

Leonhard Thumann, Kann Weg?!



Towards socially and spatially *inclusive* cities

Reclaiming public space as a common-pool resource

11.11.22 | 5627206 | Philomena Maria Vida
graduation project research plan

problem statement

Contemporary urban *homelessness* is the most extreme manifestation of a spatial configuration that excludes “a personified deviation from a societal norm. A norm that treats any lifestyle that does not meet the demands of meritocracy as a self-responsible individual case.”¹ Within the context of housing distribution and provision, the neoliberal housing market’s association of performance to ownership implies a necessary exclusion based on financial capacity.

Commodification of Housing is the urban materialization of the “enclosure of the Commons”². It demonstrates how housing has changed its initial function for providing a place for living to one for profit, increasing a disproportionate distribution of wealth and resulting in the coexistence of housing as a luxury next to its unavailability. Additionally reinforcing this is the increased urban displacement due to man-made or nature-made disasters, displacement as a result of war, or simply displacement because of profit-driven city planning. Consequently, unaffordable housing in contemporary (Western) cities is a deeply entangled reality³. Accepting this reality and, shifting the focus away from problematizing it, results in an understanding that the numerical development of affordable housing alone will not solve the situation as

long as the system produces displacement in parallel to houses⁴. Homelessness, as a possible consequence and the worst-case scenario of urban displacement will be the lense through which “the Commons” of the contemporary city will be investigated.

Across the globe, urban displacement has been addressed with a large variety of proposals of responsive shelter provision. While acknowledging the value in studying proven pioneering projects, a topic of this universal scale has always locally specific causes, expressions, and consequences that need to be understood first when dealing with it. City planning and the distribution of resources and people are always politically and economically imposed, thereby revealing context-specific ideologies⁵. In order to find out how the city defines spaces for public use, what mechanisms are at work in terms of inclusion and exclusion of certain groups of people and which public spaces are essential but missing, the global problem will be investigated on a local scale. The project will initially focus on analyzing the incidence of homelessness in Munich as a *symptom* before to contextualize and integrate it as part of a larger *system*. The objective will be to understand which characteristics of displacement are particular to the city of Munich, and which

ones reoccur in a similar manner on a global scale.

The increasing number of displaced people puts an enormous strain on cities, resulting in densification as a common dominator in all urban future projections. Urban and spatial planners' realm of competence intersects with this urban phenomenon for its relation to the built residential environment. Part of this work will attempt to position the scope of action of the discipline of architecture outside of mere damage control as preventive planning is needed to avoid human cost of austerity. Cities have a predefined spatial limit due to the availability of land so even with a fair and dignified distribution of dwellings, growth will at some point have reached its limits. Embracing this opens up the potential in rethinking how to structure urban life and its translation into spaces.

