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Second paragraph: Changes in affiliation (if any)

Third paragraph: Disclosures and Acknowledgments

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Indent the first line of each paragraph.

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# Abstract

*(written by AI)*

*This thesis explores the issue of unproductive car infrastructure and the potential for reclaiming public space in cities. By analysing the historical context of urbanisation and the politics involved in planning, the authors argue that cities have been neglected in favour of rural and alpine life, resulting in a vicious cycle of suburbanization and commuting. The thesis proposes a hypothesis and research questions to explore the possibilities of reclaiming public space from cars and parking infrastructure, offering a model for a more sustainable and community-driven urban environment. Through a methodology that includes location scouting, interviews, and field research, the authors examine the potential of self-initiated planning and the existence of brownfields and unused spaces to give expression to imagined ideas and for community building. The thesis presents findings and next steps for project development, including experiments, prototypes, and results, and concludes with a discussion of the contribution and future steps for this work.*

*Teaser Text:*

##### Keywords:

Urban planning, public space, car infrastructure, community building, sustainability, location scouting, interviews, field research, self-initiated planning, brownfields, prototypes, experiments, user tests.

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Antonio Scarponi

GZ Affoltern

All participants of our actions

All our friends that listened to us.

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Background and Context \

History city planning in Switzerland has been primarily neglected due to cultural stigma of the ideal rural and alpine life. Cities have been seen as the breed of disobedient movements and the underclass of society.  
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Methodology chosen for your investigation \

Project review summary, list methods encountered and afterwards assess their possible usefulness in our process. Link to Research questions

Location Scouting

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WTF is this even? read other Thesis chapters

----- Your concept (12000 words)

Concept and Angle  
Related Projects  
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Findings and Next Steps

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# Main Content

## General Introduction

# 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.

## 1.1 Background and Context

##### 1.1.1 We Have to Talk about Cars

Close your eyes and imagine a conjure of an ideal street in your neighbourhood?

What does this street look like? Do you see cars? Shopfronts? Street vendors? What’s around you? How does it feel?

It’s very likely that none of you who have imagined a street in the ideal city had lots and lots of cars in it or even more than one lane for the cars to travel through. This has a reason. We all share an intrinsic want of how we feel comfortable within an urban environment. This includes a community, safety, inclusion and wonder. [[1]](#footnote-0) As we designed our streets solely with the purpose of transit, these public spaces turn into traffic spaces [[2]](#footnote-1) and do not serve those needs. These places don’t evoke the perception of being places to stay but only places to drive through by car to get to another place. They also work as a sign of non-belonging and thus kill a space and its identity/community. We have the same problem with parking spaces. They are not only a huge waste of scarce space in a dense city (Robin Chase) but also waste the opportunities and solutions we could build for cities that are serving the mentioned needs. As we are imagining our ideal street, it’s a fact that cars have to be a part of it because everyone has a need for mobility, and there are numerous people with disabilities dependent on them. It’s safe to say though, that streets completely lined with parking spaces are not desirable and that citizens aren’t able to participate and stay within these. As these are communal spaces this is something we can change and that’s also where our biggest chance as a community lies. From self organised spontaneous events to small community gardens or meeting points. The most important part is that inhabitants of streets or neighbourhoods have an active part in the creation of their public space.

##### 1.1.2 Public Spaces as Such

There is an ongoing ownership debate with space in cities. As this is a limited medium, the design of it is also at stake. The city is often involved or accountable for these processes and provides public spaces such as parks, libraries or community centres. These meeting points are very important, because they are available to everyone, whichever income or cultural background and serve as a place to connect and discuss. There have been a lot of sociological observations, such as “Palaces of the people” [[3]](#footnote-2), that show the importance of these spaces. With an ongoing privatisation and also the notions of compact cities, unused or designable spaces in Switzerland disappear ever more.[[4]](#footnote-3) We believe that people also have the urge to help shape their environment and have an active impact on it. That’s why public spaces in cities don’t stop at parks or squares but go further and are an essential part of the identity of certain cities. The places created with a self initiated process are what act as an expression of actors involved. The role of the people changes from just being passive users to actors within a system. It also makes these places more resilient and more adaptable to changes, because there is a local community that’s invested and designs the place in a way that benefits the people who live there. This allows for a more durable way of housing and more social and financial security.

In the recent publication Self Made City[[5]](#footnote-4) the authors also emphasise the importance of self-initiated planning and the existence of brownfields and unused spaces to give expression to imagined ideas and for community building. We also see this in Zurich with examples of the Stadionbrache, the Binz, the Rote Fabrik or the Zentralwäscherei. These places serve as a cultural enrichment and help to create a community and serve as a canvas for ideas to be implemented. One aspect that also makes these places unique is the way they are organised. They work on a shared basis and thus can be used by many people. The management of a certain space however is also always bound to a shared responsibility. This enriches community building and can be applied to many other aspects of infrastructure. If we look at the examples of cars again, one car takes up 15 times more space than a shared car. The aspect of sharing is not only saving space regarding cars but is also saving resources within every other aspect of an urban lifestyle. This can go as far as building own housings and settlements within cities.

##### 1.1.3 The Early History of the Swiss City

To understand how cities have developed to the lively organisms they are today, we have to look at the historical context of urbanisation and the politics involved in these processes. As we are working very locally in the city of Zurich, we will also look primarily at the developments in Switzerland.

In contrast to earlier perceptions of the city, we are now characterised by a rather positive attitude towards it. Especially during the first Industrial revolution, as cities started to grow quickly, there was a big dissent towards cities[[6]](#footnote-5). The changes brought by the capitalistic system of mass production made these developments possible, as there was the possibility to house and work for a lot of people with minimal space. There has always been a ditch between rural and urban life and especially during these times first critics, such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau (JJR) started to arise. He lashed violently against big cities: ‘Cities are the abyss of the human species. After a few generations, races die or degenerate. They need to be refreshed, and it is always the countryside which furnishes replenishment’. (Zitat)

The ideologies proposed by JJR were still a big part of the later executed planning of Jean Francois Gravier and Armin Meili. They both had a big influence in city planning in France (Gravier) and Switzerland (Meili). After the Second World War and the accompanying financial upswing in Switzerland, they both were involved in the emergence of anti-urban ideologies in space planning. What is interesting to see is that a lot of their statements didn’t necessarily have a practical aspect, but rather a political one. (We can still witness this notion today with a lot of prestige projects.) They saw cities as a threat to the morality of society. People who lived in cities also did not correspond to the traditional values of having a family and being a normed citizen, let alone of the established patriarchal system. There were a lot of other aspects involved too, but what’s mainly the cause of the anti-urban critique is that cities don’t support the traditional and conservative lifestyle that these two men imagined. As of their political nature they would have never seen a benefit or gain an acceptance to new ideas that emerged in these urban environments. These power dynamics have mainly led to a disempowering and neglect of urban planning and thus led to a very organic and unorganised way of urban growth.

With the emergence of modernist ideologies, a planning hype to counteract the previous developments has started. This led to very strict and regulated forms of planning that wanted to understand the city as a whole and to include everything within this planning. A lot of ideas of building a city completely from the ground up emerged, such with Max Frisch and Lucius Burckhardt and Le Corbusier.[[7]](#footnote-6) Although they have been revolutionary for the time, they lacked the potential to react within given circumstances and were mainly constructed from a very distant view but started a very important dialogue of city planning that has before been neglected. Discussions about ownership of common ground, such as the ideas of Bernoulli[[8]](#footnote-7),that one mustn’t own ground but only the infrastructure on top of it, have emerged. A lot of self organised cooperatives have been founded since then and have shaped urban developments in a positive way.

When looking at a lot of the infrastructure that is being perceived as valuable these days, the emergence of these places had a very pragmatic background. During the last years our cities were experiencing the unique threat of a global pandemic. From a historical perspective, it is notable that the first public green areas e. g. in our cities were created for infection control reasons during the latter half of the 19th century. Overcrowding, narrow alleys, and dirty gutters caused epidemics such as cholera, typhoid, and tuberculosis to flourish in the urban, working-class neighbourhoods. They have been a very important part of public participation and community building as seen with f.e. the free lunch programs on playgrounds that date back to food-scarcity in the Second World War. [[9]](#footnote-8) These unused spaces had the potential to provide space for self-initiation, help and thus community.

##### 1.1.4 The Consumption and Cost of Space in Zürich Statistics / numbers on Parking Spaces / Cars in Zürich

To add some context to the claims about unproductive car infrastructure the following section outlines some of the most relevant statistics regarding parking infrastructure in the city of Zürich.

The standardised size for a parking space in Switzerland (norm from VSS) is 5 x 2.35 Metres in length which equals 11.75 square meters of parking space. According to the open data tool that the city of Zürich provides, there are about 49'000 open-air, roadside car-parking spaces in Zürich. Including the spaces in condensed parking infrastructure, such as park-houses, this number grows to about 70 '000 spaces. This discrepancy of open-air parking spaces in relation to parking infrastructure also shows the inefficiency of space usage and therefore about 575'750 square metres (0.575 Square Kilometres) of ground are covered by Parking spaces in the city of Zürich. That is roughly the size of 80 soccer fields.   
Zürich itself is 87.88 square kilometres big. Averaging out the density of car-parking spaces per square kilometre this equals to about 800 parking spaces per square kilometre.   
Usually parking spaces in Zürich are occupied to about 90% to 97% of the entire capacity. This results in at least 44'100 cars standing on the roadside at any given time, in close proximity to a living house. When matched with the number of households in Zürich, this results in about 1 occupied car parking space per 4 households. [[10]](#footnote-9)

When Rented at the aforementioned average rental fee, these 11.75 square metres would cost about 2800.- in one year. But the city of Zürich sells parking cards for their blue zone parking spaces for 300.- a year. This card has to be used in a registered light motor vehicle to allow parking in any blue zone space in the chosen district.

When looking at the same numbers for bike parking infrastructure, the site lists about 2000 public bike parking spaces which are able to hold about 44 '000 bikes, and calculating it down to average density per square feet, we come to a number of 500 bike parking spaces per square kilometre. Why is there such a discrepancy in infrastructure between the car and the bike as a much more space- and emission-efficient vehicle of individual mobility?

According to “unparking”, a project by the MIT senseable city lab, the average car sits parked 95% of its time. Assessing the IMT (individual motorised traffic) on the criteria of transport efficiency per space used, its drawbacks of increased pollution and more danger for all other traffic shareholders, could lead to the realisation that cars and their infrastructure are one of the least desirable means of transportation in a city.

Zürich is one of the most densely populated [[11]](#footnote-10) cities in Switzerland, with its inhabitant number growing about 21% in the last twenty years, space is becoming a scarce resource. In the same period, the cost of housing has increased by about 22%. In 2022, the average price for apartment rental in Zürich is at 19.9.- per square metre / month.

This equals to 1470.- in monthly rental fees per and 17'640.- in yearly rental fees for a 3-room apartment. According to the rental price index, Zürich is the second most expensive city in Switzerland.[[12]](#footnote-11) Alternative housing solutions like residential communities or student housing are common in Zürich.

So where does one find space available for use? Could we use non-productive and vacant space in cities to satisfy our need for living and social space? Because when compared to the renting costs of (...) , it could be an opportunity to claim some inexpensive space for self realisation.

##### 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.

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.

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.[[13]](#footnote-12)

SOLUTIONS?

*What do we see as the most promising solutions to this issue?*

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## 1.2 Research Questions - Hypothesis

This chapter will outline the different focus points of our own research. It focuses on qualitative and very local research as this data is the most valuable for our project. Furthermore the agency and the impact of design is discussed within the field of urban planning.

Regarding our Research questions, it’s very important to set a scope of what is important to us and where we can have the biggest impact. City planning is a very complex topic and there are a lot of stakeholders involved. To realise a project you have to overcome a lot of administrative hurdles. These processes always take a lot of time and it’s also the stage in which most projects already die. The “urban equipe collective” published a book regarding exactly these questions and how to act within the legal and administrative frame.[[14]](#footnote-13)That’s why we won’t focus on this aspect too much. As we come from a design background it’s more important for us to find out how we can gain a resonance from the people and how to get quick and qualitative feedback to iterate in further steps. (How can we include people and gain participants to iterate our interventions?)

We also think that this is a chance for us as designers to contribute to this very relevant topic. As we are neither architects nor policy makers we have the opportunity to work in a very spontaneous and local way. There a lot of projects we could find on how designers can contribute to the surprising aspect of a city. What we really want to investigate is how design can contribute to a more self-initiated and democratic way of behaving within a city. Can we achieve this with speculative work or maybe with very local and pragmatic projects that work as an inspiration for other self-initiated projects?

