

CAN A PLAYFUL APPROACH MAKE A POINT FOR DECISION MAKERS AND RIVERBANK USERS?

“Access permitted only if you pay for a boat cruise”, “Picnic Zone: Bring your own chair”, “You can look but you can’t touch - Neckar”, “What If: Mercedes Benz Restaurant”. These messages and more are now available to entertain your imagination while wandering along the Neckar!

Photo Courtesy: Connectivity Group Authors

Have you ever decided to venture to walk beside the Neckar? If so, you must have gone through infinite and long stretches without finding a chair, a public bathroom or any service, even the desperation and craving that is caused by the continuous walk without knowing where the next exit is, for many users result to be a nightmare.

Even students told us that for them, while in full field activities, it was difficult to find the exit points once inside. To tackle this, they found a fun and original way of facing the problems and deficits that the river presents. We had the opportunity to interview a representative of the group, Gabriella Micciche, while she was hanging a sign next to one of the only five benches that are in the 3,6 km stretch along the Neckar, and that can hardly cover the totality of users who walk there.

In a space as small as a letter sheet it is difficult to calculate the potential of written messages, this specific one, imposes to the user the question “*What is this bench facing?*” as a way of pointing out a fact that almost no one sees, that even with a landscape as nice as the Neckar, the few benches that are available on the riverbank face elsewhere rather than Neckar River.

“We can not change anyone’s mind, but we can make them think about their



surroundings.” Gabriela told us. Sometimes it is difficult to realize what is wrong in our context because we spend every day in the same place seeing the same problems, so we get used to the shortage and not having enough or efficient services. While observing every day deterioration, Stuttgart and its citizens seem to have accepted and surrendered to the appropriation of spaces around the Neckar, as well as the abandonment and lack of maintenance.

We can not change anyone’s mind but can make them think about their surroundings”

Without realizing, this acceptance becomes a way of giving away those spaces, as well

as the right for contact with nature.

But there is always a turning point when something makes you think more, a fact, a situation; just a simple message can spark the light in some minds, or encourage those who felt they were fighting alone for this purpose. The way this group of students worked on this experiment was quite systematic but at the same time creative. Giancarlo Muñoz explains that there are four characteristic situations repeated along the Neckar that needed to be attacked with sarcastic signage. Signs served in the following: Criticizing the lack of services or urban furniture at the Riverbank; Criticizing the amount of kilometers to reach a restroom; Creating guidance for riverbank users concerning existing exit points; Identifying and criticizing barriers and borders along the riverbank, which is the most common case; finally, giving clues of which activities can be done on abandoned

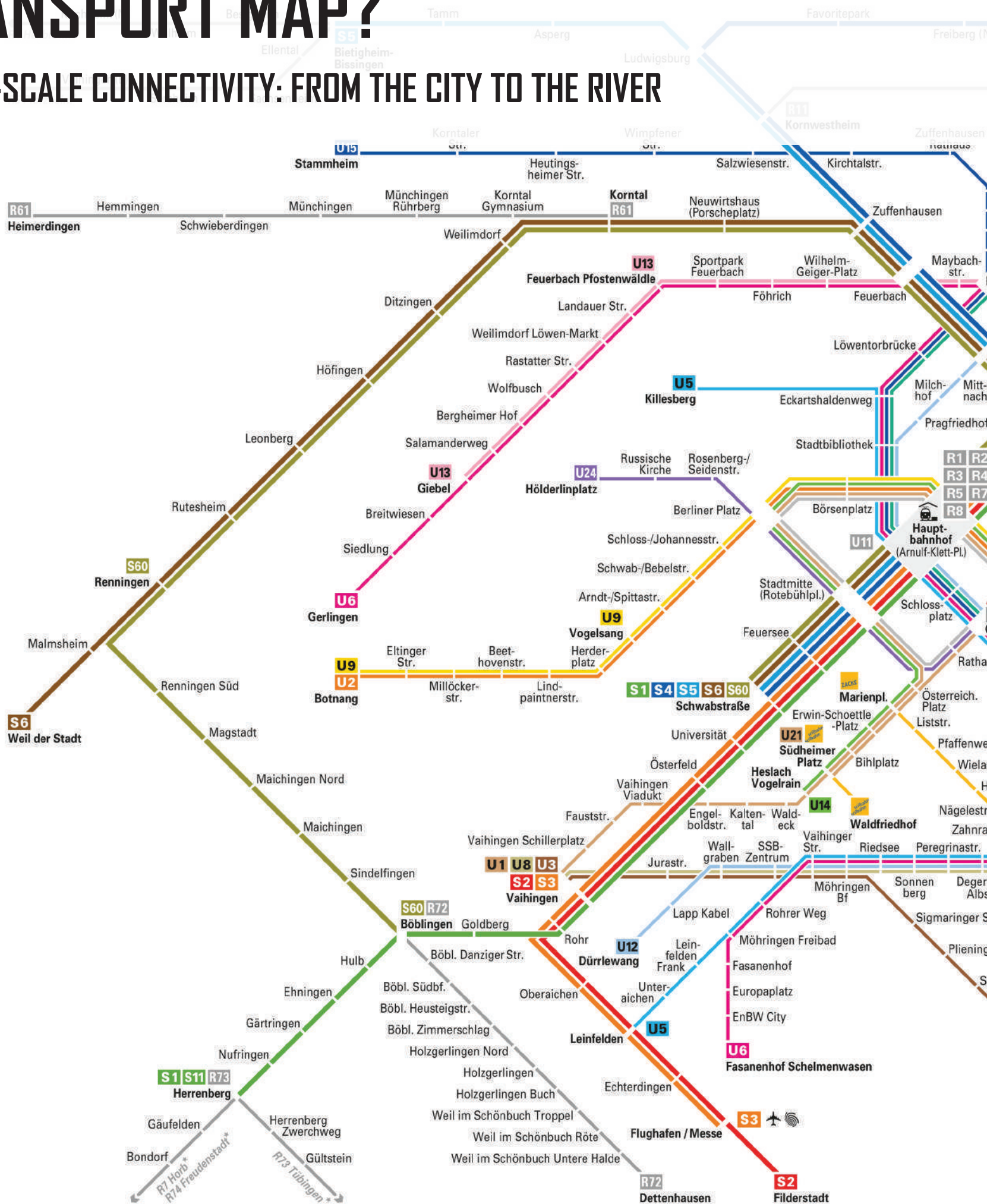
places or where nothing is happening now. These messages come loaded with a touch of humor and sometimes a bit of sarcasm that brings a smile to the faces of those who pass there. In the short time that our team was preparing this report, we noticed that several users took a second of their time to stop and read the content of posters. Some with good humor laughed and went on their way, others with serious countenance read the message in silence as if contemplating and reflecting a little more on what is written. In one way or another, the messages were sent. This experiment, as Gabriella express, does not claim to be permanent, but at least it is in the minds of the users of the area, since it is them who have the power to change something and can raise their voices to demand bringing the Neckar into the course of daily life.



Photo Courtesy: Connectivity Group Authors

A NEW STUTT GART PUBLIC TRANSPORT MAP?