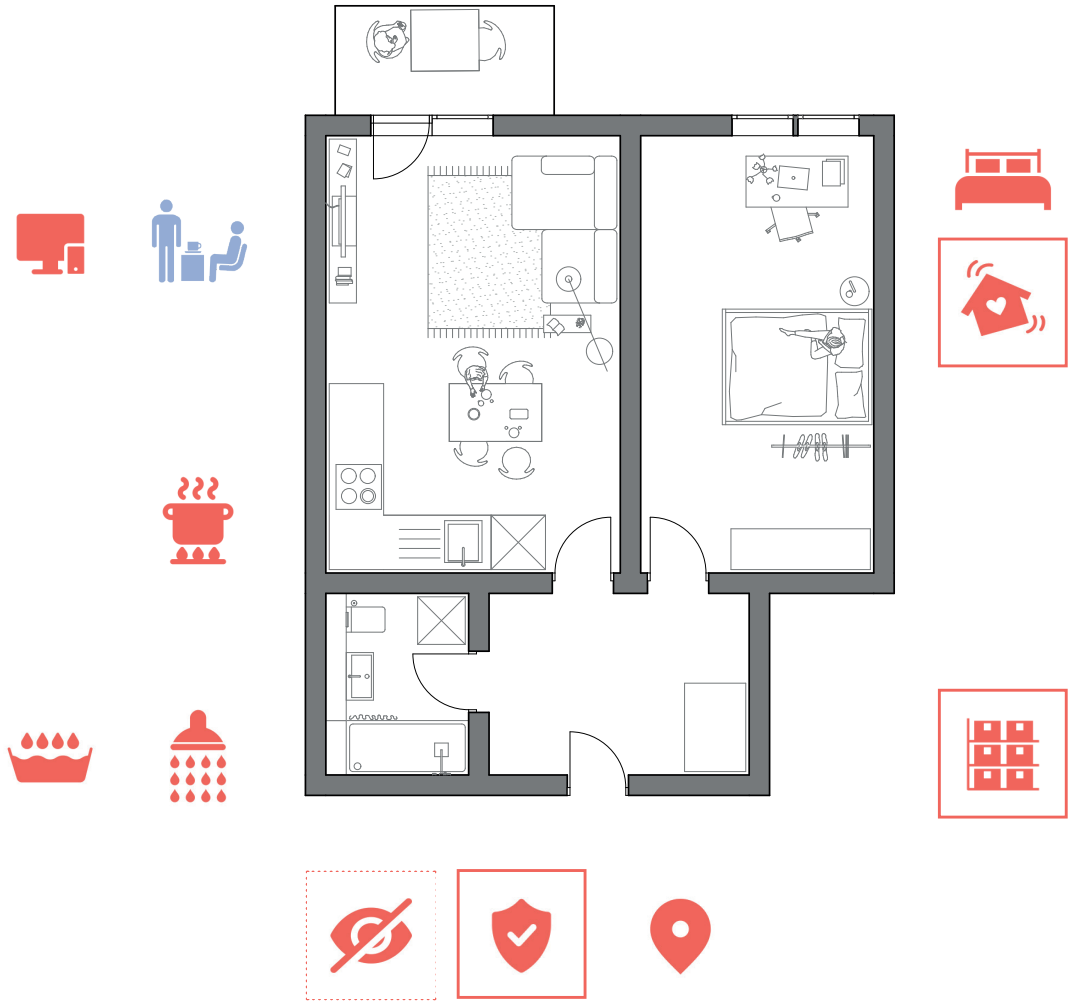
¹ Wolf, Sandra, and Stefan Kunz. "Die Schuldfrage Der Obdachlosigkeit Im Gesellschaftlichen Diskurs." *Hamburger Journal Für Kulturanthropologie* Nr.6 (May 2017): 125.

² Lecture by David Madden in SFU Continuing Studies, "Home or Commodity? The Transformation of Housing and Its Discontents", YouTube, May 10, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KnSPmRsFBgQ>.

³ Marcuse, Peter, and David Madden. *In Defense of Housing: The Politics of Crisis*. London: Verso, 2016, 21.

⁴ Talesnik, Daniel. "Unfolding Homelessness." In *Who's Next? Homelessness, Architecture, and Cities*, edited by Daniel Talesnik and Andres Lepik, 18–25. 2022. Reprint, Architekturmuseum der Technischen Universität München (TUM), ArchiTangle GmbH, and the contributors, 2022, 20.

⁵ Madden, "Home or Commodity? The Transformation of Housing and Its Discontents"