A further aspect of public interventions is how they are getting perceived. There is a lot of stigma against classic occupations of buildings and the aesthetics involved play a big role. That’s why we think it’s very important to evaluate people's reactions to different designs and aesthetics. Is a refined design necessarily better? How are improvised interventions accepted? Is it better to stay with the intervention or just leave it alone? How do people identify with a place according to the aesthetics and the co-creation provided? An aspect of perception is also found within the wording of slogans or the name of a project. We will test out different questions and descriptions, ranging from provocative to rather explanatory to find out how discussions evolve and how answers differ.

When it comes to designing with and for a community, inclusion is also a big part. We are sure that projects have a longer life-span if people are getting involved in the process and also can have an active creation or a passive decision part within them. However these processes always take time and more opinions lead to a more diverse project but also to more time spending in discussions. As we are evolving our bachelor thesis we also want to find out how and where we can have the biggest impact. Should we work with just one community and neighbourhood and develop a very refined but local project? Or should we include all different parts of the city and thus more diverse target groups, but stay in a more spontaneous self-initiated concept? Another aspect we also want to look at is how participatory design processes can also happen within a digital space.

Because we do not only want to provide different proposals but also the tools to start projects in the same manner, we would like to look at the motivation of people to act within their cities. Is there a willingness to act in the public space but the administrative hurdles are too big? Is there only a need for participation and having a say? These questions are some of the most important to us because the community determines the success of such a project.

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## 1.3 Methodology chosen for your Investigation

*Transition from share- and stakeholders (from who owns what) to the notion of interaction design (discipline as mediator for connections) and its methods seen as applicable and relevant to our vision and improvements in the urban community.*

The discussed problems about enacting change in public spaces leaves us wondering about possible strategies and solutions for the outlined issues. In a field where political, infrastructural and social interests collide, a mediator is needed. City planners, as they are named, will plan some change, politicians are concerned with budget and their agendas, civil engineers usually work in the framework of public contracting work. All that has its purpose to control and regulate the quality, need, functionality and budget of public infrastructure, but does not provide a framework for communal interventions. They lack the possibilities of creative, spontaneous and decentralised creation of urban infrastructure.

We propose the methodic toolkit of Interaction Design as the ideal utility to act and research. In the complex, interactive systems of cities, a multidisciplinary approach will lead to services with a broader User base, therefore more legitimacy and inclusion.

This said we have a lot of different tools at our disposal. These range from strollology to quick prototyping or user tests and studies. In the early stages of our thesis, we will mainly try to lay a focus on qualitative research. Already having a lot of statistics and papers in our research basket, we aim to have several interviews with people who are specialised and work in the field of space planning. Furthermore it’s important for us to also get a perspective of citizens. This can be either done with cultural probes or also with interviews and collaborative workshops.

Participation and Inclusion is a big part of urban developments and also contributes to the success of a project. Regarding the Co-Creation or Co-Designing with involved parties it’s very important to set a goal of what we want to establish and what our goal is within this collaborative process. We will prototype different appearances directly on the street to get a feeling of what infrastructure seems the most approachable. When looking at different media articles and the number of complaints that are being issued regarding unusual projects in public space, we also found that people are often very sceptical when it comes to the creation of public spaces, because they feel like, as it’s also their space, that decisions have been made without their consent. To tackle these challenges we want to work with prototypes that either generate an added value or that propose a story that then can be discussed[[15]](#footnote-14). To move away from abstract and very theory-based ideas we also hope to incorporate this participation context within an ongoing discussion.

##### 1.3.1 Game Methodology

Games are an excellent tool to research different connections and dynamics within a system. As there is a common goal to be defined, there are also certain rules that apply to everyone. Furthermore specific skills and limitations can be thought through with different characters. Creating this canvas we hope to also identify certain leverage points within the urban system. As there are so many parties involved it’s very hard to gain a holistic view and to understand and include all the actors within an urban environment. With this approach we hope, on one hand, to manifest the data we collected though the aforementioned methods, and on the other hand, to have a discussion platform we can build upon. We want to understand the interactions that are happening between the different actors involved. parking spaces. As cited in „Play the City“, consider the complexity and potential variations in a game of chess. Despite its simple, nixed, and easy-to-comprehend rules, it is almost impossible to predict the moves of two opponents after three or four steps, and all of the intricate and responsive solutions generated during the play process.

Following the guidelines of Play the City[[16]](#footnote-15), we want to create a game that enables different parties to shape a process and have an active part within the emergence of a project. This includes several steps and preparations:

1. Define the game challenge: In our case this would be the goal to create streets and spaces that are car free and offer the possibility to act within this newly resulted public space. To limit ourselves we set the Blue Zones in the city of Zurich as our playground.

2. Engage your stakeholder network: This includes people that commute by car or own a car and people that only commute by bike and use public transport systems. Furthermore there are the city planners, the neighbourhood councils, small entrepreneurs and many more that can be added or subtracted to the game. We also hope to use this step to create personas and to define the different motives of involved citizens.

3. Identify Relevant Data: Regarding the data we will have to look at two different types of data. On one hand we will incorporate the „hard“ data such as location, traffic, certain statistics that prove our game dynamic and also what rules and networks already exist. Furthermore we have the „soft“ data, such as philosophical thoughts about space but also points that we see as beneficial factors for living in the city as before mentioned in the background chapter.

4. Identify Available Resources: The resources generally influence the skills or possibilities the players have to act within the game. This would include several legal restrictions but also f.e. the possibility to own a „Blue-Zone Card“. Furthermore the financial resources should also be added into the play and administrative processes are also being taken into account.

5. Design Game Rules and Conditions: The Game Rules include the individual and collective rules. The individual rules will differ as do the skills. Citizens may have the possibility to organise cultural events and the city-players can then approve these proposals. When creating these rules we will take the Urban-Equipe handbook as a guideline.

The collective rules will apply to everyone involved and will include: sequence, respect and priority.

6. Build the Game Interface: When building the Game Interface it’s again very important to define what kind of outcome we want to generate. As we don’t have a lot of time within the Thesis and we aim for fast results. This would include an easy interface that’s quickly understandable and thus helps us gain fast feedback from a lot of different people. It should also be an interface that can be accessible for everyone; either in the digital or the public space.

7. Play and Record Game Sessions: When testing out the game we would like to use it as a proposal and discussion platform for people in a public space but also to have a manifestation of our ideas and having a platform that can be dynamically changed. We would also like to organise game sessions that can include different experts within the beginning of the project.

The game will first be played in a Dungeons & Dragons RPG style. This can also be explored with people who aren’t specialised within the field of urban development. With the provided role cards the different motives and dynamics can then be explored. As the game works as a model for the real scenario, ideas that emerge can then quickly be tested out in the real world, which insights can then be included in the further iterations of the game. Another focuspoint will be how the different outcomes vary when changing certain elements, such as Action points or certain Veto-possibilities. How will the street look if the civil-engineering office is solely responsible and how would it look if no restrictions would be given? As we have a direct representation of the street at the end of the game, we can directly find out if and for whom it will generate an added value. This way we also hope to find out how we can mediate the interactions involved that would benefit communication and more satisfaction for everybody involved.

##### 1.3.1 Research Methodology

When dealing with a setting that strives for a finished project that is let alone after being built, personal traits and ongoing discussions within a neighbourhood often get carried away and don’t seem to get too much attention. We aim to have a more personal research methodology where we do not simply outline the different outcomes of a newly planned street but also try to engage with a community and get a grasp of how projects within the street are getting perceived. For that investigation we will have two different Methodologies that both aim to get a portrait of a couple of citizens and also to gain an understanding for a community within that street. One will be a sort of public brainstorming session where we aim to discuss with people about their own ideas and hope to elaborate on the possibility but also the added value of this change. The other tool we will use is a classic questionnaire that consists of more or less 10 questions that can be handed out. The goal of this questionnaire is to also have a more quantitative data collection as it allows us to not be involved while filling out. Another advantage is that we can also answer questions that we asked ourselves, more precisely as everyone is having the same framework. The lacking discussion part will miss within this methodology, but we hope to counterbalance this with the idea cards. A potential we see within the “idea” methodology is also that people can choose what to talk about, as it is their idea that is being proposed. The narrow framework and small space on the postcards we will provide, will further lead to a very short description. We hope that this will lead people to an urge to explain the idea to us, as it could have not been described thoroughly enough on the idea card. This sparks discussions and will provide us with soft data that we could not gather from a simple questionnaire. We will use both methods for an afternoon in the same street to have a comparison of the outcomes and also what we could gain from either method. We hope to incorporate a variety of people and aim to have more or less 20 participants for each methodology.

## 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 social factors. After our first research we started to get a grasp of the potential this semi-public space can have and what interesting solutions it can provide to shape a neighbourhood and the interactions that happen within them.

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.

# 2. Concept

This chapter summarises the issues that were identified as in the most dire need of work and begins to outline a framework for our thesis project. Concluding the issues highlighted in the research chapter, it phrases our research questions and discusses the different tracks they could lead us onto. It describes the leverage points that we identified as the most relevant ones, namely the contribution of people on the street, the more democratised discussion about their concerns and ideas and the need to investigate defining attributes of public character and how ownership plays an important role in redeveloping and maintaining space.

## 2.1 Concept and Angle

[[17]](#footnote-16) With its changed strategy in regard to shaping the city centre and traffic characteristics in districts the city of Zurich has a defined goal of reducing the amount of cars present in a city. In different studies they prove that car traffic is not strictly required to the businesses’ success in a neighbourhood. In their conclusion, they visualise some possible change to streets and argue that other solutions as the ones we outlined above and in our research chapter (i.e dense car-parking infrastructure) suffice to cope with the demand for parking spaces. However what we still deemed as missing in that strategy is an effective, creative and inclusive way of redeveloping the areas in question. Although projects in that manner exist with “Brings ufd Strass” and other neighbourhood-based redevelopment projects, they lack public attention and discourse around them. In our view, recent redevelopments still fail to transform transportation infrastructure towards more public spaces.

Space is very scarce in Zurich. Unused areas and brownfields are disappearing ever more and there is hardly a place that hasn’t been planned out yet. These spaces are however a very important part of urban development and neighbourhood identity. Having a space where one can get active, has the possibilities and mindset to change and initiate is a space where ideas can thrive and where needs can be expressed. We hope to incorporate these factors in a project that isn’t based on a specific locality, but to bring this mindset to the street, or more specific to parking spaces. With lots and lots of parking spaces being removed and having no actual supplement, we also think of these spaces as brownfields and they can be found everywhere in Zurich. This led us to the angle of changing streets and neighbourhoods through temporary conversion of parking spaces with a mobile architecture or spontaneous low-fidelity interventions.

The core of our concept lies in two simple, yet not easily answerable questions: What if residents could plan and co-decide the changes that are undergoing on and within their streets? How can we empower people in a Neighbourhood to change / create / occupy their "Quartierstrassen"? And how can streets, with the focus on parking spaces as model, be reshaped towards a more public appearance.

Up until now the decisions that have been made regarding public spaces are mainly done from one perspective; the civil engineering office point of view. This is surely not a completely bad thing but it poses a very important question that is: Why do we manage public space, that is as its name suggests, public from a single and very strict perspective? Couldn’t we create a more personal, lively and resilient structure if different views would be taken into consideration? Where people are not only living passively, but contribute actively to the existence of a public sphere. This is where we hope to have an effect — to change spaces that are designated for traffic and individual mobility to spaces that are designated to humans.

##### 2.1.1 Shift of perspectives

During the first phase of our project we try to disrupt the dynamics and perceptions we have of a classic street. Without much doubt we take it for granted that streets should primarily be centred around cars and parking spaces and what’s maybe even more important, that we are not in a place to use and change this semi-public space for other purposes. We aim to do that from different points of views, so we can also assess which methodology works best. This can include a model of the street that is rearranged within a game, small ideas and sketches or a direct repurposing on a parking space. The playful aspects of these approaches also aim to lower the expectation one has regarding the creation of public space.

If we look at the percentage and history of street usage we can observe that cars shouldn’t be preferred within that setting. Furthermore the street is a public space and by blocking that street with our individual goods, that is the car, we take designated public space and use it for our own individual needs. This also changes the way of how we perceive this street. A very impersonal and traffic-centred space isn’t a place we would like to stay or where we feel a certain hint of personality or ownership within the neighbourhood. All this said, we decided that it is best to start off our project by organising small actions on parking spaces and claim that space for other purposes that can also benefit a neighbourhood.

To create discourse around and legitimation for these actions, the following framework for ideating and realising change on streets is used. The first ingredient in this framework is the inclusion of the audience, as developing relevant ideas is difficult without intimate knowledge of their users. This audience can only be found in the context of the problematic street, therefore the framework has to be placed on location. At the time being, uncertainty still surrounded the nature of our result, so an instant exchange of benefits for participation is the underlying principle of interaction. After establishing discussion around our research questions, the need to document the participants’ stance and ideation is the third ingredient to creating the framework. With the word “change” contained in our concept, its promise leads to the need to develop the input into visible action, as this is the basis for gaining trust and establishing legitimacy in our actions. Using this course of action, we aim to derive a design process that distinguishes itself from the usual opacity inherent in the current system of street redevelopment.

