

1.1.5 Private, Public and communal Ownership.
Or “Who is managing whose possession?”
And why cars are, in nature, exclusive.

When talking about private, communal and public ownership, many questions arise regarding the conditions of possession, control and maintenance. The implementation of use cases only adds further complication and problems of individual consideration. To gain a better understanding of their definition the following section tries to define a framework of considerations that should aid in quickly assessing objects and their status. In categorising a realm with one of the attributes found above, several criteria present themselves as relevant.

I. Assessing its ownership status, it being attributed to either a specific person, a group of people or a nation. How opaque is the structure of ownership?

II. The accessibility issue asks for its status of admission. Who is allowed “the right of use” or “the right of way” to a realm? To what amount are use cases regulated and is there an instance of control?

III. The issue of government agency, closely connected to the ownership structure, executive power, and feedback loops are subject to the interaction of stakeholders. Who can propose and decide on use, development and adaption?

These questions might be originating in an encounter with reality. Some inherent exclusivity in a space drew attention to it. Through imagination, a vision in how the space could be improved, or used in a more inclusive fashion, might form. But when contemplating said imagination, all the hurdles in its realisation inevitably arise. How is legitimacy for action or the call to action gained? When and how does this individual concern become a common matter? – The answer might be hidden in the term «common». From several individuals with shared interest, a community might form that tries to realise their goal through activism. This might include advertising the Action and how the creation and distribution of value for a broader community is an act of empowerment that contains its own legitimation. Diving deeper into the notion of the «public realm» we can observe a shift in its understanding. In its semantic origins, the public realm was understood as the ground for the political life of a citizen. Its contrary, the private realm was designated space for the “existential” life, where basic needs were to be handled and control and influence was not practised based on speech and thought, but based on necessity and hierarchy. It was not as much about the question of ownership but more about the questions of rule and governing principles.

Locating the two realms in the example of individual mobility, we are able to outline the conflict that has emerged between them. Infrastructure, as a communal good, is funded through the governmental institution. Its function is always founded in something we state as “public need”. But when looking at contemporary jurisprudence, the car is seen as a private entity. A car, in its idea, is serving the individual need for mobility. Transporting to work, goods of provision, and to activities of self-fulfilment. These purposes, although sometimes intertwined with the public sphere, can be categorised as private in their nature.

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This chapter dives into the underlying issues, reasons, statistics and argumentation ground for our concept. It discusses our stance in regard to cars and the infrastructure they consume, how this shift from the productive, public spaces we had to the unproductive spaces we know as streets happened historically. It tries to analyse the term “public space” and inquiries on its applicability for describing the street. From this broad overview regarding our issue, it draws conclusions regarding our work methodology, formulating a hypothesis that is reflected in our research questions and forms the basis for our process and the ambition to enact change.

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1.1.5 Private, Public and communal Ownership.
Or “Who is managing whose possession?”
And why cars are, in nature, exclusive.

When talking about private, communal and public ownership, many questions arise regarding the conditions of possession, control and maintenance. The implementation of use cases only adds further complication and problems of individual consideration. To gain a better understanding of their definition the following section tries to define a framework of considerations that should aid in quickly assessing objects and their status.

In categorising a realm with one of the attributes found above, several criteria present themselves as relevant.

I. Assessing its ownership status, it being attributed to either a specific person, a group of people or a nation. How opaque is the structure of ownership?

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These questions might be originating in an encounter with reality. Some inherent exclusivity in a space drew attention to it. Through imagination, a vision in how the space could be improved, or used in a more inclusive fashion, might form. But when contemplating said imagination, all the hurdles in its realisation inevitably arise. How is legitimacy for action or the call to action gained? When and how does this individual concern become a common matter? – The answer might be hidden in the term «common». From several individuals with shared interest, a community might form that tries to realise their goal through activism. This might include advertising the Action and how the creation and distribution

of value for a broader community is an act of empowerment that contains its own legitimization.