MASLOW'S HIERARCHY OF NEEDS

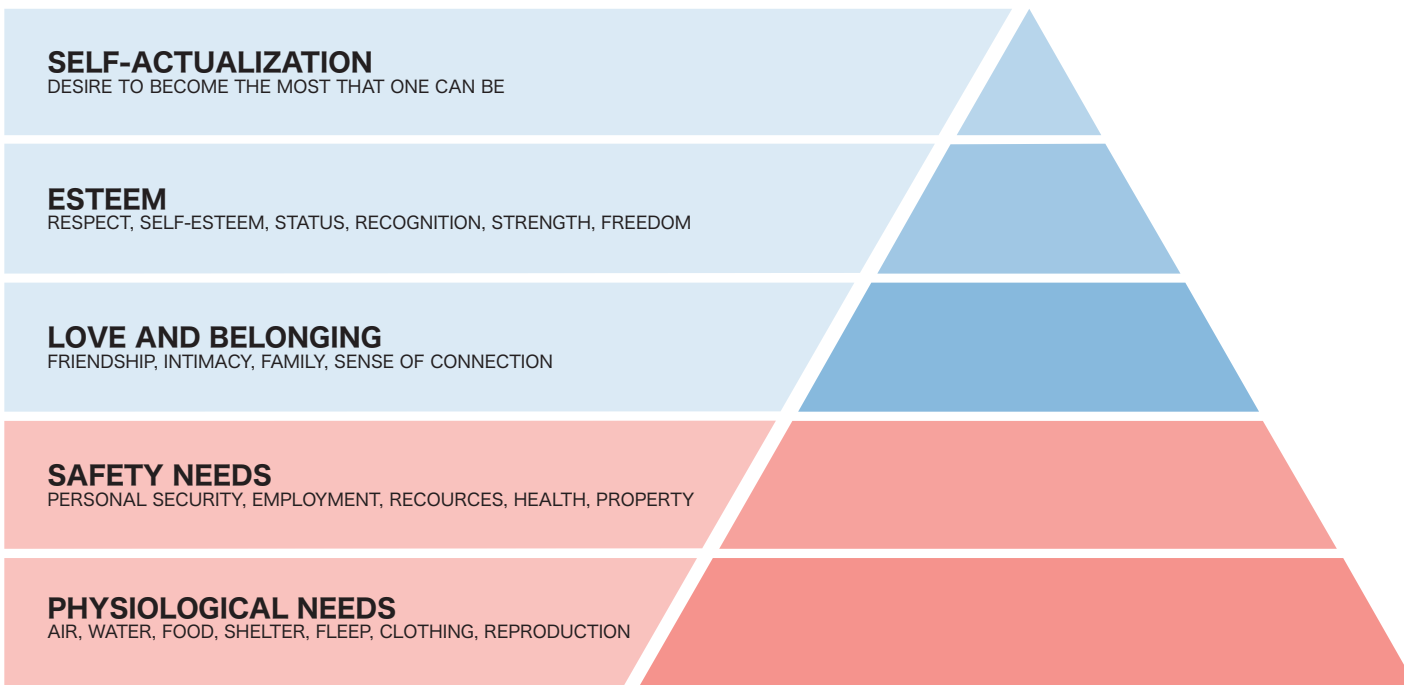


Illustration left:
starting point of reference for
research: own studio apart-
ment, Munich.

Illustration right:
Maslow's hierarchy of needs.
Red: physical needs
Blue: Mental needs

research questions

In his analysis on human motivation, psychologist Abraham Maslow developed a theoretical framework on a human hierarchy of needs. The basic human needs have been divided into five categories which must be satisfied successively, one after another. The first two levels of his pyramid of needs consists of physical characteristics (physiological and safety), upon which mental needs (love and belonging needs, esteem, and self-actualization) can subsequently build. In Western urban development, spatial configurations have been established and enforced that tie a large part of these physical needs to permanent housing - highlighting the necessity of this discourse. When people have no or very little private dwelling space, a possible conclusion is the outsourcing of spaces into the public realm. However, the visibly precarious conditions of public dwelling imply that public space, against its initial definition, is not a place accessible for all users and functions. It seems that houseless people must spend a great deal of their energy, time, and financial resources to meet basic needs and access infrastructure that people with a permanent residency take for granted.⁶

In the first part of the research, spatial translations of these essential needs will be identified. Further, qualitative and quantitative

research will be conducted on the available indoor spaces in Munich to meet the aforementioned basic physical needs. The research will aim at analysing functionality of public spaces of people who must rely exclusively on them. Therefore, the objective is to generate an urban floor plan of a houseless person in Munich. Besides a consideration of the sufficiency of the satisfaction of needs, the available spaces and their distribution will be evaluated on the notions of time, distance and access.

To what extent can *Munich's public realm* substitute the essential components of a private dwelling?