##### 2.1.2 Local vs Urban

During the preparations of our concept we were being confronted with the question of the scope we want to work within the city of zurich. We knew that our project would have a bigger and more enduring effect if we work locally as we are able to engage with people on a more regular basis. With a city that is so diverse though, we also wanted to get a feeling of how our approach can work within different settings and neighbourhoods. After our first actions we realised that wherever we work, we have to think in a hyperlocal way. Having streets that are directly in front of the involved actors’ house, we sensed that this sense of ownership is an important key to having motivated and involved people. Even public squares and schools aren’t considered as personal space and thus the “right” to have an active part within shaping this space is very little. The space that interested us the most was the inbetween; or a semi-public space. The advantages of these, sort of unassigned, spaces are that there still is a sense of ownership but not a claim to it. This leads to a more engaged and involved audience as there is a feeling of legitimacy and responsibility. We also think of parking spaces as a part of these semi-public spaces as they are a communal good that is then later used for individual purposes. During our actions we have also witnessed that the people who lived in the house which the parking space was in front of, were often the most engaged and talkative during our stay there. This said we also realised that it can be helpful to work in a neighbourhood where we are also involved. Doing the actions near the place we live had a better effect in a way that there was more trust, relatability and also more local incidents and objectives to talk about. This led us to a concept that should be reproducible with very little knowledge and low effort. This way we achieve a change in every neighbourhood with different local actors involved.

Another problem we have encountered is the management required in the involvement of people and municipalities. With Zürich having a very high population density, the impact of democracy in decisionmaking and the distribution of finite resources for near infinite concerns consumes a considerable amount of management capacity. . If the civil engineering office plans a big bike route through the street, do the residents get to decide if they are in agreement or not? Digital tools such as “decidim” or “bikeable” offer great options to tackle these decision-making processes. A project can also gain more acceptance even if one was only involved via passive vote. These processes lack a qualitative discussion part to it though. We think that the physical representation and the co-alignment of these two realms is very important to consider. We can also observe this with the “Quartieridee Wipkingen”. They had a broad physical representation within the neighbourhood during the project and thus gained a lot of trust for the project they were planning. The digital tools they used to accompany it were a great organisational tool as it is merely impossible to manage these kinds of approaches without an additional platform. This said we also hope to incorporate this aspect and use each tool for what they can do best. Because community building, in our opinion, still happens in person and a physical form. As there are also a lot of people that struggle with digital tools we always have to keep this exclusion in mind when trying to involve as many actors as possible.

##### 2.1.3 Our role as designers

When working closely with a group of people, where we take inputs and ideas from the outside it is always important to be clear about one’s role during the project. While having a lot of joy with organising these little neighbourhood meet-ups we stated for ourselves that we want to provide a platform for people to exchange and express themselves, but also that our task is not only to mediate between the different actors involved but rather to empower and enable people to voice and realise their ideas We have an active part in presenting solutions and presenting insights through our research that enables residents to get involved within this movement without having to test everything out and get visible. We will mainly work on a manual of ways to get active and we will look at the ideas that are being provided as a suggestion that can be implemented and assessed as people’s needs. Having the slow processes in mind that interacting with multiple actors involved brings, we would like to speak through actions and prototypes rather than having a lot of meetings that can then bring forth the best solution. In the next step it is also very important to us that our process and our methods are as transparent as possible. By providing a digital platform that documents each of our steps we hope to enable and inspire other people to reproduce our approach. We also want to provide a manual that can demonstrate how one can get active and be involved within the reshaping process. As Interaction Designers our competence is heavily based on designing processes. Through documenting our project and the interplay of the different actors in mind we hope to advertise our activism in attractive form to create interest and contribute to the discussion in official entities. We imagine our prototypes and communication methods as active “things” to be talked about from both sides, putting us into the spotlight to have a ground for discussion.

In design, the attitude towards acquiring knowledge about problems and developing solutions is less traditional than in other subjects.[[18]](#footnote-17) Its prototyping methodology consists, as described by the book “Interaction Design: Beyond Human-Computer Interaction” of four stages:   
“*discover requirements, design alternatives that meet those requirements, prototype the designs so that they can be communicated and assessed, and evaluate them.”* This way of prototypes informing a next generation of prototypes is inherent in all interaction design processes, and is something that is not practised by many other disciplines. To upscale this approach into the contemporary systems of city planning would consume an exorbitant amount of resources and overextend their limited amount of resources. This “research trough prototyping methodology” therefore presents itself as one of the “unique selling propositions” our process could offer.

##### 2.1.4 Goals

Our goal is heavily based on our prototypes we provide. Having a “researching through prototyping” mindset we strive to get a sense of what’s possible in a realistic manner. We realised that it is way easier to discuss a proposal or an idea rather than an abstract theory of traffic dynamics. With this approach we are able to lower the perception of how much knowledge one must have to be involved in this process. Even a small action, such as colouring a parking space with drawing chalk, can serve as an expression of a need for more personality and aesthetic diversity within a street. Our goal is to empower people in a manner of speaking through actions that on one hand have a benefit for the street and the neighbourhood as it allows people to connect and dwell, but also to have a political component that is being expressed in a public manner. In our research we have different political bullet points we distilled as “problematic” that we would like to address. When talking about the scarcity of space we want to show how absurd the waste of space is by having all streets parked with cars and also how much relevance is given to the ability of having to park a car from a monetary aspect as this possibility is extremely cheap. We are aware that getting rid of cars within a city but is not a possible objective, but in comparison to the current situation, thinking and encouraging better solutions such as underground car parks or car sharing could lead to much improvement. The city has realised that this amount of parking spaces is clearly not necessary and thus a lot of them are being removed. Following this movement we would like to provide a direct solution to how this space can be used and substituted.

Within the framework of the many different actions and the possibilities they offered, we were repeatedly confronted with the question of longevity and manifestation. In many situations we have noticed that the motivation and willingness to create ideas is there on the part of the residents. However, since we also want to have an impact after the action, it is also our goal to develop a digital documentation tool which, together with a physical legacy (e.g. a plaque with a QR code), functions as a portrait and solution library and can thus also offer added value in the longer term. Furthermore, it is our goal to compile a manual that outlines the most important clues for actions on the street and presents many different ideas that can be carried out by oneself, with varying degrees of effort.

Finally, our aim is that the actions should always have a playful aspect, that people should also feel like carrying out the action and that this should not turn from a free weekend day into a working day.

## 2.2 Related Projects

When talking about these related projects we think it’s very important to state how self-initiated or municipal the process has been designed. Having a lot of official and heavily funded projects in cities we would also like to look at “self made” projects from cooperatives in Berlin or different brownlands in Zurich. Whilst analysing the projects we always had different questions in mind that we tried to answer. Some of the most important questions were: What has been done before? Where did the drive in the project come from? How active has everybody been involved? What long-term success has been achieved? These different criterias in mind we realised that there is a very big span on the duration of the planning processes and also the impact the different projects have had. An interesting thing to point out though is that projects that have been addressed in a financially cooperative way had the most long term effect and were resistant to a lot of changes that gentrification and urban developments have brought up.

##### 2.2.1 Brings uf d Strass

“Brings uf d Strass” is a project that was initiated by the civil engineering office in the city of Zurich. In cooperation with the “Denkstatt Sarl 3” and local residents, several streets in Zurich have been closed down for car traffic during summer vacation and furnished with possibilities to play and dwell on them. Created as a reappearing project and proving ground for participative city planning processes by the Zurich civil engineering office, the annual cycle of holding allows for a constant assessment and improvement of its iterations. But this co-creation process with local residents seems to bring a diminished flexibility for both actors, as all decisions and plans have to be sanctioned by multiple parties. This results in big lead times and the diminishing of ideas through compromises and objections. There seems to exist a strong polarisation in the city council regarding the use, budget and right to exist for this project. Interests of the car-lobby and local commerce argue about reduced revenue, are unhappy about the implication for car traffic and accuse the organising bodies of “Gambling money on some useless gamification of valuable traffic space”. They lack understanding for the declared project goal to research and prototype spaces for recreational activities in close proximity to dense living spaces.

##### 2.2.2 Self Made City

The publication “Self Made City” is highlighting different projects and cooperatives in Berlin. What was interesting to observe is that a lot of cooperatives have started to emerge from the squatter scene that were living in abandoned buildings after the “Mauerfall”. These unused spaces have immediately started to form a community that was dependent on affordable housing and that has later in cooperation with the city founded cooperatives that still make up a large part of some neighbourhoods in Berlin.

What we really like about this story is that if there’s space that has to be talked about and that in a sense belongs to everybody, communities can form and that there’s a more personal and resilient process going on. It’s also always important to talk about ownership and the longevity that this factor can have. This means that people are much more likely to get active and are being involved if they know that they are being responsible and can also decide for a designated area.

##### 2.2.3 Stadionbrache

The Stadionbrache is a project that aims to create an accessible, inclusive space for culture, gardening and dwelling on a brownfield that was previously a stadium. These interim uses are a rare sight in Zürich, as plots of land like that usually belong to holding firms that quickly work towards construction projects with mere commercial goals. The Stadionbrache is managed by a small association of locals that have an open ear for any creative project imagined by someone in need of uncommercial space. The Zurich climate festival took place there in 2019, and occasionally houses nomadic communities. A forest playgroup provides affordable daycare for children, there is a small skatepark, and in the centre of the permaculture or community gardens is a small pavilion that accommodates pizza ovens and can be used to host events. We see this project as a prime example of repurposing unproductive spaces through occupation towards a collective meeting point and purposeful existence. Unfortunately, the ruling property dynamics in Zurich threaten to extinct the wandering and existence of these spaces in Zürich.

##### 2.2.4 BeeHome

This is a project implementing the concept of non-human-centred-design into a product. It aims to provide living space for solitary bees through gamifying the process for us humans. With their online-tool, one can create a completely customised digital model of a beehome and then print out the construction plans for it or contact a local makerspace for its production. We incorporated this product as an example for public infrastructure. Even when it is not providing a direct, consumable good of exchange, it strengthens biodiversity in our city and contributes to an ecosystem around our living space. It could be the answer to our searching for more productive, innovative uses of inactive public spaces.

##### 2.2.5 WikiHouse

The WikiHouse is a project where different building blocks can be composed into a small liveable house that enables it to be stable, tested and easily buildable. The notion of offering tools and not products and having an open source mentality really appeals to us because it always has an empowering factor too. In a way of DIY Democracy the skills one learns from building and being involved into the process of a small infrastructure makes an installation or an infrastructure more resilient to changes. Because one understands the process of building it, repairing becomes easy. This leads to less resources being wasted and a longer life span. On the other hand it is also interesting how identity can be expressed with something that has been composed by oneself. Having an active part in painting or the goal of usage makes the responsibility issues of common goods less worse. Another design principle this project embraces is the one of decentralised manufacturing and management. This leads to less transportation ways and a better distribution of both power and manufacturing. 2.2.6 Decidim

Decidim is a tool for democratic processes and is heavily used in Barcelona as in other cities. The goal is to let as many people be a part of public decisions as possible and thus make every process more democratic. It is an easy to use tool and is a good example how digital applications can help make decisions in a bigger community. Trying out mini projects with decidim can also help gain a feeling of what‘s needed and wanted in a community. (...) MORE

##### 2.2.7 Quartieridee Wipkingen

The Quartieridee Wipkingen is a project that has been situated in Zurich in the district of Wipkingen. The project was realised in 2020/2021 and was a collaboration between the urban equipe the Quartierverein Wipkingen and the city of Zurich. The idea was to have a participative budget to realise ideas that have been submitted by residents. After the submitting phase each resident could vote on their favourite ideas on a digital platform. It was the first attempt on realising a participative budget in Zurich and the main goal was to find out how valuable the submitted ideas are but also which methods work best to include as many people as possible. What is interesting about the project is, that it wasn’t necessarily all about the budget that is at stake but more how one can discuss ideas in a neighbourhood and how these are gaining acceptance. The main objective we observed when talking with the urban equipe and when reading the reports was that there was a very big work input from the side of the project initiators and that the processes behind submitting and voting to then later being realised took a very long time. Another thing we observed was that it was very important to have an offline presence in the neighbourhood and that people could exchange and discuss because there was a meeting point created. The long term effect is something we couldn’t really measure within this project. As also described during our research, meeting points that include activities such as skateparks, Pétanque fields or book coffees really help to get an exchange and are way better to connect than simple parks or infrastructure. The infrastructure that has been provided though may not always act as a long term social place. Another aspect we liked though was how the discussions revolved mainly around ideas and simply by having an idea it enabled people to have a common goal that can maybe also be achieved without the funding.

