for people! Streets are part of the public realm where we meet others and chat with neighbors, sit in cafés and go about our daily business. Once you understand that, it can be better incorporated and implemented in planning processes," emphasizes Wulfhorst's doctoral student, Ana Rivas.

"We have been forced to reflect and realize that streets are not primarily made for cars but for people!"

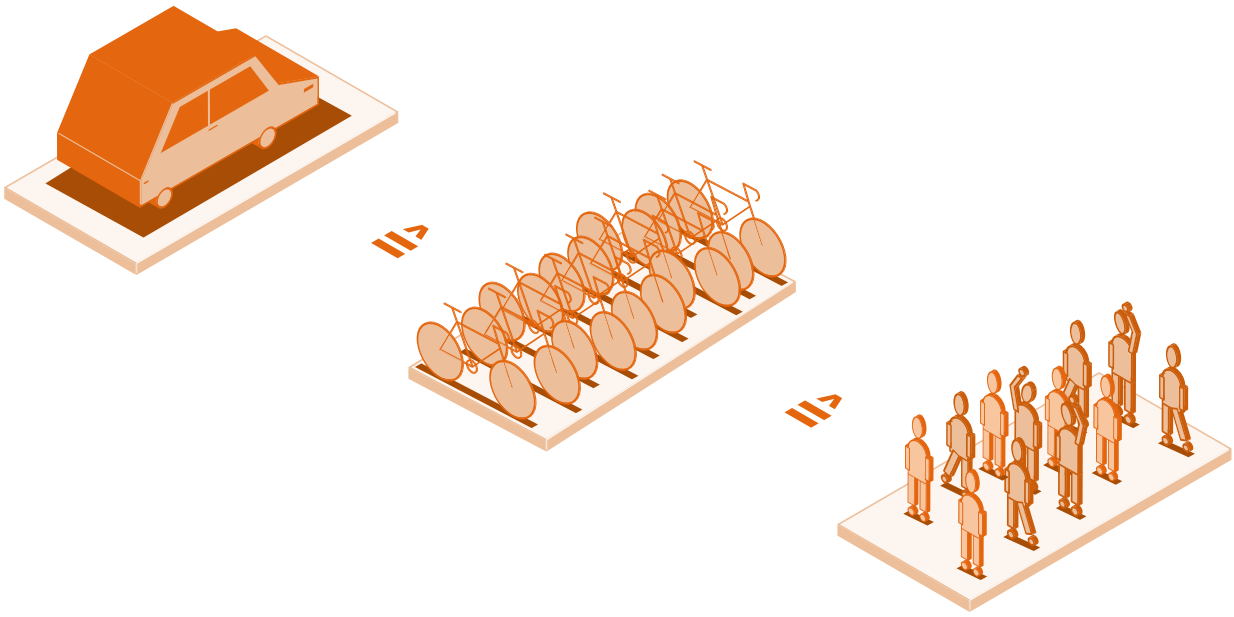
Ana Rivas

Public space is a hotly contested resource

In the course of her dissertation, architectural researcher Rivas gathered data on around 150 street experiments in 38 countries, analyzing six projects in Amsterdam and Munich as case studies based on her own catalog of criteria. Rivas wanted to find out the conditions under which time-limited initiatives lead to lasting change at different levels, including individuals' mobility behavior, urban planning, building design and engagement with different interest groups.

So, what did she find? "There are three criteria that determine the success of a street experiment, namely acceptance, communication and citizen participation. This means that those who are directly affected should be involved as closely as possible in the concept and execution of a project to gain their commitment to the cause. At the same time, the entire process must be coordinated with all stakeholders on an ongoing basis and also communicated to the outside world. Finally, it is very important to have local authorities on board."

Urban transformation is not an easy task, as public space is a valuable resource and – due to its limited nature, especially in major cities – is hotly contested. "The challenge here is to find a balance between the interests of different groups: people who drive and those who cycle, others who get about on foot, deliver goods, visit local bars or want spaces to play in," explains Gebhard Wulfhorst. "There are plenty of potential technical solutions, from new drive systems in electromobility to autonomous driving to sharing and shuttle models with bicycles, scooters, buses and taxis. Yet, all these concepts can only achieve success if their products and services can be integrated into the public realm – otherwise, bicycles will end up lying around on footpaths and that will annoy



Space-consuming car: The area of one car parking space (approx. 12 m²) has room for between 6 and 20 parked bicycles or as many pedestrians.

everyone. Innovations need to be integrated as a common, sociocultural construct, which means developing, exploring, considering and trialing them together."
Street experiments, as shown by Ana Rivas' research, can make an important contribution to this process. "This idea of bringing different stakeholders together, which we have developed with our partners in Amsterdam and Milan, is something we now want to pursue more intensively in Munich," explains Wulfhorst. Established in the fall of 2021, the Munich Cluster for the Future of Mobility in Metropolitan Regions (or MCube for short) provides a framework for this research and is part of a new funding program established by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF). The vision behind MCube is to establish Munich's position as a pioneer of sustainable and transformative mobility innovations. One of the cluster's lighthouse projects aims to create low-traffic neighborhoods through the use of multi-modal transportation options. "In that project, working together with the Chair for Urban Design, the City of Munich and private partners, we want to combine alternative mobility systems with new design concepts for the public realm. It is exactly these ideas that we know from successful street experiments and now wish to put into practice."

Monika Offenberger

European partners

The European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) was set up in 2008 as an independent body of the European Union, tasked with delivering innovation across Europe. The EIT brings together leading companies, educational institutions and research institutes in order to form dynamic cross-border partnerships. The resulting Innovation Communities are dedicated to the interdisciplinary search for solutions to the major global challenges of our time. TUM is involved in the following EIT Innovation Communities: Health, Food, InnoEnergy, Digital, Climate – and, last but not least, Urban Mobility. TUM serves as a strategic partner to EIT, committed to promoting sustainable urban development through revised urban mobility strategies.

Graphics: ediundsepp (source: TUM)