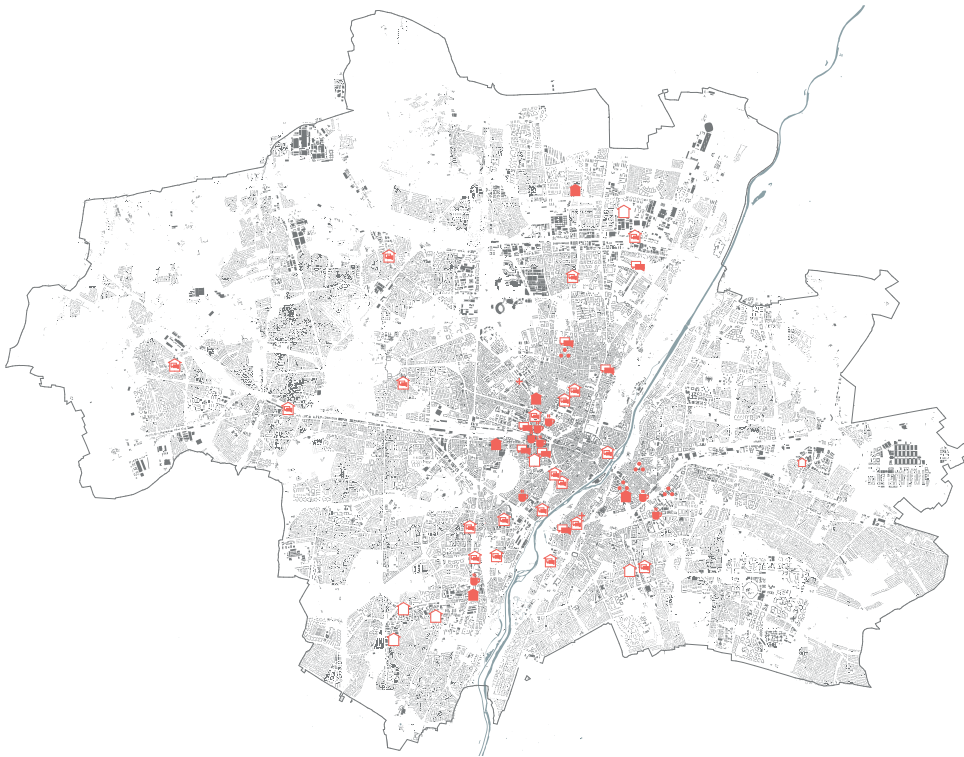


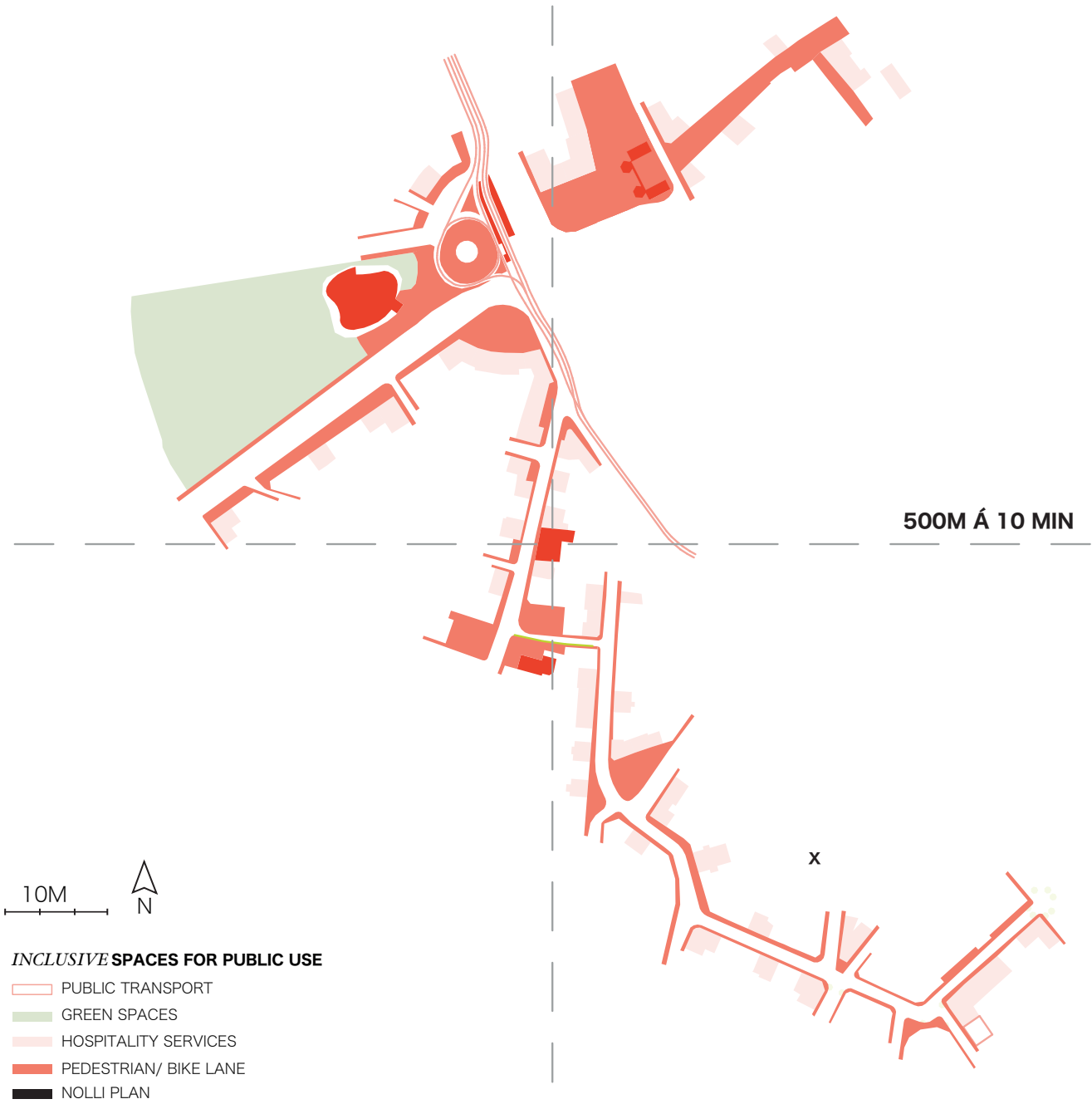
Illustration:
Hagenauer, Michelle. "Räume
Der Wohnungslosigkeit.
Urbane Strukturen Münchens
Zwischen Wohnung Und
Straße," 2021, 34-35.