Diving deeper into the notion of the «public realm» we can observe a shift in its understanding. In its semantic origins, the public realm was understood as the ground for the political life of a citizen. Its contrary, the private realm was designated space for the “existential” life, where basic needs were to be handled and control and influence was not practised based on speech and thought, but based on necessity and hierarchy. It was not as much about the question of ownership but more about the questions of rule and governing principles. Locating the two realms in the example of individual mobility, we are able to outline the conflict that has emerged between them. Infrastructure, as a communal good, is funded through the governmental institution. Its function is always founded in something we state as “public need”. But when looking at contemporary jurisprudence, the car is seen as a private entity. A car, in its idea, is serving the individual need for mobility. Transporting to work, goods of provision, and to activities of self-fulfilment. These purposes, although sometimes intertwined with the public sphere, can be categorised as private in their nature.

When comparing the statistics of motorised individual mobility with others (as outlined in the former chapter), we get a grasp of its numerical absurdity. Is not, in every other system we developed, efficiency the most important evaluation metric? (...) The ability to take part in modes of individual motorised transport is dependent on financial means and comes with a huge ecological and spatial footprint. Car infrastructure, through its inherent danger and consumption of vast spaces is, in essence exclusive for all other shareholders of mobility.

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See: Fig 777, facing page

See appendix “Manual”
on p 777

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See appendix “Manual” on
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See appendix “Manual” on
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See: Fig 777, facing page

See appendix “Manual”
on p 777

1.4 Motivation and intended contribution

This chapter will outline the need for change we have experienced and the frustrating everyday-life that it originated from. While not being experts within the fields of urban planning or traffic-engineering it will also look at how the aspects that make us, as inhabitants of a city, still valid experts within this field.

Living within a dense neighbourhood in Zurich brings a lot of interesting, but also challenging faces with it. While being at the heart of an ever-changing and quickly developing hive of people it can also cause a lot of frustration. This mainly started with us, moving through this multipart system of streets and squares by bike. When riding a bicycle in Zurich many questions start to arise and the more one gets nearly overrun every second day, the more we asked ourselves, why is it that in a city where we might have the best public transportation system in the world, still the case that everything planned, is revolving around and for cars. How many people do actually use that infrastructure and how should a neighbourhood be centred around the needs of its inhabitants or the needs of the people who drive through it? Once in our head we realised the sheer absurdity of the space that cars and its infrastructure occupy. If focussing solely on traffic one could argue that it serves as means of transportation and thus is needed e.g. for business and for commuting or the public transportation system. Even though it still is leading to a point where everything is, again circling around cars and one could only discuss the accessibility that is being provided to drive within a city, we started to look at another less productive and, in our opinion, more interesting part of car infrastructure, that is the parking space.

When looking at, especially the blue zone, parking-spaces , we realised that there is not only a strange system that allows for very cheap housing of cars, but also a big potential this space can provide for a street and a community. We started to imagine what else could be built, organised and changed in that space and also how this can help to transform a street and its

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See: Fig 777, facing page

See appendix "Manual" on p 777

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See appendix "Manual" on p 777

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See: Fig 777, facing page

See appendix "Manual" on p 777

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See: Fig 777, facing page

See appendix "Manual" on p 777

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When using "our" city, we often get alienated by its nature, depending on how we move, we feel excluded from vast spaces of its area, and many places, although accessible, seem dead and lacking any inviting character. Our private space is scarce and expensive, while much of the city's area lies idle, scarcely used and contradicting reasonable measures of utility. Should not we, as interaction designers, try to improve that situation? However marginal the contribution might seem? Do something where our skills seem to find their perfect application scenario? We want to create systems for better interaction with each other and with the "public infrastructure". We want to motivate others to participate and innovate by themselves. We want to "hack" the bureaucratic and prohibitive system to create some controversy but more importantly, some value.