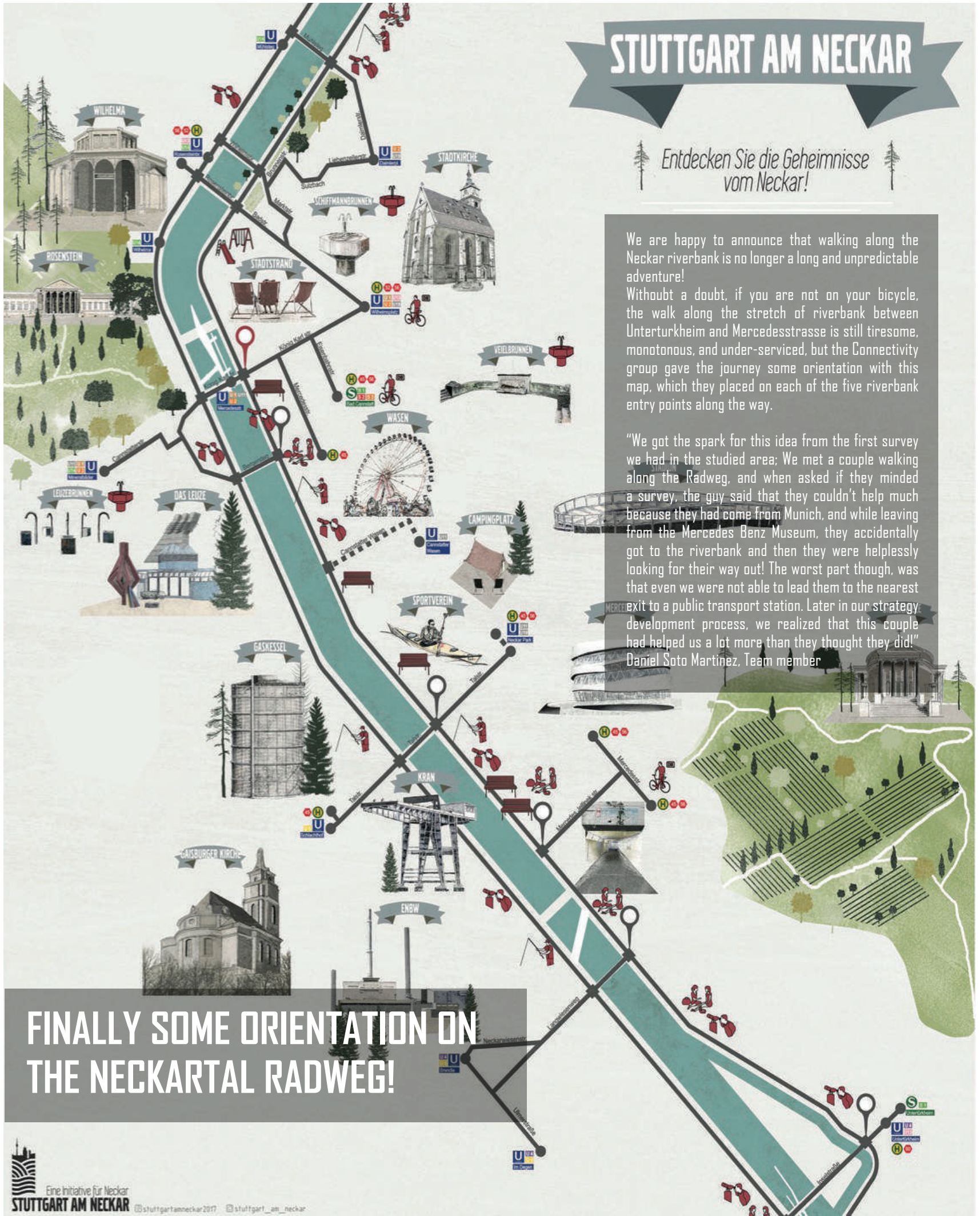
LARGE-SCALE CONNECTIVITY: FROM THE CITY TO THE RIVER



Looks familiar? It should. You have probably noticed that most cities incorporate the river into their public transport network map (e.g. Paris, London, etc.). The river is often at the heart of the city's recreational center and the city makes effort to draw people towards it. Why is Stuttgart rejecting the Neckar? Why is it marginalized, under-developed, and not inviting for visitors? Students created their own vision of Stuttgart's public transport map, this time *with* the Neckar, and it seems to fit right in!



Source: VVS map 2017. Adapted by Connectivity group members



STUTT GART AM NECKAR

Entdecken Sie die Geheimnisse vom Neckar!

We are happy to announce that walking along the Neckar riverbank is no longer a long and unpredictable adventure! Without a doubt, if you are not on your bicycle, the walk along the stretch of riverbank between Unterturkheim and Mercedesstrasse is still tiresome, monotonous, and under-served, but the Connectivity group gave the journey some orientation with this map, which they placed on each of the five riverbank entry points along the way.

"We got the spark for this idea from the first survey we had in the studied area; We met a couple walking along the Radweg, and when asked if they minded a survey, the guy said that they couldn't help much because they had come from Munich, and while leaving from the Mercedes Benz Museum, they accidentally got to the riverbank and then they were helplessly looking for their way out! The worst part though, was that even we were not able to lead them to the nearest exit to a public transport station. Later in our strategy development process, we realized that this couple had helped us a lot more than they thought they did!"
Daniel Soto Martinez, Team member

FINALLY SOME ORIENTATION ON THE NECKARTAL RADWEG!

On July 15th, maps promoting existing & potential attraction points along the riverbank, as well as nearby public transport and access points, were placed in five different spots along the Neckar. Once installed, they instantly found interest from a large audience of walkers and cyclists.

“NECKAR IST NEBENAN”

POSTERS REMOVED FROM U-BAHN STATIONS, ACTORS THREATENED WITH A FINE.

Attempts for more large-scale connectivity continue, this time with a series of posters that you have probably seen in U-bahn stations around town during the past weeks.

On Friday 14.07.2017, students from the connectivity group went around Stuttgart spreading posters that read “Neckar Ist Nebenan”. They placed them close to existing SSB information stands in U-Bahn Stations. The posters point out the physical distance of the observer from the nearest station to the river, and which U-Bahn line to take in order to get there. e.g. To travel to the river from the main station, only need to travel 6 stations on U1 (Fellbach) or U2 (Neugereut). They aim at delivering the point that the Neckar is closer than you think!

“Sadly, the stakeholders we need for adapting this idea from a temporary experiment, aiming to raise awareness about the presence of a river to permanent part of the system, are not on our side.”

Giancarlo Muñoz Ramirez, team member



HOW DID SSB REACT?

“In the 1st experiment, we noticed through social media reactions that our river version of the public transport map got noticed and appreciated by many, so we contacted SSB to negotiate the possibility of incorporating the river into the actual city maps. After some time, we got a reply stating that incorporating the river into the public transport map isn't doable in the short term since it requires coordination with multiple involved actors, and major changes in the structure of the map. For the 2nd experiment (*Neckar ist Nebenan* Posters) it was a bit different, we made the mistake of not obtaining a permission to hang the posters, we just went ahead and spread many posters in stations, and of course, with an efficient company as SSB, this did not go unnoticed; they sent us an e-mail two days later asking us to clean it all up or the institute will receive a fine.” Giancarlo Muñoz Ramirez, team member

OUT OF SIGHT, YET ONLY A 5-MINUTE WALK: FROM THE SURROUNDINGS TO THE RIVER



Photo Courtesy: Connectivity Group Authors

Victoria Vuong, Stuttgart, July 2017: “Our working group’s focus point was connectivity. We always conducted long meetings where we brainstormed for ideas on how to make the Neckar an integrated part of Stuttgart city. The way we saw it, Neckar is most integrated in those areas where it

is visible for passers-by, and where an entry point to the riverbank is close by (e.g. Mercedesstrasse). In some cases, a close by entry point is available, but the Neckar is out of sight from the neighborhood or the U-Bahn station (e.g. Untertürkheim, and most other examples), therefore, users of

“You can find our walking maps in Mercedesstrasse, Bad Cannstatt (Wilhelmsplatz), Rosensteinbrücke, Mineralbäder, Wasenstrasse, Brendle (Grossmarkt), Schlachthof and Untertürkheim. In the longest case, the walk is only 10 minutes”

Victoria Vuong.

the riverbank are mostly those who have lived in the area long enough to know their way to the river. But we wanted to engage everyone! That was what our project was all about; to make Stuttgart a river city by function and not just on a map. We created a continuation of our previously-created



Photo Courtesy: Connectivity Group Authors

“Neckar ist Nebenan” Posters: After taking the U-Bahn to the closest station to the river, this time, you find a new map that shows you the walking path to follow to get to the river. In the longest case, the walk is only 10 minutes”.