##### 2.2.8 Bikeable

Bikeable is an online platform that allows registered users to post issues and discuss possible solutions regarding bike infrastructure in public space. Users have to register and can use a map with needles or a feed to explore problematic or fixed streets that others have documented. They can up- or downvote the posts to express approval or dissatisfaction with a spot or issue. In the comment section, an active discussion about possible solutions for the spots is taking place, with the Zurich civil engineering office seemingly taking part in the discussions and commenting on their awareness of and progress in tackling the issues. It is included here as an example for a project that connects physical space with a digital representation, enables a discussion about its form and organises a community around an activity to which it serves as strong voice and mediating platform to other, more influential players in the system to be improved.

## 2.3 Field Research

With our working strategy consisting mainly of “researching through prototyping”, our concept is subject to iteration, influenced by needs and learnings that we discover through our journey.

By prototyping together with actors in the field of street development, such as The “Tiefbauamt” as official institution, the “Urban Equipe” as Activists for self-empowered Initiatives, and residents as main users, we aim to gain practical knowledge on their decision-making, processes and visions. As described in our current concept, we have several questions that need to be investigated through further prototyping. The most pressing question probably was: Is there a need for intervention? / Do people reaffirm or relate to the issues we want to tackle with our project?

##### 2.3.1 Concept Validation

To answer that question, we developed a prototype to gather opinions from people on the street. Embedded into our first prototype of the “Idea Café” this was a framework that aimed at discussing and validating our concept through confrontation with people of diverse age, origin, life circumstances and modes of mobility. Passing people were offered one coffee in exchange for one idea of possible change for the street we were located in. Through these ideas, we aimed to create a discourse with each other. Explaining this exchange of goods always led to the same question: “But what do we pay with?” And: “Really, just an idea? But for what exactly?” As soon as they had our idea-card in their hands, the participants began to realise that ideation and this kind of “creativity on demand” is not as easy of a currency as imagined at first hand. We, on the other hand, did not yet have a “streamlined” answer to their last question. “Ideas for a more liveable street”, “Imagine a street without cars, what would you do?”, “Ideas for a more public street” were a few of our answers. The usual dialogue unfolded around our vision for a more liveable street with less space for car parking and more space to meet. We tried to not discuss the banning and / or necessity for cars, instead trying to bring people to contemplate a “what if-scenario”, where the logistical problem of parking spaces for cars has been solved in another way than to occupy half our streets.

One phenomena we quickly discovered was the “hyper-locality” of the Ideas. They were all strongly connected to the street our “Kafi” was situated at. Ranging from little proposed interventions to improve safety for pedestrians, to a more green street with more plants and less “sealed surfaces”. In some instances, the ideas reflected the starting point of our thought process — Occupying space that was strictly destined for cars with self-empowered interventions for more personal space. Having a like-for-like character, that contrasts the unproductive occupation with a productive occupation for more living room. The need for a truly public space, as one with the affordance to dwell and therefore participate in a public realm was voiced. Plants, comfortable seating, shielding from traffic and cars, a fountain and generally a more “public” character were listed as the most essential elements to afford the imagined roadside dwelling space.

Inevitably, the discussion of ideas gravitated to the underlying issue of car politics in cities. During our iterations we have yet to encounter a radical car owner that has no other concern than the parking of his vehicle, but some critical arguments were brought up. These Critical voices argued that the need for cars is and always will be there. Be it for reasons of convenience such as transport in bad weather, transporting personal goods, insufficient public transport offerings, or for reasons of necessity, such as limited mobility or transport of commercial goods. “You can't just take away people's cars, they are just too comfortable, and everybody is used to them” was one concern. Also outlined was the effect of parking-induced traffic, that emerges from people searching for parking spaces when the offered spaces are not sufficient.

The opponent of said opinion was found in a person stating that nobody in a city needs a car. As the Public Transport in Zürich is on such a high level of development, the solution would be to make car traffic in a city as unattractive as possible, through measures in traffic planning and taxing car use with more expensive parking spaces and road taxes.

A common ground was the agreement with our vision / assumption that streets could serve a more productive use as a true Public space instead of being occupied by unproductive infrastructure and that traffic shouldn't be prioritised within neighbourhood streets.

##### 2.3.2 Collecting Data ( from residents and passers)

In the first iteration of the “Park-Kafi” (more detailed description in the prototype chapter), we used the Idea-Card 1 (fig 777) to document the participants' ideas for action on the street. We gave these ideas a physical form to afford some value to the effort that the participants exchanged for the coffee. The card asked specifically for the description of an imagined “Re-utilisation” for an existing parking space, be it by writing or sketching. They worked great for documenting the ideas, but seemed to intimidate some people, as writing and sketching about ideas did not feel as easy for them. After assessing the content and systematic of these idea cards, we had several learnings for the next iteration. Along with the aforementioned fixation on sole ideas being decremental in initialising a time-independent discussion, the fixation of the ideas on the parking space itself seemed restricting, as the discussions usually began to include the whole street.

For the second iteration of the “Park-Kafi”, We kept the concept of our Idea-card, but widened the scope to include more surroundings. Furthermore, we wanted to expand the discussion taking place by giving people the ability to react to other people's ideas, and maybe initiate thinking with Questions (see fig 777). In hindsight, the questions asked were too suggestive, and would have profited from inviting more nuanced opinions. More so we tried to prototype a non-time based exchange of the ideas but also the answered questions. For this we had a board, where one posts his answers or ideas. The people who will then later add a card could either react with a glue dot to either like or dislike the idea or with a short answer dot that was limited in space. We mainly tested this out, because we wanted to find out how exchange can also happen on a digital platform. The learnings we had, was that the collection sparked curiosity and the ideas were looked through quite joyfully. The reaction and especially the answers were quite hard to provoke and did only work if we told them to do so. The difference there was, that the glue dots were distributed quite easily but the reactions with also writing something was something that, even if only little, had too much effort involved. We can incorporate these findings in a digital platform but we aren’t quite sure yet how to deal with the visibility of the upvotes because it may also create a certain bias of the best ideas and does not treat them objectively.

##### 2.3.3 Learning from existing Projects

*We will have a look at what in our opinion made certain projects successful and how we can profit from them. The focus point will be on the interviews we conducted and how we profited from the answers.. Furthermore we will have a look at how the methodology used in the projects added to an acceptance of the project and if so how.*

When looking at existing projects in the realm of reshaping streets, many of the co-design processes were documented poorly. This was especially the case with projects in cooperation or initiation by institutions. We tried to contact the “Tiefbauamt Stadt Zürich” to ask them questions that we were not able to answer by reading through their Website, but their answer simply was that they were not willing to allocate resources for ba-thesis inquiries. After more searching, we were able to find the contact details of a person in charge of the “Brings ufd Strass” Project. We sent them a catalogue of questions regarding the project, and to our surprise, we got an extensive answer to all of them. The questions we asked were mainly regarding their process and how they choose and work with a community. We focussed on these steps due to the lacking documentation of this part. The answers we got were not very specific. We were surprised however how flexible they seemed for the location that was chosen. The locations were based on proposals from the residents and the only criteria they needed to fulfil was that they don’t have a high traffic volume or were part of a rescue or public transportation axis. We could not find out though how these proposals have been gathered and whether it was only acquired digitally or also on site. Another part that we were interested in was the co-creation part of the design and also the feedback they got. We didn’t get a very precise answer again and were thus a bit disappointed because we didn’t know how the participatory events were organised and what they included. The feedback they got was with a polling device that was on site and asked whether the residents like the street and if they want it repeated. The usage of the street was mainly done by spatial observations. All of these approaches were very hard to assess for us because we didn’t really know what they actually included. We got the feeling that the data they collected was either done in a very quantitative or a very observing kind. We think it is great to see that the city of Zurich shows the readiness to support these projects. We could also observe how the topic was discussed in the media and how different residents reacted. The different images we could find also provided us with more ideas on how to change a street and what infrastructure this could include. We could notice though that there wasn’t a community that formed around the project and the usage of the street seemed only passive and not very event-based. We hope to find out more about this aspect in our project and it was also a part we missed.

A similar project was the Quartieridee Wipkingen. We also wrote them a multitude of questions and they offered us to answer them but also directed us to their documentation website to see if we can get them answered there. We weren’t disappointed and excited about how detailed and extensive their documentation was. It was great to see how different methods they used had different outcomes. They also worked with a digital tool and the knowledge they gained, provided great insights. Our main learnings from their process was how they documented and described their physical presence during the project. They had a multitude of events that have had a great response and helped to advertise their project. They also had a mobile bike trailer that informed about their project. This was not very successful however and it also made us realise that activities, even if small, are very beneficial to communicate and interact with people involved. The digital tool to submit ideas that they have developed also showed that there is always a discrepancy between high and low-effort submissions. On one hand it can’t be too detailed because then a lot of people don’t even start to submit ideas. On the other hand it can also be hindering if the ideas don’t have to be concrete at all. We think that they managed to hit a sweet spot by having a sketch or a photo and a small description with a proposition about the realisation.

What we really liked about both approaches is the direct feasibility and solutions they provide. This is also a point of criticism though as it needs financial resources and a lot of logistics to get the street up to a point where the project is working. Furthermore it is also very interesting to see how a lot of voices against the project have been raised. With the scale and the financial resources it poses a big target for criticism. The municipal character is also playing a role as it is tax money that is being used to finance the project. What’s interesting to observe in this context is that there was almost no media representation of the opinions of the residents. It was rather a collection of many politicians who did not live in this neighbourhood that have been portrayed. When looking at other decentralised projects such as Bikeable or Decidim we see that there is an ongoing discussion going on. This is also mainly due to the specific framework and technical challenges they pose. The distribution of responsibility is also clear. We hope to incorporate both aspects and thus have more self-initiated and resource-friendly approach to get a broader action possibility.

##### 2.3.4 Findings and next steps

This section aims to answer some questions and outline our Heading and Vision for our proceedings.

Within our research and also our user studies we realised that a lot of the projects that have been realised have been approached from a very big scope. Often there were whole neighbourhoods being rebuilt and trafficways have been directed. Even when looking at neighbourhood specific projects we think that the actions that have been taken were often too big to understand. The topics that were discussed were often on a very abstract level and have been thought of as finished projects once they were being built. We realised that discussions were always best, when we started with a specific idea that people could imagine. Later the discussions often revolved around different “bigger” topics such as traffic dynamics and ownership debates of the street. To dive into this discussion directly however has never really worked. With always providing an action whilst intervening in the streets this helps us to also always generate an idea and a “thing” to talk about.

A lot of projects that we found interesting have been built in a collaborative way. The collaboration though only happened in the first phase of the projects, where the topic of what to build has been discussed. This led to a different building process than one that was purely handled by the civil engineering office. When finished it lacked the possibility for residents to interact and change the space. This led to an impersonal space that was provided by the city and was not thought of as personal or communal space. Generally speaking we think that identity and accountability are big factors regarding resilient neighbourhoods. We often see this in cooperatives where decision making and building are going hand in hand. The way that a lot of the people see streets today however are from a very numb and inactive way. This is also caused by the fact that streets are designated to traffic and not humans. We hope to contribute to this discussion by looking more on the aspect of how public spaces can be changed in a self-initiated way. This way we hope to not only make a neighbourhood more resilient but also to connect people in a manner that is of interest for everyone. We also realised that people have a different feeling of ownership when it comes to the space that is right in front of their house. This active involvement is something we also hope to incorporate in later prototypes.

The idea revolves around a meeting space and its necessary Infrastructure. When looking at existing GZs, they are always bound to knowledge and connection to some people that are already involved in the group. Their location in conventional housing, gives them a non-inviting appearance, and all Action connected to them will be associated with and depending on their Identity.

When looking at existing projects to reshape streets, they lack the possibility of spontaneous interaction and creation, because their character is, through the long and bureaucratic planning and realisation process, inflexible. The more they are realised, the more static they become. They do not inspire participation in creation and empowered action.

We aim to solve these problems by providing a toolkit as a platform for flexible, independent and motivating action on the street. Through providing expandable shelter, this toolkit allows for weather-independent dwelling. By providing flexible furniture and infrastructure it enables the temporary reuse of the road surface for communal activities. To initialise open use and create a community around the “toolbox” start the project with several different events on regular bases that aim to connect people from the neighbourhood and inspire them to participate with their own ideas for events.

*What do we prototype next? / next steps? There are three fields to prototype / evaluate:*

# 3. Project Development

How can we convey the feeling of belonging, of having a right in the space and the security of being active ourselves? Throughout the project we were aware that many of our questions could only be tried out in the field. The creation of a concept, the value of detail and the direct feedback from different participants were the most valuable experiences that contributed to the development. We realised that public spaces are very sensitive ecosystems. Small factors often determine the success or failure of an action. Because basically, public space is a place that is highly regulated. In the Swiss system, we are not used to finding non-institutionalised structures and even less so in places like car parks, which are generally understood to have been designated for a purpose. Our main task was to transform the emerging scepticism that accompanies unexpected events into curiosity.