Whilst getting oneself into these mills of permits, institutions and the public our motivation is also heavily focussed on a prototyping and realistic approach. In a "how far can we get" manner we also hope to get a feeling of where our skills can be useful and how a certain change can or should be achieved. With a curious and open mindset we hope to be able to interact with a variety of different actors and learn from different institutions and disciplines.

As outlined in our research, many projects that intervene in the public sphere face difficulties on political, infrastructural and social level. But what many of them achieve is a small step towards more decentralised and inclusive urban development. Almost all of them document their gained knowledge and provide it as a resource and possible inspiration for other people. Through that they create a continuously growing toolset of communal empowerment in urban interventions. In our eyes, this decentralised activism has the potential to marginally improve life quality in a city. By going through the process of activism, we want to create a "model-principle" intervention. Its goal is not to throw over the old system, but to serve as a model and inspiration for reflection on the status quo and providing possible points of departure for other empowerment projects in Urban intervention.

See: Fig 777, facing page

See appendix "Manual" on p 777

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1: Achtung: Die Schriften,
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1. Research Field

This chapter dives into the underlying issues, reasons, statistics and argumentation ground for our concept. It discusses our stance in regard to cars and the infrastructure they consume, how this shift from the productive, public spaces we had to the unproductive spaces we know as streets happened historically. It tries to analyse the term “public space” and inquiries on its applicability for describing the street. From this broad overview regarding our issue, it draws conclusions regarding our work methodology, formulating a hypothesis that is reflected in our research questions and forms the basis for our process and the ambition to enact change.



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See appendix “Manual” on p 777

See appendix “Manual” on p 777

Table of Contents

Keywords:	3
Abstract	4
Teaser Text:	4
Acknowledgments	6
General Introduction	12
1. Research Field	13
1.1 Background and Context	13
1.1.1 We Have to Talk about Cars	13
1.1.2 Public Spaces as Such	14
1.1.3 The Early History of the Swiss City	15
1.1.4 The Consumption and Cost of Space in Zürich	
Statistics / numbers on Parking Spaces / Cars in Zürich	17
1.1.5 Private, Public and communal Ownership.	
Or “Who is managing whose possession?” / Wer verwaltet wessen Besitz?	
And why cars are, in nature, exclusive.	19
1.2 Research Questions - Hypothesis	21
1.3 Methodology chosen for your Investigation	22
1.3.1 Game Methodology	23
1.3.1 Research Methodology	25
1.4 Motivation and intended contribution	27
2. Concept	29
2.1 Concept and Angle	29
2.1.1 Shift of perspectives	30
2.1.2 Local vs Urban	31
2.1.3 Our role as designers	32
2.1.4 Goals	33
2.2 Related Projects	35
2.2.1 Brings uf d Strass	35
2.2.2 Self Made City	36
2.2.3 Stadionbrache	36
2.2.4 BeeHome	36
2.2.5 WikiHouse	37
2.2.6 Decidim	37
2.2.7 Quartieridee Wipkingen	37
2.2.8 Bikeable	38
2.3 Field Research	39
2.3.1 Concept Validation	39
2.3.2 Collecting Data (from residents and passers)	40
2.3.3 Learning from existing Projects	41
2.3.4 Findings and next steps	43
3. Project Development	45
3.1 Experiments	45
3.1.1 Walks	45

3.2 Prototypes	48
3.2.1 The Game	48
3.2.1 The Idea-Café	49
3.2.2 The “Pop-Up” Repair-Workshop	51
3.2.3 Designing “Public” Furniture	52
3.2.4 Public Infrastructure with Hydroponics	53
3.2.5 The Mobile Platform (Anhänger-Thingy)	54
3.2.6 Aesthetics of Invitation	55
3.3 Results (incl. user tests if applicable)	56
3.3.1 Structure of information	57
3.3.2 Manual/Fibel	58
3.3.3 Data collection	61
3.3.4 Data processing	62
4.Conclusion	64
4.1 Contribution	65
4.2 Future Steps	67
5.Appendix	71
7. Figure Index	72
6. Source Index	