NECKARLAB

MEETING NEIGHBORS IN UNEXPECTED PLACES



New ways to experience the Neckar

Stuttgarters get to discover spaces around the Neckar and its neighbors. The event gathered passers-by throughout five hours of activities and contemplation at the riverside.

The day started more colorful than usual in a small part of the riverside that Sunday. The place, unknown or unnoticed to many Stuttgarters, is used as access to the water for members of the KGS Kanuklub. Facing the gas tank, it is one of the few points where the view of the riverside is not blocked by dense vegetation. Cyclists there, usually with their heads down in high speed, were surprised, sometimes annoyed, to slow down and share the riverside with some curious people taking a moment to enjoy the space. Intended to break the monotony of a linear asphalt path, a group of five young researchers from the initiative *Stuttgart am Neckar*, proposed alternative uses of the space for a day. The stairs normally used for bringing the canoes to the water turned into improvised bleachers where onlookers could enjoy the view of the river. For the more curious ones, chairs were placed on the plateau right next to the water, as people could also dip their toes. It was a scene not often found there, as said by a young couple seated by the water. "I often bike through here because it is faster, and that is what it is to me: a fast lane, nothing more. It never occurred to me that it could be actually peaceful and a nice small break from biking", says the woman as she takes off her shoes and finds a comfortable position on her chair.

The view was not the only attraction there. On the other side of the cycle path, on the upper side, a rustic lounge was set by the

fence of the canoe club. Pallets and cushions formed furnitures and large baskets with fruits invited passersby to experience that place. The timidity of many to grab some fruits was broken by warm welcomes from the organizers. "The idea is for people to discover that they can use public spaces in different ways, trying to incorporate them in their daily life.", says one of the organizers. "We want to blur the line between social and public life".

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NECKAR LAB

The happening on July 16th was part of a series of interventions under the initiative *Stuttgart am Neckar*. With the focus on the quality of the urban life around the river, the organizers provide a "platform for new experiences", as described in their leaflets. "While still analyzing the area and trying to find an entry point, we realised that there is a general unfamiliarity from the common citizen. The area is sort of a blank space in the city's image. People are well aware of Wasen and the stadium, but they wouldn't put the riverside as their top destination in Stuttgart" one member of the team, tells me. This blank space, as they say, is indeed

marked by the lack of urban furniture and places to stay there. And it is not only the scenery potential, but the current activities on the site are also unknown. The sense of belonging is almost inexistent there, surrounded by fences, high speed cyclists and warning signs.

"One of the biggest distributors of fruits and vegetables of the country is one of the Neckar's neighbors. So is the powerplant that provides energy for a big part of the city", says Debora Zukeran, Neckarlab team member. This NeckarLab is constantly talking about awareness and somehow engaging people's curiosity in the urban issues. Yet only set for about six hours, starting 10 a.m, this new urban setting revealed to achieve its main purposes: raise public space awareness and instigate people to discover the potential of their neighborhood. As their event motto "Hi, I'm your neighbor!", the vis-

itors could know a little more about the two neighbors brought together to promote this event, the GrossMarkt and the KGS Kanuklub. Two companies of the Grossmarkt, Andretta Fruchtimport GmbH. and Gemüsering Stuttgart GmbH, were interested in connecting with their consumers, provided fresh fruits and information about their products. The information was tailored by the NeckarLab so people could have a first glimpse of how steps of the food production chain are closer than they thought.

The wish of activating the grounds near the Kanuklub property was always present, but the administration of the club haven't seen a possibility to do something unrelated to sports. Even though not directly linked to canoeing, visitors were pleased to watch the athletes training for the next weekend competition and even delivered some fresh fruits to them on the water.



Large baskets with fruits invited passersby to experience that place. Photo Courtesy: Life Around the River team.



“The area is sort of a blank space in the city’s image. People are well aware of Wasen and the stadium, but they wouldn’t put the riverside as their top destination in Stuttgart.”



Above: couple take a break from biking and have some fresh fruits by the water. Left: Group of friends wet their feet and enjoy the water. Below: Kayaker makes a detour to grab fruits.

“We want to blur the line between social and public life.”



“It never occurred to me that this spot could actually be peaceful and a nice small break from biking.”

REACTIONS FROM THE NECKARLAB

We invited people to share their experiences from the river.

“I live in Stuttgart for 5 years now. I came here to study and got a job right after my graduation. The city has many opportunities for young people. When the weather is nice, I am one of those creatures fighting for any space in the city’s gardens. I used to go to Schlossgarten all the time when I lived close by. I like to stay outside, but I would never choose to stop by the river and have a moment. Even if my bike breaks, I would find a way to get out as quick as possible. For me, it has only been a way to passby. I make use of the emptiness to speed up on my bike. I have to admit, though, that I was surprised by this place’s qualities. I had an unique experience, I enjoyed a lot. But it also made

me angry, to be fair. How is it possible that our river is not celebrated? How come all around is just industries? I think people don’t come here because they don’t know the potential this place has. Maybe there is no much marketing of the river, but I think the City would only benefit if investing in it. While being here, feet in the water, looking at that huge gas tank, I was thinking: “Did I ever mention the Neckar when describing Stuttgart to an outsider?” No! I haven’t. As a citizen, I think that I have to claim for the right to the river. It is now on my picnic and dog walking route. After seeing the potential of it, I want the Neckar to be part of Stuttgart.” Anna Kaiser, 29 years

“I had an unique experience, I enjoyed a lot. But also made me angry, to be fair. How is it possible that our river is not celebrated?” Anna Kaiser

“I am an erasmus student from Italy. I grew up in the sicilian city of Palermo and I was within short distance from the sea, so this relation with water was always present in my life. It was a big contrast when I moved to Stuttgart. I do like the vineyards and the woods in Vaihingen are quite nice for a run, but I was still missing this contact with the water. I was told about the mineral baths of Stuttgart, but it wasn’t a big thing when I asked my german classmates. I found out about the Neckar when I was biking to see an apartment in Bad Cannstatt. I was impressed by the dimension of it, from the bridge I could notice that is quite long. Coming to this event is very exciting for me, I was always a little scared by the “verboten”

signs by the river. I am going back to Italy, but I am happy to discover this place before I go. People have a great place and should come more often, make it public, maybe like a park with some restaurants and bars.” Rocco Maggiori, 22 years

“People have a great place here and should come more often, make it public, maybe like a park with some restaurants and bars.” Rocco Maggiori

“First we stoped when I heard one of the organizers say: “free fruits!”. I admit it, I saw the event from far and I was ready to say “no, don’t have time”. I’m glad I didn’t. Not only for the fruits, they were delicious, but for the experience that me and my boyfriend could have. We were coming back from the city, he often takes this cycle path to go to work. But he said he never stops. I cannot blame him, I wouldn’t stop either. There are few benches and at most of the places, you cannot even see the river, the bushes are just too tall. The space provided on that day were just what we needed to enjoy the riverside: a few places to sit. I don’t think that is much trouble for the city to provide, after that day I am wondering why that area doesn’t receive more attention. I grew up

in Stuttgart, in Schondorf, and it was my FIRST time dipping my feet into the water! We grew up with this impression that the river is dirty, but it was good for me to see that people practice their canoeing there. It is funny to remember that my parents used to take me to Basel to have summer holidays, we would swimm the whole afternoon at the Rhine, when we had a river right at our city. We should definately ask for investment. I think it starts with small things, like making the place nice for people to spend some time sitting or having a picnic. It doesn’t need to start with the swimming, but we could have options to stay by the water.”