⁶Hagenauer, Michelle. "Räume
Der Wohnungslosigkeit.
Urbane Strukturen Münchens
Zwischen Wohnung Und
Straße," 2021, 88.

research questions

While the first part of the research aims at an accumulation and interpretation of hard data, the second part focuses on a collection of soft data - revealing “informal regularities implicit in the bodily use of urban public places by their most constant and long-term users”⁷. An ethnographic analysis of potentials and shortcomings of the daily use of these spaces can inform a speculative visualisation of a future definition for spaces for public use.

How can the routines of Munich’s houseless population inform the future design of *spaces for public use*?



⁷Frehe, Fraya. "On the Spatialities of the Homeless' Street in Covid-19 São Paulo." In *Who's Next? Homelessness, Architecture, and Cities*, edited by Daniel Talesnik and Andres Lepik, 92–97. 2022. Reprint, Architekturmuseum der Technischen Universität München (TUM), ArchiTangle GmbH, and the contributors, 2022, 95.

methodology and structure

There is a social responsibility intrinsic to the architectural discipline, as public and private spaces shape and form generations. I am aware of the inability of being able to comprehend the lived reality of the people affected. In an globalised society where it is increasingly common for architects to plan for unfamiliar needs and contexts, the initial association of the service-providing profession to the tectonic act of building⁸ (architecture as the masterful skill of building) evolves over time to include an increasing number of anthropological concerns. Overlaps between architectural research and ethnography imply the possibility and perhaps even the necessity of disciplinary collaboration. As architecture should be the design of spaces for the use of people, at best, informed by people, ethnographic fieldwork will be conducted to determine what spatial configurations are required to meet necessary human and urban needs, which of these needs are already included in the urban fabric, and how unmet demand can be accommodated through future projections.

The fieldtrip to Munich, the object of investigation, will take place over a period of one month (November 2022) and is structured in three phases. In the first phase, with its focus on interior infrastructure of homelessness, a selection

of facilities of the support network for homeless people in Munich will be visited and documented. The respective administration will be interviewed on structure, accessibility, demography of the clients and communal responsibility. The selection criteria for the chosen facilities is based on an aspired complete coverage of basic human needs in their translation into spaces.

Research Tools: literature review, expert interviews, mapping, documenting

Subject of Analysis: Spatial translation of basic human needs in Munich's support network for the houseless population

The second phase is comprised of voluntary work in facilities and as a street worker. The expected insightful contact to the administration and clients of the facilities will shed light on an understanding of both interior and exterior spaces and of the variety of actors involved. The change and questioning of one's own position as researcher, interviewer, helper and resident of the city of Munich and the respective shifting assumptions, motives, expectations and prejudices are documented by means of keeping a journal. The objective is to formulate a position of the

architect's role and an understanding and depiction of the various formal and informal actors involved.