As already mentioned, any manifestation of infrastructure in public space is characterised by a political sphere. We, i.e. politicians and the civil engineering office, make decisions that influence the entire urban design world. This public discussion about bicycle routes, the expansion of more green spaces and the abstract talk in the media is often beyond our imagination and leaves us no option to act. Our ambition has been to make policy with things, to start discussions with direct proposals. This contributes to our vision not only to talk about the design of our streets, but also to show the possibility of taking action ourselves and to achieve a mini-democracy through the shared responsibility of a space.

## 3.1 Experiments

##### 3.1.1 Walks

The first part of being active started with us "being in space". On various walks we examined our surroundings in the sense of Lucius' Burckhardts Spaziergangswissenschaften[[19]](#footnote-18). In the process, we increasingly noticed the discrepancy between the different neighbourhoods. With the thought in mind that there is a fundamental lack of space in Zurich and that neighbourhood streets are often blocked up with parking spaces, we could hardly observe this in neighbourhoods with a very distinguished background. The greening of various gardens, for example on the Zürichberg or in Hottingen, led to neighbourhood streets that provide a lot of shade and, through the design of each garden, also acquire a personality that invites people to take a walk. The basic problem is that only a privileged upper class can enjoy enough design space. The clear allocation of the respective plot also leads to the fact that hardly any exchange takes place and thus hardly any meeting places can be found. Places to linger or live on the street were hardly to be found, as everyone already had enough space in their own garden.

As we continued our tour of Zurich, we came more and more into the well frequented commercial spaces like the “Niederdorfi” and the vicinity of the Bahnhofsstrasse in general. These spaces were very busy, but had hardly any personal components, as the entire infrastructure was managed by the city and living space was nowhere to be found.

An interesting place to observe how nomadic objects in a public space change its character to the better is the Sechseläutenplatz in Zurich. In 2014 the city decided to place a contingent of 100 chairs there, being bound together in pairs. After a year-long testing phase, they placed another 100 of them. During the first two years of the project only 9 chairs were stolen, with their paired arrangement and the heavy weight listed as the main factors for theft prevention. As their intended use targets groups, these chairs group themselves in random arrangements, seemingly reminiscing about the groups that have been dwelling there for some time. Passing them in the early morning, one is reminded in his imagination of the social gathering that happened in the arrangement a few hours before. These chairs contribute a great deal towards the public and bustling character of the square, whenever one passes the square there is at least one group of people taking advantage of the seating opportunities, except for maybe the severest of weather conditions. Apart from its proximity to the opera house, the lake and a train station, the square lacks inviting character. These chairs seem to have tackled that issue in a very effective way. A difference we have witnessed however is that this square isn’t personal and there are no residents around. Thus, there is also no infrastructure that aims to include this and the square is targeted towards short-term interaction.

During walks through the Oberstrass, Unterstrass and and Wipkingen districts, we began to wonder whether we could find the traces of people who live there?We found hardly any, no signs, no self-initiated infrastructures or even self-planted green spaces. One reason we observed was that many houses had courtyards that were not accessible and therefore not visible, but also that the street as a traffic element does not invite people to linger, since it stands for traffic, i.e. for the temporary stay as a transit zone to get to another place. Basically, the more traffic elements a space contains, the fewer people will linger there. This can also be observed in a square like the Hardplatz, which is located in the middle of various traffic axes.  
In another neighbourhood, Wiedikon, we also noticed how many streets were blocked. It was exciting to observe the concentration of meeting places on individual squares. The streets between Hardplatz and Lochergut are hardly used and also blocked, but Bullinger-, Ida- or Bruppacherplatz were full of life and people every day. One reason for this is that there is reduced traffic upcome and many cafés also offer outdoor seating, but another is that the density of single-family homes is extremely low. The many apartment buildings, missing or desolate courtyards and small flats lead to much more interaction on the street and also to its use. Another discrepancy we saw in the streets was mainly in cooperative housing estates. Rotachstrasse, for example, is in our opinion a prime example of neighbourhood design. The many green spaces, the little traffic and the component that residents of a cooperative flat stay on site much longer and also a networking within the cooperative takes place, leads to more personal components, such as garden beds or signs painted by children.   
Finally, in this exploration, we did not find a single “public“ street in Zurich that was car-free or residents-only. The blue zones were all occupied, except for the more upscale neighbourhoods, and where there were gaps, we could see them closing within minutes. Furthermore, we see more life and interaction on the street in neighbourhoods that had many cooperative buildings or housing developments. As there is more shared space at hand than with everyone having their private garden, meeting points often concentrated on a few squares. Apart from signs calling on people to drive slowly however, we did not observe any intervening activity in the public space.

One we were able to observe more neighbourhood interaction and attest a public character were several particular “Genossenschaftssiedlungen” where the somewhat private access streets were car free because of the big car park-garages specially designated for residents’ cars and not serving as traffic axis. The Resident blocks at Rautistrasse / Freilagerstrasse are a good example for that. Car access is only allowed for emergency services, goods handling, and exceptional circumstances. These Streets form courtyards that incorporate green space, trees and non-sealed surfaces. When observing the street for some moments, one sees children at play with each other, riding their bicycles and scooters, their parents talking to each other, some old people sitting on the benches, young people meeting in small groups to play Pingpong and People walking their dogs. These residential streets convey a livelihood and public character that is missing from every other street we observed in our walks.

## 3.2 Prototypes

*This chapter will outline the different prototypes in a chronological way. We are explaining why we started with a game and have then evolved to ever more physical prototypes that act within the street.*

We have already examined the dynamics of traffic and urban planning in our research. On the one hand, we were able to observe that insufficient transport connections, but also the displacement from the city centre to the agglomeration, causes a recurring vicious circle of commuting, congestion and lack of parking spaces. Another observation in our research was that many of the cars parked in car parks are not used 95% of the time. (Source) With these thoughts in mind, we wanted to explore the dynamics of a street. The fact that blue zones are a suboptimal solution for residents who regularly need a car (as there is no security for a space and long search times are included), as well as a solution that promotes traffic. We ventured to develop a tool that was equipped with game dynamics and also provided the different actors in this ecosystem with corresponding capabilities. The core question we wanted to find out was how residents would design a street and whether the number of parking spaces would be more, less or the same.

##### 3.2.1 The Game

In the first Prototype of said tool, we developed a small game to model and examine roles, players politics and interactions of street planning. We used the Calandastrasse as an example street located in Altstetten to draw a game board that could be played on. It was outfitted with a snapping grid system that could be used to place tiles (fig. 777). We created a big variety of these tiles to represent different surfaces, elements and use requirements. To reflect different entities and interests in the street planning discourse, we created role cards that the players should try to embody in their playing behaviour. On each of these cards was a goal, an ability and the number of action points available per round. These points could be spent for different moves in a round. In a first playtest the goal for the players was to cocreate a street with the tiles available. After discussions, arguments about matters, relocating and replacing each other's tiles and many compromises, a somewhat satisfying result was reached. It quickly became apparent that a lot of communication was needed to achieve the single player's goals together, as single players only have limited freedom of action to shape the whole street.

The rules, which were rigorously laid out for the first time, were not necessary in this setting and were replaced by a looser set of rules in a second version. Other aspects that struck us were the lack of location and the realistic representation of the individual elements. We did not assign a specific place of residence to the individual residents. However, the participants wanted to know very quickly where they live in order to build their own targets in front of the house and, in the best case, to have, for example, the required parking space in front of their own home. The effective size also became a problem in the definition of different walkways, because it was not clear, for example, whether one could still walk past a bench or block the path with it. Another element that led to ambiguities was the insufficient visual differentiation between drivable and non-drivable surfaces, which are particularly important for fire protection regulations. Finally, it has to be said that hardly anyone had a claim to a parking space directly in front of the flat. The other options seemed much more attractive to all participants. The possibility of having a private parking space, which remains free but is more expensive, was welcomed by all. We could also observe the same assumption in later surveys. We could directly witness how different the outcomes became if the residents had different needs and have been given more power than the civil engineering office. The more restrictive we became with the possibilities given, we saw the streets get ever more similar. An interesting part was that nobody wanted a completely car-free street. One aspect that was missing for us personally was that of activity. Since this component has a very strong social as well as democratic side, it is just as important for the design and resilience of a neighbourhood.\*

##### 3.2.1 The Idea-Café

As already briefly discussed in the research Chapter, our second prototype presented itself as the so-called “Idea-Café”. The concept behind it was simple: Setting up a coffee machine, as well as various chairs and tables in a car park and inviting people to coffee in exchange for an idea to improve the neighbourhood. The preparation started with many logistical issues. Where is electricity sourced? How is the coffee machine and furniture transported to the site? How many seats are provided? We were able to solve these problems by choosing a location close to our place of residence. Another 150 metres of cable helped us. The second approach we had to investigate was the interaction with us, but also with the cashing in of ideas. In the beginning, we assumed a capitalist attitude that more elaborate coffees need more ideas to be redeemed, but we had to throw this overboard relatively quickly, because many people also liked to stop just to discuss and didn't want coffee at all. The next step was to design the idea cards on which the ideas could be sketched and described. The description was very loosely formulated and allowed for any format. In addition, we made a display wall on which various information about us, but also about our project, could be seen. This exchange also acted as an exhibitor for the actions’ slogan: “Ein Kafi für dini Idee”.  
One attitude we took to heart at the beginning of the organisation is that our actions should always add value for the neighbourhood. We achieved this quite well by creating a meeting point and free coffee. Furthermore, we did not only want to discuss the abstract dynamics of urban planning, but to immediately evoke a proposal with our own ideas that would serve as a basis for the discussion. This personal input of one's own idea worked very well. We could see this in the different discussions we had on the one hand with people who entered an idea and on the other hand with people who just stopped and discussed briefly. The former discussions were often very varied, as the suggestions were also very different. These ranged from an ice field to a Tiny House in a car park and inspired the vision of the participant, so that often several ideas were submitted. The discussions we had with passers-by, however, often revolved around the necessity of parking spaces or the generally bad bicycle traffic in Zurich.  
We could observe that there were a lot of ideas, but few of them really knew where to start with the implementation. However, the aspect that we could observe best was that a thought process was started through their own involvement with the topic, which was not necessarily guided by us and thus also enabled a freer approach to the topic. The feedback we received was actually exclusively positive. However, we noticed that our argumentation for the project was not as stringent as we would have needed to communicate our concept effectively. “What will your action develop into?” was a frequently asked question that was difficult to answer for us. Usually we would describe our areas of interest and our planned methodology.   
We realised that confronting ideas with the public space is always a good “reality check” to make yourself clear again how the topic is framed and whether your concept pitch works out for non-experts. However, the organisation of the whole action was very time-consuming and took us at least a week, as we also had to evaluate and discuss everything.

The next step in this process was a first validation and comparison of different actions in different settings. This also helped us to analyse where there is still room for improvement and on which factors this depends. The first “Idea Café” took place on a beautiful Monday afternoon during the school holidays. The people we encountered most frequently were pensioners or parents who were out with their children. The second iteration of the “Idea Café” took place on a Tuesday afternoon in a cloudy and cold atmosphere. There were hardly any people out and about and the climate was not conducive to sitting outside for any length of time. Other changes we made were the introduction of questions and a board on which ideas could be posted. The aim of this was to try out a first form of time-independent interaction, as in a democratic discussion process not all participants can always take part at the same time. The basic idea of this making visible worked well and triggered a certain curiosity. The questions we had formulated (What do we still need the car for today? And Where can we still find space in Zurich?) were answered many times. However, the wording was very suggestive and even if many answers were good, the opinions went in the same direction and therefore didn't really provide an explanation or serve as a basis for discussion. Another important discussion component is the location and the walk-in audience that we can address over the course of an afternoon, as otherwise we would not reach a critical size to generate an exchange. On the other hand, new participants were schoolchildren who were delighted by the absurdity of the installation on their way to school. Unfortunately, the serving of coffee was not the biggest attraction for this target group. The ideas we received were nevertheless enriching and appealing in their simplicity, as they were easy to implement. The two actions were certainly a good starting point to get a feeling for the needs and dynamics of a neighbourhood. However, there was often a lack of perspective and the prospect of effective change or demand. This was partly due to the timing of our process, but also because we were not yet able to offer many “realistic” implementations, apart from the “Idea Café”. We were also aware that we had not yet built a proper contact point or public platform where interested people could find out about the next action or our vision. The creation of a website and a social media channel was therefore the next concern we tackled.