Katharina Rumi, 33 years

“I think it starts with small things, like making the place nice for people” Katharina Rumi

STUTTGARTER STUDENTS ARE BRINGING THE NECKAR TO THE CITY

The students of the Awareness-Group were present in the Stuttgarter City Center, the Schlossgarten as well as in Bad Cannstatt in July 2017. Read more about their work and the experiments they have done.

“DO YOU RIVER IN STUTTGART?”

“Do you River in Stuttgart?” was the overall provocative question asked to the people in this experiment to emphasize that the noun ‘river’ does not have an equivalent verb which describes activities in and along rivers.

The aim was to get information about people’s perception concerning the Neckar. The experiment was held in three different locations: At the Königstrasse/Schlossplatz, the Schlossgarten next to the U-Bahn station Mineralbäder and close to the U-Bahn station Wilhelmsplatz. The experiment contained three actions: a small recorded oral survey about the perception of the Neckar, a written questionnaire asking for the existence and current uses of the river and third, a map of the Neckar and its surroundings that people could use to mark their frequently used locations.

Nearly everybody who filled out the questionnaire knew that a river exists in Stuttgart, just a few of them answered the question either with “I do not know” or left the question blank. It can be seen that most people do not go to the Neckar frequently, the majority answered that they are never going to the river, and some of them are visiting the river less than once in a month. This gives a hint on how the Neckar is not used to its full potential, although the people in Stuttgart are aware of its existence. Interestingly, we could find a difference in the answers given on the Königstrasse/Schlossplatz and Schlossgarten and the



answers given in Bad Cannstatt. People who are never going to the Neckar were mostly interviewed at the Königstrasse/Schlossplatz and Schlossgarten than in Bad Cannstatt. “When we asked what people think about the river, the water itself was mentioned often, mostly in combination with the words “waterquality” and “dirty”. Although we asked in different spots, the answers were diverse and did not differ according to the location” Vivian Rimmel explains. The answers to the question “What do you not like about the river?” are nearly identical to the responses given before: Pollution/Dirt and accessibility through construction or fences seemed to be negative points about the river. Surprisingly, nobody mentioned the distance to the city center as a reason for not going to the Neckar. The few who are going to the river, use the riverbanks for sports like running or biking, they like to take a walk, or they prefer to be active on the water with fishing or canoeing activities. “When we asked what people would like to do along the river, we got the highest amount of answers. Sportive activities were mentioned the most, followed by relaxation and sitting activities and active swimming in the Neckar. Besides the obvious activities like biking, walking or sunbathing, the desire of buying icecream along the Neckar was given various times and independent from the location of the experiment.” Rimmel concludes.

“I walked along the Königstrasse and because it is so hot, it would be great if I could walk along a nice river.”

I THINK THE RIVER IS...

- DIRTY
- NOT ACTIVE
- UGLY

I DO NOT LIKE THAT...

- IT IS TOO DIRTY
- I HAVE NO ACCESS
- IT IS UNSAFE

I WOULD LIKE TO...

- ENJOY THE NECKAR
- BE ACTIVE
- EAT ICE CREAM

**“I FIND THAT THE
NECKAR IS NOT THAT
RIVER THAT GIVES
YOU INSPIRATION,
I CAN NOT ENJOY
THE RIVER”**

A citizen like you or me

EVER WANTED TO DO SOMETHING ALONG THE NECKAR?

WE HAVE THE RIGHT SPOTS FOR YOU!



#1

You can find this great location as the number #1 on the map. Listen to the powerful sound of the river lock in the background while enjoying the sun. Take your mat to this location and relax on the tree stump.



#2

Here you can take your mat and picnic on the table. It is a great opportunity to observe the activities along the river such as the Theaterschiff or canoers.



#3

This spot under the bridge next to the Wilhelma is welcoming visitors with its fantastic view on the river and Bad Cannstatt in the background. Drive away with your thoughts of older times while watching the bridge and the old column in front of you.



#4

If you are more interested in the aesthetics of industrial heritage, you should not miss location #4. Either you walk or bike along the river, take a small break from your tour here and enjoy the view of the last active Gas tank in Germany.



#5

Location #5 is a truly hidden spot, you can nearly enjoy the river privately. It is a great spot to walk around, or even do a small BBQ as the ground is nicely patterned.



EXCLUSIVE BACKGROUND STORY: HOW THE GROUP FOUND THE HIDDEN LOCATIONS ALONG THE NECKAR

"It all began on a sunny Saturday in the end of June 2017. A day, when the temperature already reached 25°C at 8:00 AM. I just packed my bike for the upcoming trip, a trip that changed my perspective of Stuttgart, the Neckar and my capability of riding my bike. Another group member and I planned to use this sunny day for a small excursion to find interesting spots along the Neckar for our project and I think what I found was much more: I found locations shimmering like some small gems; unpolished gems that were just laying along the Neckar and nobody has really seen them. Until now. We started the tour from our home, close to Neckartor and drove through the empty Schlosspark to the U-Bahn station Mineralbäder. From there we split up, I went left, my group mate right. This was the worst choice of the day. We should have stayed together, because we found such beautiful places, but were just able to enjoy them alone. After two hours of biking along the Neckar,

I already discovered four hidden locations. Locations where I was totally alone, enjoying the view, observing what was happening around me, breathing in the air and listening to the sounds of birds while the water flew silently in the background. I had to stop several times, not just because of exhaustion, but because of the breathtaking landscape I was surrounded by. The river, the vineyards, the animals, the city, the industry. All in once. I constantly checked my GPS status, to be sure that I mark the locations I found, so that others can follow and they did. Around midday, my energy level was already close to Zero, I reached the northernmost point of my journey – time to go back where I started in the morning. At night I invited our friends to join us for a small picnic at one of the locations we found, but this time I went with the U-Bahn. It was a successful Saturday for our exploration team and I would do it again.", Saamil Patel narrates.



MOVIE NIGHT

The group arranged two event nights at the Königstrasse/ Schlossplatz and Schlossgarten to bring the Neckar to the people



The group preparing to show the movie at the Königstrasse/ Bolzstrasse

The experiment called "Movie Night" was prepared by the Awareness-Group. Three were the main objectives: inform, gain input and let people participate in the rediscovering of the Neckar.

"We started our preparation for the second experiment in the end of June and planned to show our movie in the middle of July 2017. The group was divided into the "moviemakers" and the ones responsible for creating postcards and a participatory game.", Nojoud Ashour introduces. The overall strategy for the whole experiment was the image of a white mat that is travelling from the city of Stuttgart to the

Neckar. The white mat symbolizes a person, who is adventurous enough to discover the river, showing different locations and spots to the audience.