Research Tool: journal, mapping, observing, documenting

Subject of Analysis: shifting positions (as a researcher, architect and citizen) and other actors intersecting with the topic of houselessness in Munich

The third phase of the research is speculative in nature. It attempts to create a socially perceived image of spaces that are accessible to all through a deliberate walk through the city with a focus on traces of homelessness. In the best case, this bodily research of public spaces is complimented by the knowledge exchange of an affected person. If it is manageable to create a connection with a client in phase two, the objective is to co-live a houseless reality in Munich's streetscape - not as a speculative individual but as a companion.

Research Tool: walking interview, sketching, mapping, observing, documenting

Subject of Analysis: accessibility of Munich's public realm

The fourth phase will be after the fieldwork has been conducted. The main aim will be the ordering, contextualizing and visual translation of the findings. The translation of imagination to tangible products is a skill fundamental to the creative architectural discipline. Like cutting through a construction detail, this research attempts to dissect the issue at hand and to reveal its inherent web of dependencies.

Since "the visual is central to the cultural construction of social life in contemporary Western societies"⁸, the incentive is a prospective social acceptance of the necessity and relevance of this discourse. The translation of the research findings and the chosen medium will offer an updated depiction of houselessness in the city of Munich including its complexity of main actors involved. Besides presenting viewpoints that show houselessness in Munich is an issue independent of a lack of economic activity, the storyboard also presents possible spaces and objects of intersection for different income groups, areas of responsibility and action for local authorities, and possible projections for the future on spatial alternatives to consumerism.

⁸ Frampton, Kenneth. *Studies in Tectonic Culture: The Poetics of Construction in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Architecture*. Illustrated. The MIT Press, 2001, 3.

⁹ Rose, Gillian. *Visual Methodologies: An Introduction to Researching with Visual Materials*. 4th ed. London: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2020, 2.

methodology and structure

Research Tool: storyboard
(cast, setting, rhythm, duration)
Location: fiction or reality
Subject of Analysis: multiple lived realities overlapping
with hidden implications of houselessness in Munich