##### 3.2.2 The “Pop-Up” Repair-Workshop

The second Experiment we conducted originated from the “Idea Café”. After much talking about improving the streets, we felt that action was needed. One Saturday, we went out to repair peoples bicycles. For this iteration, we decided to not place the experiment on a parking space, but in proximity to a well-frequented bike route through the city, as none of the close parking spaces had the attributes we felt necessary for the success of our experiment. The only unoccupied parking spaces were flanked with two big lorries that restricted our visibility to passing people, and in close proximity to a driveway that we did not want to block with our expanding action. We brought some usual consumables, two repair stands and a small convolute of Tools. In some distance from our work area, we put up our information board with a description of who we are and what our goals are. When approached by someone with their bike, we offered them a basic check and the necessary repairs. Generally we would not perform all the repairs for them, but guide the participants through our checklist and help them with performing the repairs themselves. We charged them only for the price of the consumables, but most of them insisted on some Tip. Once again, the exchange deal for our work was the filling of a questionnaire we prepared *(reference image / research chapter)* with the goal to get them to reflect on the use of public spaces and gather data on their perceived comfort in said spaces. When passing by, People would usually stop by our infoboard to read it, and then come to us to show their bike or just talk to us. In general the feedback was of positive nature. *(... write down some of the feedback)* The main rush came after lunchtime and both of us were busy with fixing bikes and talking to people the whole afternoon. In that situation of us being busy and more and more people dropping in, some of the people that had just repaired their bikes started to engage with people that were waiting. In some cases they were able to solve the problem without consulting us. This shows one of the dynamics that we aim to create with our work: not only providing the service itself, but generally a platform where people can connect and help each other that would otherwise probably never have met. Another observation of importance was the arrival of a bigger friend group of ours. After getting their bike fixed, they decided to spend another hour sitting by, playing card games and talking to us. At that moment, The nature of our action went from public to exclusive, as passing people felt the connection of our group and assumed that we were busy with them, not wanting to disturb our more intimate group dynamic. This is something that we need to manage better in future iterations, as it lessens the interactions with people we want to reach with our actions.

In the end the action was very successful. We felt like we have reached a lot of people and could create a meeting space that had a part within a community. The issues we had were again the regularity and the infrastructure. This is something that can be easily improved if needed. We were also surprised with the change of people that wanted to spend time there in relation to the actions on parking spaces. It was the first time we really had enough space and weren’t scrambled up in a lot. We tried to improve this aspect by creating additional shielding from the street and an extension on to the sideway.

##### 3.2.3 Designing “Public” Furniture

Learning from all our observation walks, actions and interactions with people on the street was the need to create a meeting point. Not only in its social form but in a physical form that would invite people to stop, reconsider their urgent transportation behaviour and dwell. Be it only for a moment or the time an interaction with others takes. Being one of the three crucial factors that afford life on a street, it seemed worth investigating through some prototypes. Although a big variation of this public furniture exists and many elements of public or private architecture can be used to rest, dwell and meet, the proximity to streets seems to devalue them or even prohibit their installation. Considering ideas that have been done already, we had several goals for our own prototype: Our furniture should use and transform road infrastructure that has a different purpose. It should invite not only passive interactions but provide flexibility and playfulness in use. It could incorporate data collection about its usage, frequentation and traffic around it. Providing flexibility in its configuration, it can be adapted to different surroundings, activities, and locations. It has nomadic character, it invites movement and migration to a new location and purpose. Through its movement, it explores different streets and their need for a living or meeting space.

The approach chosen for the observation of the furniture was the following: passing them by bicycle several times in a day to assess their use and the location we have chosen for placing it. At some location deemed fitting, we decided to eat lunch outside, in proximity to the furniture piece, and observe its use over an hour.

The first of these pieces of furniture was a swing, designed to be hung from traffic signs. Built from a wooden board, some steel wire and some hardware, it embodies all the attributes that we aimed to fulfil with our furniture piece. For its testing, we decided to hang it in different locations that seemed suitable. Our aim was to understand and observe how playful infrastructure differentiates itself from static infrastructure like benches, that can be found at several places. Once set up we noticed that when walking by the infrastructure certainly grabbed people’s attention. Almost everybody paused for a brief moment but almost nobody interacted and actually got on the swing. The few examples we had were from children and 2 adults only. We realised that a big part of its purpose and the reaction it provoked was the absurdity of the object itself. The urge to come back and actually use the object would have to happen with another purpose and another timeframe however. We were confirmed in our assumption that a certain infrastructure always proposes a purpose and that depending on its purpose people can act within a space. For our actions this means that the infrastructure provided also always has the perception of purpose and because enacted non-permanently, the time-factor is ever more important. This said we realised that whenever provided infrastructure will even if scarcely be used. The absurd character it has will disappear however and lose its power. A nomadic infrastructure would help with that aspect. Furthermore the aspect of community is very hard to achieve solely by infrastructure and would not suffice to reach our goal. That’s why we decided to prototype an infrastructure that would have more responsibility involved.

##### 3.2.4 Public Infrastructure with Hydroponics

Public infrastructure as we know it with benches, public toilets or bike pumps are very consistent in their appearance and often serve a purely practical purpose. Consisting mostly of low-maintenance, solid objects, almost immune to vandalism and passive in their nature. Nevertheless they are, in many cases, used more frequently and for longer durations than the average car standing in a parking space. (add source?) When considering different options for a more productive use of space in streets they quickly spring to mind. But is not, at some time, a saturation in the demand for these passive infrastructure elements reached? What if the benefit the shared infrastructure provided was not of passive but of active nature? Through mutual benefits, public infrastructure can transcend the indifference that passive elements face. This was the basic principle for selecting action ideas, and led to the development of a prototype concept for shared public infrastructure that invites care and the building of a relationship to the piece of infrastructure. The first iteration we chose as fitting for the set criteria was a hydroponic plant system (instructions by Scarponi) to easily reproduce and grow plants for distribution in a neighbourhood. This system was built in a workshop format on a parking space, together with interested residents. We installed it on a traffic sign guarding a parking space and observed its use for several weeks. To explain its purpose and our set rules for participation, we attached laminated instructions on the backside. (...) We didn’t really know if someone was taking care of the saplings because the hydroponic system is very self-sufficient. However the saplings got taken away from time to time and this had a benefit for some people. After the harvest they haven’t been replaced and we faced the problem of responsibility again. This led us again to the question of purpose and how the saplings should be available for everybody

##### 3.2.5 The Mobile Platform (Anhänger-Thingy)

With several actions organised and issues in the logistics presenting themselves each time, thinking about better solutions began. Together with the learning about the “meeting points” and how furniture/infrastructure influences these we began to work on a concept for a more mobile and flexible solution that would provide the modularity and transportation capability to organise action on the street in an easier fashion. As the concept evolved more into Action and empowerment. As we considered different ways of manifestation (...) The idea of a mobile meeting point as a metaphorical toolbox to reuse a parking space for a short timeframe emerged. Research for suitable bike trailers pointed to the swiss company “Polyroly” and the german variant called “Hinterher”. The first visualisation created incorporated the Polyroly trailer, as they seemed to provide the most flexibility with adding structures and we knew one of the founders personally. In further inquiries about this, the opportunity presented itself to collaborate with a GZ (Affoltern) for the creation of a customised trailer, as they were looking for a solution for the same problems we encountered. They had already decided on a Hinterher trailer and bought a big transportation box with it, but quickly realised, that this simple box was not suitable for their intended use. During the process, this trailer and its amenities were reimagined several times, adapting to the shift of priorities in the concept. Central elements to fulfil its mission are, at this point, the following:   
 A sheltering element, to protect participants from weather influences and separate the space from the street and passing cars. However, this sheltering element must not impede the public character of its hosted event.  
A working surface, as hosted events tend to be of productive nature, having ample table space proved to be an important necessity.  
Secure and flexible storage compartments to transport all materials and utilities needed and imaginable.  
Furniture, as it serves as a meeting space, should be able to provide seating and placement possibilities to accommodate several people, and whatever activity they are occupied with. This furniture should be dismountable (for transportation reasons), sturdy (to accommodate many use scenarios) and weather resistant.  
Size and weight, as its intended staging area are parking spaces, it should comfortably match the shorter side of a parking space to avoid restriction of traffic and creating dangerous situations. The whole system has to be as light as possible to allow for easy and hassle-free logistics.

Before building a solution from scratch, validation of the need for this product was deemed necessary. As one of our mentors had worked on a similar project, the opportunity presented itself to loan and test a cargobike from her providing a setup that checked at least some of the set criteria for the trailer. It had a solution for shelter in the form of fold-out elements that were covered with tarp, ample storage space and fitted onto a parking space. We used this vessel as the basis for our “Velowerk 2.0” (fig 777) in combination with a self-built table system (fig 777) that can be expanded and adapted to a seating solution as well. In comparison to the solution we used before, a large-sized cargobike with minimal organisation system, this vessel allowed us to prepare our action in a more efficient way, be more organised during our action and had a more organised and purposeful appearance. It balanced against its stage, the usual street filled with a row of parked cars. One possible point of critique that can be made is the use of the usual blue tarp used for all lorries and car trailers, that did not have a remarkable character in a street setting. Another thing was the missing work surface that we had to use our collapsible table for, which led to us having to eat, drink and write on the road surface / between greasy bike tools.

##### 3.2.6 Aesthetics of Invitation

When trying to convey a message or a statement in public spaces, one thing that receives very little active consideration seems to be the aesthetics of appearance. They play an essential role in the invitational attributes of any object, action or concept. When done wrong they might repel visitors and interactions, but when done right they integrate seamlessly into the positive subconscious impression a passing or interacting person might take with them. Through varying the appearance of our project, we gained some insight into what factors influence what behaviours and reactions. To reflect that, we tried to gather some of the questioning and reflection behind the different elements of our actions.

I. “Appearance of location” How do passing people act? Is a considered location well frequented? What activity are passing people carrying out? Is there vegetation around? Are there many cars passing? What weather and time of day is it? Are there recreational spaces in close proximity? Are there commercial players closeby?

II. “Appearance of dwelling objects” After seeing an activity taking place and assessing their interest in it, people may start to consider the objects in its surrounding and reflect their use and invitational character. Is there seating provided? Does it look comfortable? Is there some kind of separation element to communicate spatial separation from the street and cars? Is there no shadow to be seen in the entire street?

III. “Appearance of concept” When interest persists, how is the concept communicated? Does it happen solely through spoken word, or can interested people read some more? Is argumentation consistent? Is the communication happening through examples, questions, or refined argumentation? Does the written communication represent the action? Do you pose questions for passing readers? Is the argumentation for a point suggestive, rational, or even speculative?

IV. “Appearance of performance” After the furnishing and in conjunction with the dialogue around an action, a central element of consideration should be the appearance of interactions in the parking space as staging ground. What interactions are considered normal in the vicinity of your action? How do you approach people? What do you offer them for their partaking? Do you start with Questions or let them consider your static communication first? How many people do you want to interact with simultaneously? Is appearing as an individual, a group of interest or an institution the right choice? How is legitimacy communicated and do you pretend or disclose your affiliations?

As the project progressed, its communication of strategy and visual appearance was reworked several times. At some point it became evident that our concept was transcending the small frame a parking-space provides, we repositioned our identity away from the “Parkwerk” with the “WerkStadt”-name and a more open, inviting and less parking-space focussed visual appearance. This was a point at which we reconsidered the whole communication. We replaced the blue with more colours, to represent several aspects of our concept. We kept the arrow as a graphic element but added some more that were related to our topic. The typeface “Univers” with a very serious and official attitude was swapped for a more neutral and slightly playful “Cinetype” that had a more individual character. In combination with these elements, the concept was to use slightly provocant questions as claims to bring the readers’ attention towards the content.

## 3.3 Results (incl. user tests if applicable)

Introduction

##### 3.3.1 Structure of information

Whilst organising the actions we always had an information board, some postcards and a flyer at hand. Their aim was to serve as a physical memory and further information without always having to talk directly to us. We realised that the wording within these small information paragraphs is very important and that if there is a small uncertainty we got directly asked about it. During our process we have changed these descriptions a few times and have encountered different reactions to them. We could observe that in a latter phase of the project where we were already quite sure of what our final project will look like, we had fewer discussions about the overall concept and improvements that it could benefit from as it was already seen as a finished project and thus no changes would be possible. Most reactions were just a heads-up or a sign of agreement but we struggled to start the lively discussions again we had in the beginning of the project. This said, we realised that it is always important to set a goal of what we want to achieve within an action and what should be discussed and how we can frame our information accordingly. We have stated that the information that is on our website for example should be quite concrete and already offers a vision and a concept that can be applicable. This decision has been mainly made because we have realised that it is a very big difference if you have people in front of you that are representative of the project or if one is let alone solely with the information. Uncertainties will thus, if not clarified, mostly lead to a negative experience and remembrance of the project as its only circling around the “talking about it” but not really doing anything about it. => from very concrete to stimulating discussions  
Regarding our information material we could also observe how people interacted and cared about the material we provided. We could especially see this when we were asked about further actions and the next time we plan to do something. Often we told them that they can take a flyer with them to see our website and to inform themselves about the next action but hardly anyone wanted to take a flyer with a lot of information. Even though we designed the flyer in a way that it can also serve as a poster we had way more success with the postcards. We realised that the aesthetics and the Corporate Identity of our project is also very important as people are more likely to take the postcards with them if they like the design. In a project that’s also circling around identity visuals always play a key role. Furthermore we realised that instagram isn’t necessarily the best communication platform for such personal actions. Most people we have encountered and who took part were either pedestrians or people that we have told about the action. In this sense our digital tools didn’t really work as an advertisement but more as an information platform and the advertisement happened more on a word of mouth basis.