"Take your mat and claim your right to the river"

"We captured different situations where the mat was first travelling with the train to the Neckar and afterwards relaxed at different locations.", Nojoud continues. The focus was always on the surrounding landscape that changed during the small movie. The movie shows industrial landscapes, abandoned places and the overall beauty of

the different situations. "We also wanted to show locations that are not considered as accessible by capturing a door being opened. The different scenes in the movie are divided by short sentences that are stating our ideas and thoughts about the main issues", Saamil Patel adds. The group made different versions of the movie: As we saw in the first experiment, Stuttgarter citizens are feeling more comfortable with German language, so we produced a version in German to show in public and one in English for our Master program. The movie ended with our overall message that people should take their own mat and claim their right to the river.

PARTICIPATION PROCESS

The Group decided to integrate a small participatory activity besides the projection of the movie. Like in the first experiment, the outcome should give the participating people time to think about the river and us a broader understanding of the needs of the Stuttgarter citizens.

The method we selected for this activity was to provide people with four images of certain locations along the Neckar that lacked of people and were therefore underused. We encouraged people with a sign to "Design" their Neckar by giving them various figures in a box that showed people doing different recreational activities (i.e. jogging, playing an instrument, reading, having a picnic etc.). We tried to give a high variety of activities that could be done along the Neckar, also in retro-perspective of the findings from the first experiment. Besides recreational activities, we also encouraged the people to add animals or other relevant objects to a natural environment.



Raising awareness among those who do not know about the fact that Stuttgart is rich in mineral water sources.

STUTT GART, DRINK LOCAL!

The experiment "Drink Local" took place on a sunny Saturday afternoon on 17th of June at Karlsplatz beside the Fleemarkt which is always well visited. The aims of this event were to measure the awareness of people on mineral water as a drinking resource and raising awareness among the ones who do not know about the fact that Stuttgart is rich in mineral water sources. To reach the aims, the group set up a stand right next to the Fleemarkt where the amount of people passing by is quite high, and invited them to taste the mineral water from the Leuzebrunnen served with some fruits and decorations. During the three hours event, the group had conversations with approximately 150 people, 70 of which also participated in the questionnaires provided. The questionnaires aimed to collect information if people know the fountains and Stuttgart being rich in mineral water sources, already drink from the fountains, would drink after this event and recommend it further, would like to have it remain free to the public or prefer buying it from the supermarket or being served in the restaurants. Besides questionnaires, postcards were handed out, one of which was a map of fountains in Stuttgart and the other was the components of the mineral water and their health effects. On the back side of the postcards, a brief information about the mineral water and a QR code linked with the locations of fountains are provided. What the group learnt from this first event was that there is a lack of knowledge about mineral water sources in Stuttgart and that people perceive mineral water as a value belonging to Bad Cannstatt rather than to the whole city. Moreover, people who knew about the fountains mostly knew about Leuze due to its fame for healing effects. There is a need for more fountains in the city center, and last but not least, people prefer mineral water to remain free and access from the fountains rather than buying it from the supermarket.



Leuze is the most famous but other fountains are not known enough



Mineral water should remain free to the public!



"STUTT GART AM NECKAR" SHOWS STRONG PRESENCE AT CRITICAL MASS



All Stuttgarters must know by now that the first Friday of each month marks the day of "Critical mass". With the assistance of Stuttgart's police, this organized movement gives cyclists the freedom to cycle in the midst of Stuttgart's car-free streets, off the bicycle lanes, and under the tunnels. It is in these two hours that cyclists feel complete safety and ownership of the streets. With drinks, music and a great spirit, Stuttgarters demand their right to better bicycle infrastructure and a city friendly to its residents. This is where *Stuttgart am Neckar* stepped in. For them, the statement "Fighting for a Liveable Stuttgart" extends to including the river.

Cyclists with decorated bikes, *Stuttgart am Neckar* personalized t-shirts and big flags spread between the thousands attending the Critical Mass event that day. An information stand at the After-Mass destination, 'Im Wizemann', provided Neckar awareness postcards, small prints of the VVS public transport maps-river-version (see page 26), flyers for the upcoming events (p. 21) and water bottles promoting Stuttgart's hidden mineral water springs.

To strengthen the idea of using mineral water as a local drinking source, the group had been planning to distribute long lasting bottles in the city to motivate people to fill them

HIDDEN WATER. CLEAN WATER



Experiment on the square around Jakobsbrunnen

Photo Courtesy: Hidden Waters team



"Planning for Real" Model

Photo Courtesy: Hidden Waters team



The experiment "Hidden Water. Clean Water" took place on the 24th of June at Jakobsbrunnen in the old city of Bad Cannstatt. Based on the responses of the event "Drink Local", the group decided to target a different kind of users this time; people who live in Bad Cannstatt, pass by the fountains and perhaps drink from them. The aim of this event was gathering information about people's perception on mineral water and river side usage. To reach the purpose, the group set up a stand next to the Jakobsbrunnen where postcards and posters with the map of fountains and health effects of mineral water were displayed and handed out. The crucial part of the experiment was applying the participation method called "planning for real" with two different models representing the riverbanks and the square around Jakobsbrunnen (see images on the left). Along with the models, icons of various activities and objects printed on little flags were provided to people so they could choose which ones they would like and place them wherever they wish in the model. Various activities and objects included trees, benches, plants, urban gardening, cycling, sunbathing, playgrounds, sports, fishing, animals and swimming, but also flags with blank papers were offered to enable people to write down other ideas and enrich the possibilities.

During this four hours event, more people than expected participated in the planning for real experiment and the models got filled with flags until very little space was left on them. Many people came up with new ideas besides the ones showed on the flags with every kind of activity and objects. In general, the placement of flags by the riverbanks was higher than on the square; furthermore some people placed the flags in a way which created a connection between the fountain and the riverbanks.

Lessons learnt from this experiment were that people have much more knowledge about the fountains, mineral water and the river compared to the ones in the city centre. However, although the majority have the knowledge, there are still some who are living close by and do not know that the water from the fountain is drinkable, thus, there is a need for information or signs on the fountains. Also, people are highly interested on improving the open public spaces around the water bodies and to have more activity options. Alike with the results of the experiment "Drink Local" (see previous page), Bad Cannstatt residents also see mineral water as a source belonging rather to Bad Cannstatt than to the whole of Stuttgart. Last but not least, many people are interested in having a connection between the fountains and the river either with small stream or green patches.

from the mineral water fountains rather than buying drinking water from the supermarkets. By doing this, people would contribute decreasing mineral water wastage by causing less water to go to the sewage system and mix with grey water and also they would benefit from the positive health effects by drinking (see page 10). The group had contacted with several bottle manufacturers, one of which named "Hünersdorff" was willing to become sponsor for this unique purpose and granted more than 500 long lasting, corrosion proof bottles. Later, labels to emboss on the bottles were designed including the components of mineral water, QR code that linked with the

fountains in google maps and a logo created for the mineral waters of Stuttgart, branded as "Brünnele Wasser". The purpose of joining the Critical Mass was to reach specific kind of users who are interested in the topics of sustainable living and consuming local. During this event, a total of 150 bottles were handed out. "Info points" were placed one day later in Karlsplatz and Schlossplatz in the city centre and the group handed out 100 more bottles with the same purpose. *Stuttgart am Neckar's* presence reached a wide audience, and stirred many remarks and questions from cyclists that day:

"What is Stuttgart am Neckar? "
 "Way to go! People have been fighting for this for a really long time now, we hope this time it works!"
 "But Stuttgart is not am Neckar, it is am Nesenbach!"
 "We like the Neckar! It separates us from Cannstatt, and we don't like Cannstatt!"