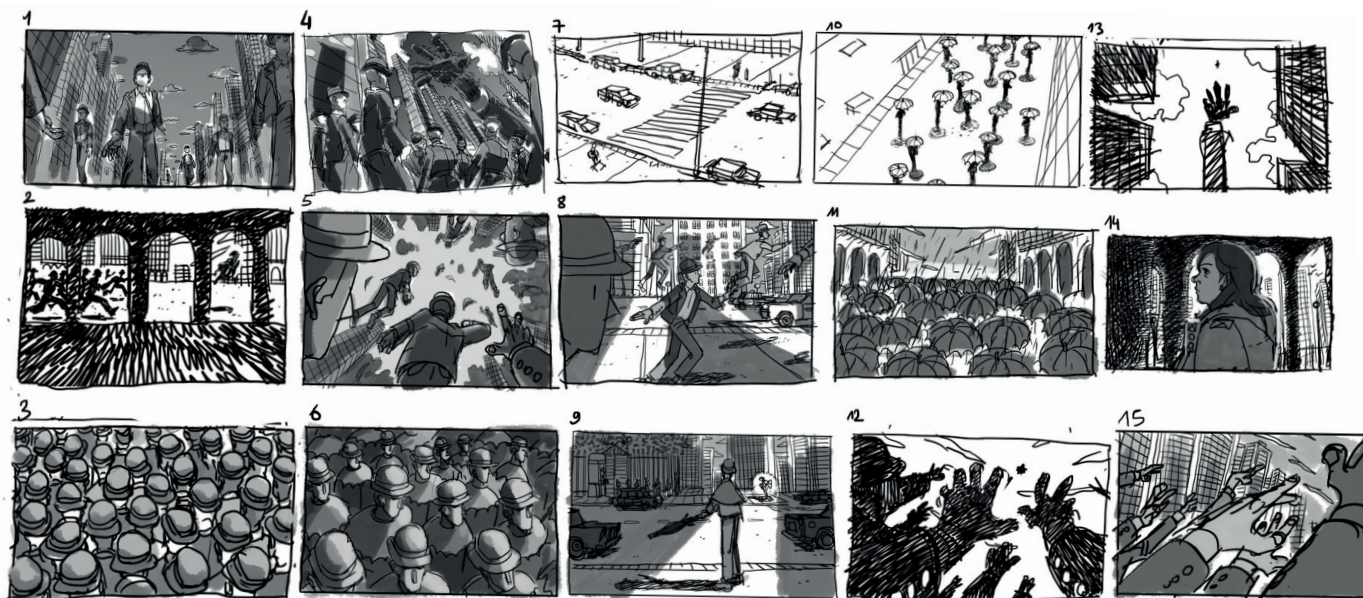


Illustration left:
Reference Tango on 16m², and
The Vantage Point
Illustration Right:
Storyboard by Laurent Prea

What is particular in the context of houselessness in Munich is the profile of the people affected by it. The very tight housing market paired with an economically flourishing city results in a large number of people finding a job and working but not being able to find and finance a dwelling. The number of estimated 9000 houseless people¹⁰ compared to 650 street dwellers indicate that the challenge of houselessness in Munich does not lie within the provision of shelter spaces but in the long-term provision of housing. This further indicates that when searching for traces of houselessness in Munich, stereotypical assumptions on certain visual qualities or assumptions on an urban life decoupled from economic activity become obsolete.

This would imply that the hidden mechanisms of monitoring the street space and preserving a certain appearance of the city do not apply to this group of people. However, explicit exclusion from urban space is not the only mechanism of exclusion in Munich. The system that makes the city work, is a “man-made system(...) and process(...) that function(s) collaboratively and synergistically to produce and distribute a continuous flow of essential goods and services”¹¹. In privatized urban spaces, however, these essential goods and service are seemingly tied exclusively to consumption.

As contemporary cities are a spatial product of „underlying social processes”¹², it seems as if only the

social processes of meritocracy have been taken into account when spatially allocating indoor spaces for public use. Understanding the city as a social construct and process challenges contemporary understandings of urban property and, as a consequence of it, an implicit exclusion and thereby making invisible of certain groups of people.

How would a city look like, that takes into account the needs of its weakest members?

¹⁰ Hagenauer, "Räume Der Wohnungslosigkeit. Urbane Strukturen Münchens Zwischen Wohnung Und Straße", 15.

¹¹ Mattern, Shannon. *Deep Mapping the Media City*. 1st ed. Univ Of Minnesota Press, 2015, 9.

¹² Deborah Martin, Eugene McCann, and Mark Purcell, "Space, Scale, Governance, and Representation: Contemporary Geographical Perspectives on Urban Politics and Policy," *Journal of Urban Affairs* 25, no. 2 (May 2003): 113, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9906.t01-1-00001>.

Glossary

Home
Residence
Street Dwellers
Rough Sleeping
Roofless people
Sheltered houseless people
hidden houseless people
Causes, consequences, cycles

Theory

:Property
Hegel on work, ownership, and citizenship
Henri Lefebvre on the production of space
commodity theory vs common-pool resource
:Redistribution of Space
Henri Lefebvre on the right to the city (Lefebvre)
:Agency
Manuel Delanda on Assemblage Theory
Bruno Latour on Actor-network theory
:Future Visions
Mechthild Schumpp on urban building utopias and
projections on society (original title: Stadtbau-
Utopien und Projektionen auf Gesellschaft)

Typos

:City of Munich
Historic Urban Development
Essential Spaces Public
:Residence, Apartment, Dwelling
Historic subdivision in private and public
Essential Spaces Private

Topos

Germany
:Welfare state
Social security network
National strategies but state-specific duty
:Gentrification
Housing market
Supply-demand
Ordoliberal/ neoliberal

Munich

:Facts and numbers
Poverty line
Average rental price to average income
minimum wage
:Spatial
Public Space
Urban design
Parameters: Accessibility, time, ...
Components
Shortcomings
Building Stock
Vacancy
:Political
Housing market
rental control
Singularization
Decline in social housing
government owned property
:Social
Context specific houselessness
Invisibility due to support system and exclusion
mechanisms

sources research plan

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Page 9: Map of accessible space to *dwell* (linger) in Munich's public realm. Illustration by author

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