##### 3.3.2 Manual/Fibel

Unbedingt introduction.

The aspects of empowerment, scalability and also reproducibility are an important part of decentralised systems. The ability to act independently from infrastructure and technological or specific knowledge is crucial when wanting to achieve this dynamic. However, we are aware that only by providing the knowledge and the steps to achieve a certain product doesn’t necessarily is enough. We are thus careful when talking about accessibility and inclusivity because one still needs the social and temporal conditions to actually act. It also doesn’t ask the question if the product is actually valuable and well designed; it just provides the ability of realisation. People who follow our manual thus become the manufacturer of an idea. Once set up as a manual it isn’t a product that either works or doesn’t, it is a concept that is constantly evolving and thus needs to be adaptable to change and different circumstances. Our project is evolving around people and a system that’s constantly changing. We can’t look at it in a way of a perfect solution or even a finished working product. The way of interacting within a city is never set in stone. That’s why the manual we created is seen as an additional tool to enable our concept to get tested by different people and by getting criticised, praised or discussed evolves in its nature.

Our manual consists of different steps and focuses on acting in a small and enjoyable way within one’s street or parking space. The framework it provides is described later in this chapter. We knew pretty early that a manual will be necessary if we want to have other people involved. Due to a feeling of security but also as a point to start it should provide the possibility to have a part within the process and also enlarges the community and the statement of the project. In the beginning we asked ourselves how extensive this manual should be and how far into the reshaping process it would intervene. Because we worked locally within our street we thought that it should almost include every step as we realised that a certain connection to a space really helps with engagement. We have then realised though, that our project is not revolving around planning a whole street from ground up but activating spaces and generating discussions and testing out ideas to see how and why certain actions work and others maybe don’t. This is best done with a multitude of different actions and an assessment framework that can categorise the different aspects and also show its strengths and respectively its weaknesses. We have thus decided on two different parts within our manual that is the organisation of an action and the reconditioning it accompanies.

We start off the manual with the definition of a goal that one wants to achieve within their neighbourhood. We framed this goal in a way that it doesn’t necessarily point to a direct solution but is more about what soft goals (more interaction, more green, more repairing) are important. We encourage the reader to stroll through their neighbourhood and focus on how people move, where they meet and at what time which place is coming alive or would have the potential. We made the decision to start off with this method as we have experienced that the time and location of an action can completely shift the dynamics that arise. During our iterations we did some actions multiple times, once at a different location and once at a different time. The success and the number of people we have reached has differed a lot, so has the group of people that approached us. We realised for example that during school holidays there are much less people around and a lot of the kids are away. On the other hand If one is organising an action during a weekday the people that are taking part normally have more time as they are often retired or have a day off. On a weekend the diversity of people is much broader but people normally have less time and the action is more crowded. At the end of this chapter we suggest different locations and examples of actions that have already happened to provide an impression of what could be possible and thus lowers the expectation and motivates as it presents a vision. We did this with every step and at the end of a chapter there are always examples or tools needed visualised.

After this first evaluation we continue with the action part. Within this chapter we also provide examples and actions that can just be done and are thus quick and easily doable. However we believe that different circumstances also need different solutions. That’s why we start with an analysis of components that these actions include. The first one is the aspect of outside-participation. It is important to evaluate the needed requirements to take part within the activation and based on these factors it also determines how inclusive, successful or crowd-intense it is. Furthermore one can take precautions and for more time-intensive workshops a registration may be needed. The factors we determined were:

Time; how much time do I need to spare to take part? This also determines the weekday, the framing and the announcement one can prepare.  
Infrastructure: What do I physically need to take part? This can be a bike to fix or a garden to set up a small herb patch that can be created. When being very infrastructure specific as e.g. the “Pop-Up” Repair station, one can also combine the different actions and offer a “Pop-Up” Repair Café to counterbalance this specificity.  
Skills: What do I need to be in control of to take part? Skills are a very big part of the different actions and are the ones that vary the most from person to person. It can be a language that must be known, a basic physical requirement or also the ability to use digital devices. These skills range especially within different neighbourhoods and it is always best to provide an additional explanation if uncertain or if one wants to reach the largest diversity of people to choose a skill needed that isn’t specific. Within the idea Café e.g. we chose sketching as a tool that has the most common denominator.

The aforementioned aspects are a guideline that determines whether or not someone can even take part in an action or an infrastructure provided. However they don’t cover the means of motivation. Within this section we go more into detail about aspects of invitation, preparation and certification. These factors determine whether or not an action has the potential to be repeated but also how eager people are to participate. It’s always best to try to really put great work into these components to get as many people as possible to participate. The only thing to keep in mind are one’s resources. This can become problematic if there is a certain skill or infrastructure, such as coffee making, bike-repair stands or chairs and tables needed. When such an action arises it is best to plan a longer time-span as it allows for more flexibility for people to also come back at a time less busy. The elements we determined within this scope are:

Invitation; We have realised that it is very important to always have a component of invitation. This can either be a coffee, an offered service or also a component that one can interact with. Its purpose is to serve as an easy entry point and to make it easy to start an approach and a conversation. Another part that is nice to keep in mind is the aspect of absurdity as it offers a direct topic to talk about and also catches people’s attention. When doing an action on a parking space normally that’s absurd enough.

Added value; Being active within a street for an action is always also an occupation of space. This occupation should somewhat be legitimised. In an earlier chapter, we criticised the occupation of public space for an individual need and thus it’s important to keep in mind that the solution we strive for should be accessible and not turn into a simple protest or undiscussable event.

Play; A question we have asked ourselves a lot was what benefit it would bring the people that, apart from us, organise the events. The easiest way to bring people together is a time- and location based activity. This activity doesn’t necessarily have to be a game, but a playful character helps to get people involved. This can be a small part such as a dice as a tool of randomness or a board with model figures. This can especially be useful when working with ideas or a questionnaire.

Longevity; This quite obvious but in our early stages often forgotten component circles around a simple question that is. How does anyone know that we have been there and what stays when we’re gone? The longevity is something that got ever more important in the latter phase of our project where we have asked the question how to collect and distil the actions that have been organised in a way that the documentation can be guided into a somewhat target-oriented direction. It is also important though that the people that have participated are always able to take something with them that also serves as a manifestation. We have solved this problem on one hand with a website where every action is being documented and noted. On the other hand we leave small plaques wherever an action has taken place that also leads to our website and serves as a memory for the action.

The last chapter of the manual is primarily revolving around the documentation aspect. This will be explained more thoroughly in the chapter “Data processing”. What we could rely on while writing the manual was that there were already a lot of frameworks out there. This was especially helpful regarding legal restrictions or other encounters with authorities as this is a very annoying and time-intensive process to find out. We hope to add to the discussion of creation within urban spheres and are tuned to find out how and where we can improve and learn after our first users.

##### 3.3.3 Data collection

The most discussed aspect in our concept certainly was the notion of “longevity” and the impact our actions have on a street in a longer term manner. Although we might consider the street as a public realm and take the liberty to disrupt and change that space, our research and talking to other, similar actors has shown that the civil engineering office has a different mindset in that regard. Additions to existing public infrastructure like benches and objects that occupy paths get removed rather quickly. Any modification to the existing traffic signage on a road surface is seen as an offence, and will quickly be cleaned away. The argument of safety concerns about infrastructure on a street could be seen as a reason, but it seems to guard its sovereignty about shaping public spaces rather offensively. To install any object or signage on a street with the goal of its permanent existence in that place proved to be a difficult undertaking. This led to all our ideas for leaving behind an “impression” being deemed difficult to achieve by ourselves. Be it the painting of objects and information on the road, or the installation of miniature representations of objects anywhere. Beginning to consider other, more hybrid solutions, such as maintaining a collection of digital traces seemed to be a much more feasible option and would provide a benefit in regard to networked documentation and a less physical journey of discovery for our actions on the street. Digital mapping tools include contribution-based geotagging functionalities that allow users to create tagged information entities to represent businesses and places in reality. These data points can be rated by other users, host photos of the place and allow a linking of websites. They begin to be shown to every user, depending on the reviews they receive and other factors the algorithm considers in selecting information. Using this information framework, we were able to quickly document our action in the digital realm and incorporate a collection of text data from other visitors. Adding a qr code to our infoboard with a link to our actions entry was deemed the easiest solution for allowing people a digital contribution. These review texts could, for example, contain just that — short testimonials of people that visited us. Possibly, they could contain ideas for the locality that our action took place, or they could be used to create a more constructive and lasting discussion about the use and management of streets in the city of Zürich. They could serve as the digital equivalent to our meeting spaces on location, and develop a similar dynamic as the “bikeable” online platform that creates discourse about missing or problematic bike infrastructure. Through uploading their own action inspired by ours, an ecosystem of inspiration and reiteration could begin. to play the devil's advocate, this digital realm brings the downside of problems with inclusion. When testing this concept, many participants did not possess the devices or digital competences to access this realm. One could argue that the reason for this might have been the location we chose, but nevertheless it proved to be an essential flaw to this idea. But when considering the user behaviour of digital natives on digital mapping tools, we observed a phenomena that could be described as “digital strolling”, with journeys of discovery happening in the realm of the digital map, with the goal of entertaining oneself through reading other peoples opinion on places and things in reality. This phenomena could lead to an expanded reach in the digital “public space” and weigh up the accessibility problems we face in the interfacing of both.

##### 3.3.4 Data processing

The considerations laid out in the preceding section work as individual solutions. But when implementing them into our project, there appear some weaknesses or dead ends by the nature of the solutions we may realise them in. The digital mapping service we used to store our information allows for hosting and discovery but lacks the context of our concept, idea communication and through that the inspirational quality for possible visitors. This could be solved by linking to a digital appearance that collects all the “locations” into one list, provides a more streamlined documentation to coherently explain our ideas and thinking process, and links to the possibility to lend our vehicle and access all our gathered knowledge in the manual.  
Serving as one of our “final products”, this platform is aimed towards players in our target audience. The main goal with this digital appearance is to serve as an information- and exchange-platform for the community that engages with our project and activism for more public streets. In a more far-reaching and speculative goal, it could be used as argument and leverage point for a constructive discourse with the civil engineering office and the city's municipalities towards a changed attitude and less lethargy in project development and change. It should mainly act as an advertisement for our “mobile”, the idea of creating action on the street and our manual that allows people to easily reproduce the essential parts of our process. In a similar way to the “bikeable” online platform, we considered prototyping and implementing a user-contribution based posting solution to allow them documentation of their own action. (....)

##### 3.3.5 The WerkStadt Platform

(...) (see 3.2.5, the mobile platform)

# 4.Conclusion

Introduction Again state our goals and how/if we have achieved them. Focus on learnings.

Working in, around and across the street is a diverse and very complex matter. The many actors involved pose a great challenge and so it is difficult to recognise the levers in an urban ecosystem. On one hand, we were fascinated by the similarities to game mechanics and on the other hand by the almost endless possibilities to act, intervene and discuss. Since a city consists of a multitude of different individuals, it is just as difficult to find uniform problems as it is to find a uniform solution. We quickly realised that the possibility to act can only happen locally and directly. An approach that is to be applied to an entire neighbourhood or a city did not seem appropriate in such a situation. It would immediately lead to an exclusion, in which a decision-making group would be created for organisational and time reasons. This also led to the fact that we decided against a project that is to be located in service design and presents a “planned out solution” of hypothetical nature at the end. We want to show the diversity of ideas and present the system of a street as diverse as it actually is. This happens primarily when people meet and discuss together. Realising this was our main goal in the second part of our thesis project.