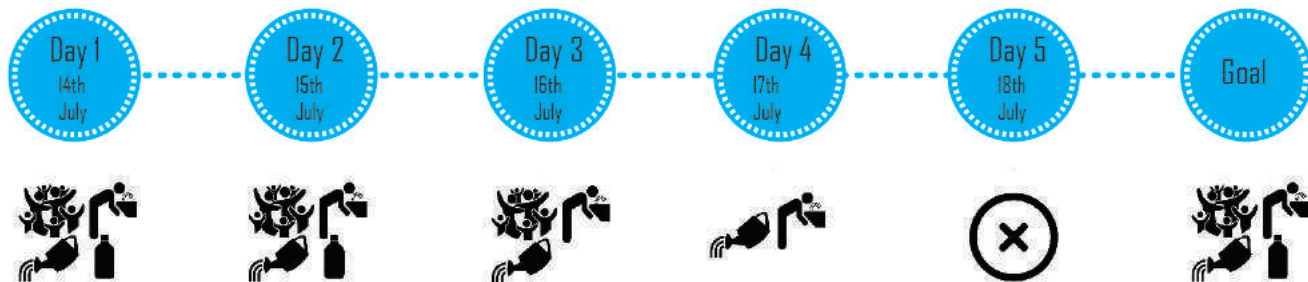
Of course, reactions varied between positive and negative. But a city as clean, organized, and economically vibrant as Stuttgart can and must apply some strict regulations and renovation strategies around the Neckar to set an example for international livability standards.



STUTT GARTS EIGENES GRÜNBÄCHLE

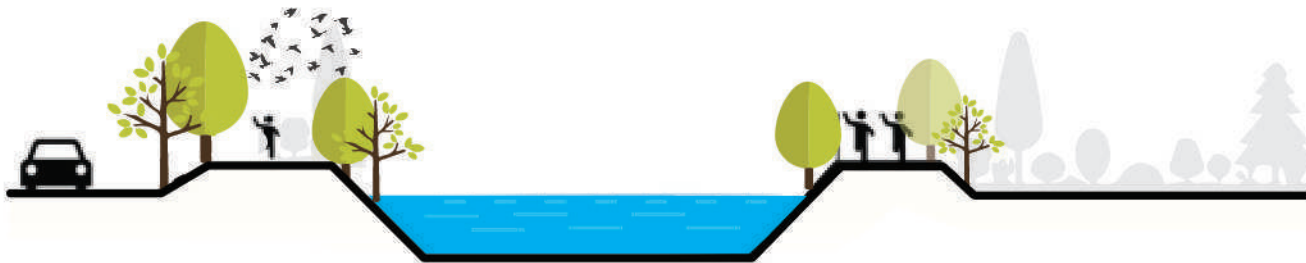
Based on the outcomes of previous events, the Hidden Waters group decided to have an installation on the site that would stay more than one day and let people interact with it. Since the beginning of the strategy development, connecting mineral water fountains with each other and with the river by bringing the water on the surface and creating an inviting public space around it, was the main idea of implementation. Also, from the ideas collected during the planning for real experiment, it was obvious that people would like to have more interaction with the water and spend more time around the fountains and by the riverbanks. For these purposes, the concept of "Grünbächle" was developed, inspired by the City of Freiburg, in which the 'bächle' around the old city let the water flow in small channels creating an inviting atmosphere with a chance of interacting with the water. In addition to that, the 'Grünbächle' concept refers to the system in where the water flows into the naturalized channel from one mineral water fountain to another and finally to the river, instead of directly going to the sewage

system. The event "Stuttgart's Eigenes Grünbächle" took place from the 14th until the 17th of July at Klösterlebrunnen in the old city of Bad Cannstatt. For the three-day experiment, a symbolic version was applied into the square where the Klösterlebrunnen is located. A wood channel covered by waterproof foil was set up in front of the fountain and through the pipes water would flow into the channel. Seating elements and plants were placed around the channel to resemble to the real concept of Grünbächle which implicates greenery and water presented together. Additionally, bottles were hanged on the fountain for people to take away and in the sense of collecting ideas from people, a board was provided, on which people could draw or write their ideas, recommendations and comments. Learnings from this experiment were that people need more activated public spaces including interaction with water and a better water cycle should be created in order to keep water sources used more efficiently. Cooperation with public, private and civil society stakeholders is crucial to realize a successful concept.

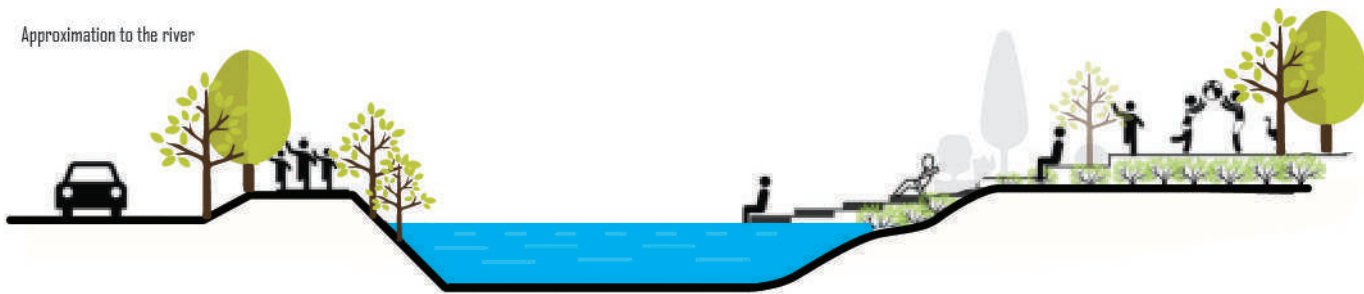


WHAT IF...

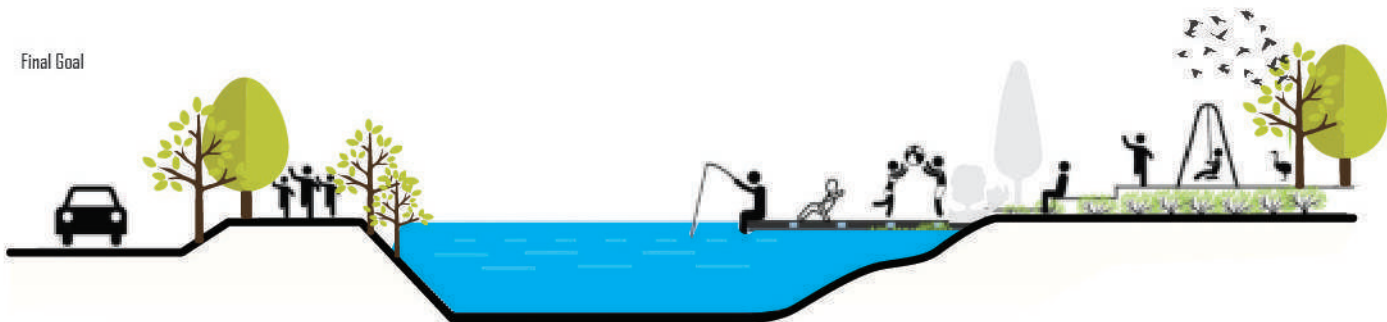
Current Situation of the Riverbank



Approximation to the river



Final Goal



Source: Hidden Waters team



THE ROLLING BOTTLE

Have you ever imagined that a bottle could travel? We followed the trail of our best companion on adventures and it has had much more luck than the publishers of this newspaper. Born in Stuttgart, our friend decided that the story behind *Stuttgart am Neckar* had to be known around this beautiful world. With just a small reserve of mineral water from one of the many Stuttgart's mineral fountains, the rolling bottle began its trip and we can't be more jealous about the places it has visited. However, we know that we are being very well represented. From places like the Neckar or Königstrasse, to Brazil, Egypt, Greece and many more!





Abu Dhabi



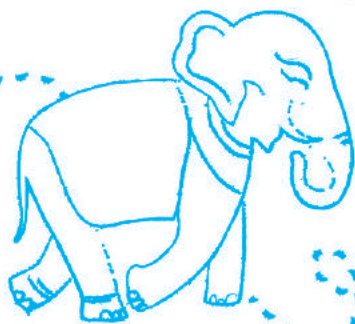
The Nile, Egypt



Cairo's Rifa'i Mosque, Egypt



Old Settlements, Oman



Vadakkunnathan temple, Thrissur, Kerala, India



Citadel, Cairo Egypt



LEARNING IN THE CITY



It was the middle of June and the project was in an already advanced phase, however the group felt the need of showing the preliminary results to the public. "By that time, we had already done some experiments on the public ground and we were adjusting our strategies according to the first results, but we were keen on some boost and more people on board though", Giancarlo Muñoz introduces. The group needed a location close to the river, hidden or neglected, appropriate to host an unknown number of people and of course, in open public space and in best case, waterproof.

Probably you recognize the place showed above. Just a few meters away from the Neckar river, as famous as neglected, the Hall of Fame (as it is known) under the König Karls Bridge in Bad Cannstatt is a symbol of the street art in Stuttgart. Despite of its importance for some, the place has a negative connotation for many: unsafe, ugly, dirty, sleepy. Does it sound familiar? You might have heard or said the same about the river Neckar. That was the right spot!

Do you wonder about the beach chairs and

a 'classroom' environment in front of these graffiti-painted walls, all at the same time? "The idea was to use some sort of neglected or forgotten place and give it another meaning, using it for another purpose. In our case, we wanted to transform this place into a public exchange room next to the river in which we could present our ideas but also open a common ground for discussion.", Mauricio Estrada explains.

Using the characteristic creativity and resourcefulness, the group of students organized a two-hour session, one hour for presenting strategies and partial results of the urban experiments, the other one for discussion, finding answers and exchange of ideas and suggestions. "We invited some of our partners, citizens, friends, representatives of the administration of the city, lecturers and the idea of doing it in a public space was to also gather some passers-by who could feel attracted by the activity.", Abdullah Lizu adds.

Mr. Johannes Rentsch, representative of Stuttgart's department of City Planning and Urban Renewal, attended this activity and was actively participating in the discussion session. Asked about how he perceives the

'outside' perspective of foreign students on Stuttgart and its relationship with its river, he answers that "The IUSD students from all over the world certainly bring valuable view on the current situation. People who live and work in this city every day, or even have grown up in Stuttgart, maybe find it difficult to question and reconsider the familiar environment. In that case, an analytical view with a certain distance is valuable to recognize the problems as well as the potentials that the Neckar holds for Stuttgart. So, what can be better for Stuttgart than young people from different continents, who have a critical, but professional view at Stuttgart and its relationship to the Neckar and present their ideas for future development?"

Besides the purpose of opening up a fruitful discussion on the Neckar and its issues, "one of the main messages we wanted to send to the people, is that everything you perceive as ugly or not attractive, might easily and cheaply be transformed into something else, something you want, something you need, something you love, you just need an idea and tons of good energy to make it happen.", Nojoud Ashour concludes.





Go, claim the Neckar!

Are there no public spaces along the Neckar?
No feeling of togetherness or neighborhood?
It might be the reason that nobody cares!

A couple of months ago, a group of students hung a simple white frame between two trees and placed a chair at the Neckar riverbank. What might seem like a trivial intervention, triggered a debate on principles about daily life culture along the Neckar.

Can we give a place to someone when it is public ground? That is what I am asking myself, because many people thanked us anonymously for the place we gave them by putting a simple white frame and a chair on the Neckar riverbank.

All we did, was highlighting a view, which made people reflect upon their environment. The reaction we got was loaded with emotion and nostalgic feelings.

“Love it!”
“Bin begeistert!”

What we can learn out of it, is that people are not looking for unexpected places in their daily life. Even more, they are backing off the public ground and do not find the beauty in the ordinary anymore. It is true, the spot we chose for hanging our frame has a specific atmosphere.

The industrial landscape seems peaceful and brutal, sculptural and out of context, harmonic and irritating at the same time. It invites people to deal with the place and that brings up memories and emotions.

However, every place has the potential to be experienced by people. The question is not “Where is the space?”, but “Where are the people?”. We are not providing a costly installation, we only fix a view. And this is already enough to make people stop, stay and reflect.

“Einfach mal 5 Minuten innehalten, dem Fluss beim Fließen zusehen und die schönen Dinge außerhalb von Normen und Rahmen entdecken.”

Even though this is a nice spot and people appreciated the installation, it will never be an experience, which is part of our daily

life, as long as there is no social interaction in this place. Only then, this place will be activated constantly and give possibilities to socialize. The claim for the space and the invisible social agreement gives the spot a value and makes it to a legitimized place.

We must be aware of the fact that our surrounding causes feelings and, even when they are subtle, they can set free emotional power. The enthusiasm, desire or even refusal, needs to be translated in an affirmation for public spaces.

“I love all cyclists!”
“I love Cannstatt!”
“Wunderschöner Platz mit einem wunderschönen Menschen.”

These feelings can even be projected on our fellow men and create more trust, openness and love among people. Instead of blaming politicians or companies for the absence or

insufficient daily life quality, we must start caring by ourselves for public spaces and social interaction.

To finally get back to the question if we can give public ground to someone, I clearly must negate.

If we give something to somebody, that means it belongs to a certain person, it is owned by somebody. Public spaces, however, are common ground, which in fact manifest the rights and essence of a democratic society. We should be proud of the chances to adopt public ground for our needs. We must claim them every day, soak up the atmospheres, become part of the urban life and start caring for our city.

No, we do not have the right to give a place, but we will keep on looking for hidden spaces and highlight their beauties. Together, we can transform them!

WHAT WORKED AND WHAT DIDN'T: REFLECTIONS

Some say that there are no good or bad results of an experiment, just plain results from which it is up to the experimenter to decide what to do with this new knowledge.

The *Stuttgart am Neckar* team kept this in mind from the very beginning of the experimentation phase and it shaped the nature of the experiments they implemented. Sally Al-Ejeilat, explains this further: "Having a 'failure proof' mentality made us be a little more courageous about the kind of experiments we wanted to do, whether it was testing a hypothesis or proving a point. We didn't care that much if our experiments were breaking the rules or challenging the status quo, we just focused on what was needed to carry out our strategy".

Giancarlo Muñoz clarifies that even if incurring in 'illegal' acts, they were never acting in an irresponsible or reckless way: "A temporary improvement of people's urban experience was always our priority, so, it's only logical you want to make sure that what you are doing is completely safe and easily removable from public space once the purpose of an experiment is fulfilled." For the whole team, it was very rewarding to witness how, in most cases, people understood this concept and did not hesitate to interact with their interventions.