In the end we happened to work in a “semi-public” realm where actions are being organised by us but participation and self-initiation by other parties are allowed to thrive. We realised that this work in the public sphere is stressful and working outside the comfort zone of known procedures inevitably leads to insecurities arising. We think that a lot of people that will be part of the project and do not work on an institutional level will experience a similar “stage fright”. With time, these insecurities will diminish but still they still influence part of the process. The reassurement a community provides can be helpful in that situation because it gives a certain legitimacy and thus boosts confidence and eliminates insecurities. We have realised though that when being surrounded by a lot of people that we know, there was a big decrease in the number of pedestrians that approached us. The project seemed to get more stagnant once the first few actions took place and tried to get more people involved in taking part in the project. We realised that, working with and within a community, processes really take a lot of time and that three months pass swiftly in these process cycles. When proposing change to a situation that has been unchanged for decades workin on a permanent level proves difficult. At this point our, previously seen as a weakness, aspect of working in a nomadic and temporary way turned out as valuable precondition as it allowed for quick testing and collecting feedback. without anyone being directly confronted with the feeling that decisions have been made without them.

The next step was to implement a functioning system of long-lasting documentation. We experimented with different possibilities such as maps, pictures and texts to record the actions that took place. The most important thing we learned from this was that a digital platform automatically leads to exclusion. Another finding was that a localisation of all ideas is an important part of the discussion and that the proposals gain momentum with their concretisation. This combination of imagining one's own ideas and reflection on how their implementation could happen was the most motivating aspect we could observe. Developing the ability to realise some of these ideas, even if only on a temporary basis, became the focus of our work. With our trailer we were able to create a tool that would allow quick realisation and testing. The cooperation with the GZ was a lucky coincidence, as it enables the “WerkStadt” to live on beyond the timespan of our thesis project.

## 4.1 Contribution

Introduction

“Getting into the field” and “Collecting your own data” is a common denominator in interaction-design practices. It is a way of getting into touch with different fields in a quick and efficient manner to gain an understanding of a challenge or topic one is confronted with. It is most frequently used when getting in touch with a target group and laying out a concept for a solution and the project that is being worked on. Especially during our research phase we have encountered many people and were present within the ecosystem of a neighbourhood and surrounding public space. In this phase we gained important knowledge on topics that people were worried about or needs they mentioned during our dialogue. Whilst having discussions with multiple people from different neighbourhoods in Zurich we realised that these topics and needs were often circling around very specific problems such as a missing traffic mirror or small conflicts between different actors with different interests. We believe that the methods we have used and the knowledge we gained prove to be useful for the different parties involved. Especially a civil engineering office or other municipal institutions can profit from choosing an approach similar to ours. Because with every street they rebuild, new challenges will arise, originating from new people with different circumstances and demographics. Around these challenges, a project has to evolve through inclusion of surrounding influences and concerns. Circling back to the points first mentioned in this paragraph, our approach of working with user studies and cultural probes proved very successful on a small scale, and could be very beneficial for the outcome of bigger projects as it allows gathering qualitative data in a quick and applied manner. As we have realised in our research, different approaches and perspectives in studying the implementation of solutions are essential to achieve a situational overview within a city and can aid in detecting problems and prioritising different solutions in the creation of public spaces. When working with a neighbourhood and a community the personal interactions and honesty in the feedback prove to be the most effective way of collecting criteria and assessing possible success of interventions.

In the duration of our process we have dealt with being active and producing knowledge in two ways. One is the aforementioned methods developed towards gathering data and using these methods to get an understanding of the dynamics within a street. The other path that we have explored is, of practical nature, with an active and empowering impact on residents. With this path, we have prototyped different possibilities of being active within a public space and what their impact has been. We have used these insights to create a “manual” as a framework for activism on the street. With this manual, we strive to empower residents to develop and claim ownership of space in a way that is not dependent on the authorisation of municipal institutions and their processes. This gives citizens the ability to have an active part in shaping a street — not only with their opinion and their vote but also through actions and small interventions. Within this framework we have designed a way of gathering this information and collecting them into a compilation of different conversions that one can discuss in a “Dingpolitisch” manner. Whilst composing this manual and also testing it out with different people we have gained insights in how to frame a project that people are willing to participate in and have fun whilst doing it. This included playful components, a sense of community and helpfulness towards each other, but also the logistical challenges such an action poses that have to be as low as possible. In conclusion, a lot of assumed opinions and ideas have to change once an actual prototype or implementation has been proposed and manifested. This fast way of assessing the quality of an idea had two side effects. On one hand it proved whether or not an idea can be realistically implemented or has the potential to really strive. This led some ideas to quickly die and them not resurfacing again in the discussion with the residents. On the other hand, once an idea has been sketched, situated and nearing its realisation, we saw how the excitement grew rapidly in everyone and it really sparking the motivation that is necessary for our idea of an inclusive, empowered community to form and act. Manifesting this into a physical “toolbox” with our bike trailer, we tried to enhance this framework even more as it allows for even quicker testing and serves as a vessel in whose framework this can happen. By connecting the manual with an object that participants can recognise, we give them the ability to gain trust in the actions that happen and the actors behind it. The ability to rent the trailer through the GZ allows motivated participants to act independent from us and by providing the manual as open source-instructions, act completely independent from any institution.

There were a lot of people that approached us and spent quite a long time sitting by and enjoying the interactions. May it be to discuss our concept, just to stay a little while and talk about what is bothering them, or just to meet new people. Through that, we realised that we created public infrastructure that seemed to function on its own, without a necessary connection to our matter. Our action seemed approachable in nature and did not force people to talk to us about politics or participate actively in our action. They might have had the urge to talk or to enjoy a space with public character. These encounters proved very relevant on a social level and confirmed our assumption that the street as a public sphere benefits from this interaction and personality. This aspect is something we hope to get further feedback from the GZ as they are very specialised in social work.

## 4.2 Future Steps

Getting to know the different parties involved and also getting familiar with the different steps involved in public space was a big part of our project. After having tested a diversity of actions we have gathered a good knowledge base of what works and what doesn’t. Our next steps would thus include to confine a plan that works from the beginning on whilst also being adaptable to different changes. A big problem we encountered was that we failed to generate “momentum” because both we and the people didn’t really know where the project was heading. In the latter phase of the projects we had a confined concept but also knew that we can’t provide the regularity that we have held up in our values. Adhering to his regularity in continued work would lead to more people being involved thus forming a bigger community through word of mouth and connection through interests.

After having built our trailer we will test out how the different participants react to our manual and if motivation to proceed with action stays or increases. An aspect that we haven’t really touched is the organisation of these different events. Having a plan for specific days would be something that benefits the project as it would attract a border audience through people getting used to us and it would also improve our communication efforts, as advertising every single event in the same elaborate manner would not be necessary anymore. Nevertheless, we can imagine this framework being too strict for certain people and that the action would already fail at finding the right appointment. This part of the manual might be the most challenging one because it is a quite time consuming component. We will reach out to a number of people to develop this component.   
In a further step, we would like to rework the structure of the collection process. Within our actions we always had the motivation to find out more and also to collect more research to support our project. When handing over our trailer or when other people begin to take self-initiated action we ask ourselves how we will achieve a manifestation of these happenings without it being too complex. This said, it would be necessary to iterate further on how big this data contribution can be when an independent action is being organised. Some propositions would be to have a couple of photos, a Google Maps location or the possibility to leave a review on the website. In addition, the providing of different products such as flyers or a small poster that can be individualised via our Website could help easing the organisation of actions. We emphasise this point as we know that this data can be powerful and beneficial as a message for the project and the street. The collection of this data promises to be achieved easily, if it is framed as a data donation. This way everybody can participate and in coexistence with our actions it helps the discussion to develop further as more and more opinions and ideas come into place. However, this data collection issue would need some rework to give it a more playful, free and clear format. Because it being too uncertain so we can’t really assess it again.

During our project we have not really had the opportunity to talk to many institutions and public authorities. This was because we have not been given the opportunity to conduct a proper interview or did not get an answer at all. We managed to reach out to certain institutions by writing to the people directly, surpassing the usual filtering from efficiency and management-concerns. We never really had the opportunity to talk about our project in a conclusive way except with the GZ. By reaching out again with a more concrete concept and some parts already validated we could hope to get more access to the people responsible for urban planning in Zurich. We also strive to bring the project into a more realistic and incorporated direction. We think that talking to these authorities could really help because they are experts in knowing the requirements and the bureaucratic procedures for creating permanent solutions to our issues. This way the data collection and web platform could also be adapted in a sense that the exchange and the framing of the documentation can serve as a better voice. With this exchange the ideas and opinions that have been conducted during the different actions can also be included in more elaborate concepts if a street is being redesigned.

With that in mind we would also like to test the full scope of our methodologies in a different neighbourhood to see if our assumptions can be validated and reproduced in different circumstances. During our first strollolgical research trips we encountered a big variety of neighbourhoods and thus many different dynamics. As of now we can determine that if a given neighbourhood has very high population density and small apartments these factors play a role in the street having a much more lively character, as people tend to dwell outside. Another interesting correlation we have witnessed is that this often comes with more anonymity as there are so many people that one can easily submerge. In Wipkingen, the neighbourhood we have mainly worked in, there are a lot of cooperatives and apartment houses. This leads to a lot of different projects and initiatives but to a somewhat impersonal street as everyone is already organised in more opaque societies. Somewhat contrary is the neighbourhood in Affoltern, where the GZ is located that we are working with. There are almost no Cafés and meeting points which leads the people to concentrate themselves in their immediate surroundings and within other people. We are very curious how the interventions can act within these neighbourhoods of less diverse development. We are not sure our actions will have the same acceptance as in Wipkingen as it is even more unusual to encounter the infrastructure we imagined and created in a neighbourhood on the city's borders. It is also possible that it proves to be more successful because it fulfils a need that is ever more present, compared to more urban, mixed neighbourhoods. We hope that, after we pass on our trailer to the GZ which is located in Affoltern, we can have an exchange with the people from the GZ which have a different background in sociocultural animation. With more insights gained and maybe also more parts of the project being thoroughly tested, we would like to look at the scalability of our project and what impact it could have in different neighbourhoods or the entire city.

This is why the last, remaining concern of realisation would be on how a scaling of the project could be achieved in a way that makes it adaptable to the different situations and requirements without losing its qualities. This part would definitely need the biggest rethinking and has many hurdles to overcome. It would include better communication and usability of the digital tools, more collaboration and a more concrete vision so the engagement is more exciting and promising. Moreover, it would benefit from an easier and more efficient way to use our methods in projects so that the data collection and the communication would not take a long time. To be implemented within a project of the civil engineering office, the distillation of the ideas would need more iterations and a better relatability within a space so one a discussion around the permanent rework of a street could take place. Last but not least the most important thing would be to network with more institutions, organisations and authorities to have a broader base to argue and discuss with as this project is only a small fish in the ocean that is urban planning and the city itself. Hopefully it doesn’t get too salty.

# 5.Appendix

*How and according to what criteria are sites selected?*  
Possible streets for organising the event are selected based on proposals from the residents. The proposed locations must meet the necessary traffic and urban planning requirements, which are refined and adapted based on the experience gained. E.g. low traffic volume, no rescue axis or public transport axis, no construction sites during implementation.

*How are ideas for the provided infrastructure collected?*  
In its first iterations a planning office proposed a furniture concept. In the following years, a design concept for the streets was developed in the course of various participatory events and based on feedback from the neighbourhood residents. The furnishing strongly depends on the location, which was also supplemented by some residents' initiative.

*What data was collected? How was it collected / evaluated?*  
During the temporary redesign, spatial observations as well as interviews with users were conducted. These show which are the user group, which activities are most frequent and when the street was most used. Polling devices were also placed on the perimeter. Here it is asked whether the users like the redesign or whether they would like to see it repeated. This data will be automatically analysed.

*How does the participation process look like? Are there future iterations planned?*  
Since 2022, there has been a dialogue with the dialogue group (residents, the neighbourhood and trade association) of the Ankerstrasse area for an implementation of "Brings uf d'Strass!".  
The inclusion of the neighbourhood population will be further promoted. The dialogue group will be expanded and the implementation will be concretized in cooperation with the residents.

# 7. Figure Index

# 6. Source Index

1. The ideal city, SPACE10, Robert Klanten, Elli Stuhler, 2021 [↑](#footnote-ref-0)
2. Traffic space Public Space, [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
3. Palaces for the people : how social infrastructure can help fight inequality, polarisation, and the decline of civic life / Eric Klinenberg. 2018 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
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5. Self Made City, City of Berlin, 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
6. Anti Urban ideologies and Planning in France and Switzerland, Bernard Marchan & Joëlle Salomon Cavin, 2007 [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
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9. Green Cities… [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
10. Open data tool Kanton Zürich [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
11. <https://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/de/home/statistiken/kataloge-datenbanken/karten.assetdetail.3262708.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
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14. Organisiert Euch, Urban Equipe & Kollektiv Raumstation 2021 [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
15. From Realpolitik to Dingpolitik or How to make Things public, Bruno Latour, 2004 [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
16. Play the city, Tan Ekim, 2017 [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
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18. (Sharp, H., Preece, J. & Rogers, Y. (2019)., p. 62) [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
19. (Burckhardt Lucius & Annemarie, Spaziergangswissenschaften, 1980) [↑](#footnote-ref-18)