In general, the *Stuttgart am Neckar* group was overwhelmed with the amount of positive reactions and interest in the topic and especially in the proposed design strategies. The experiments reached out to many citizens and passer-by and

generated various inspiring interactions creating a learning exchange among all involved. The type of responses to the experiments were diverse, depending on the target group and the methods used, producing different levels of participation. There was a balance between interactions aiming at informing a large number of people on a broader level and those focussing more on in-depth conversations with a smaller group of people.

However, reactions from certain institutions were not as positive as they wished to be. Also, some team members were confronted with doubts if paying attention to the implementation of experiments around the city instead of developing specific design proposals for building 'the city of the future' was helpful at all. However, Lenka Vojtová, lecturer of the IRD Studio, clarifies that "IRD focuses rather on conducting analysis, identifying stakeholders, on developing strategies and their testing in series of experiments, than on detailed design proposals, which (if necessary) would in our understanding only follow later in the process. In that sense, yes, the hands-on approach and real life experiments were compulsory components of the studio, nevertheless not seen as its result but as a precondition for developing a well-grounded, long-term strategy based on current situation and needs.", which means this is the first step to make a real, long lasting and sustainable proposal for all and not for a few.

The whole team agrees, that the amount of experiences and diversity of results they managed to gather (expected and unexpected), helped not only in the development of their overall strategies but most of all, left them with very valuable lessons useful for implementing any future project.

In the development of the strategy, for example, the group remarks that people's participation and positive reactions on site and in social media gave legitimacy to their ideas and in the long run helped them to establish new strategic partnerships that could, hopefully, guarantee the future continuity of some of their projects. "Without a doubt the most reliable partners of this kind of processes

are local actors: ordinary people, community organizations or other collectives that are interested and willing to support new initiatives in the area", Muñoz explains. "However, if you aim for more significant changes like recovering lost urban connections, or establishing

new ones in a permanent way, you need to simultaneously focus on gaining powerful allies such as those who oversee giving shape to the city.", he continues.

Other lessons, less related to the strategy but not less important, are the ones learned by observing people in the public space. In the words of Gabriella Micciche: "Sometimes the best way to realize what people want is to carefully notice the small hints they leave when they use public space, even

when this space is restrictive to their behaviour." In the case of the stairs experiment, for example, "it was clear for us that people wanted to enjoy the riverbank, because we noticed that every time we visited the area, the gates leading to the riverbank were open despite the obvious signs next to them prohibiting the crossing of the fences".

Ironically, this same observation made them realize that, even though signs have a lot of power modifying people's behaviour in the public space, actions can be an even more powerful tool. "We realized that people sometimes just need a detonator to start reclaiming their right to use the public space and this can be as simple as others showing them alternative uses of it, this is what we tried to do in most of the experiments, 'showing the bright side of the moon', small interventions that encourage interaction, bring life to those forgotten places and show the huge potential that we are missing every day", Vani Sood concludes.

The biggest lesson though, would probably be the role of the citizens in the process of claiming the river back and reviving the riversides. Stuttgart in its beginning has not developed along the river like many other river cities, it incorporated it only after the city structure was shaped and so were the plots along the river, defined, privatized, occupied by industries. However, the river belongs to them! It is in the backyard waiting for somebody to explore, to discover, to experience and then...to act.

"We realized that people sometimes just need a detonator to start reclaiming their right to use the public space"



AND NOW WHAT...?

Here is a fact: During the four months of research, actions and discoveries, the team fell in love with Neckar.

Even though the *Stuttgart am Neckar* project was part of a semester course, the team didn't see it as something temporary, terminating with the semester. The uncertainty of what was going to happen after the experimentation phase was completed became a strong concern of the group, provoking thoughts about ways in which the continuity of the process could be guaranteed, as Sally Al-Ejeilat explains: "Since many team members were going to leave Stuttgart after the semester ended we knew from the very beginning that we had to come up with a strategy to pass the torch to someone else who could take care of the project, it became obvious then that gaining new partnerships was a priority."

During the experimentation phase the team could establish relations with some important stakeholders with which they expect to collaborate in the future: "With VVS, for example, we opened a channel of communication after we sent them our version of the Verbund-Schienennetz map including the Neckar and they suggested the possibility to include our data in their DSM network", Al-Ejeilat explains. Also, as Debora Zukeran adds, "After the end of the semester, some companies inside the Grossmarkt are still on board, we have been meeting with them for several times to analyse the prospects of future collaboration."

There is good news also from the official side, as Mr. Johannes Rentsch, representative of Stuttgart's department of City Planning and Urban Renewal explains "The Masterplan 'Landschaftspark Neckar - Stadt am Fluss' that has been worked out by the City Planning Department, offers many proposals for the future development of the river banks of the Neckar in Stuttgart. The plan, however, forms the framework on the spatial level. How people from the urban context as well as other actors could be involved in the concretization of the projects is not yet addressed by the Masterplan. I think for that additional planning level of 'activation of spaces' the approaches of the IUSD project can be a suggestion for the City Planning Department and flow into the master plan."

On a smaller scale, the group established a relationship with the local initiative Stadtlücken as



Visualization Image for The Grünbächle In The Future

Source: Hidden Waters team IUSD VI intake

they share the team's vision of creating a Critical mass-like event focusing on the Neckar. Thomas J. Knapik, member of the team, expanded on this: "We want to take on our event of 'Lower your fences' as we see a great potential in the idea. Our vision is a monthly event in which the neighbours of the Neckar can 'break the rules' and cross the fences of the riverbank for a day and combine it with Stadtlücken's concept of Critical Mass", he continues. "we already shared our idea with them and we hope, that it is worth being taken over soon."

Concerning the Mineral Water bottle strategy, the group suggests to continue the marketing by selling special designed bottles filled with mineral water as a Stuttgart product in tourist information points and some other local organizations, possibly together with the different maps resulting from the Stuttgart am Neckar project.

Furthermore, signs should be added to the fountains communicating and assuring about the drinking quality of the mineral water and its positive effects on health. "These could be the first steps towards strengthening the cultural and heritage value of mineral fountains. Possible stakeholders for future cooperation are the citizen initiative Zukunft Bad Cannstatt, the Green party of Bad Cannstatt, the 1000 Wasser association Stuttgart and the Brünnele Association.", as Mennat-Allah Fathy suggests.

When asked about the next steps now that the project is over, lecturer Lenka Vojtová says that "It feels wrong to say, 'the project is over with the semester'. The students learned to love the Neckar and became very passionate about the current, unsatisfactory situation, way beyond the studio requirements. They managed to open many doors, gained contact with various initiatives and

to put it poetical, for four months they took care of a seed planted, but also forgotten, in the past years. As other initiatives before, they uncovered many potentials and I believe, it happened in a fruitful time. The acquired knowledge and the results will be incorporated into the research project WECHSEL. A movie on Neckar is currently competing in a competition organized by 'Unser Neckar', some of the students are still in contact with their partners, some looking for funds to continue their research and implement their ideas, our partners from the City administration are interested to take up some ideas. Reading this, you hold a copy of our newspaper presenting all results and we as well plan an exhibition to inspire other students' projects and the existing initiatives. But at the end, for Stuttgart am Neckar to keep on race, it needs active citizens, it needs small steps taken by each of us, so next time you want to have a nice breakfast, go and picnic at the riverside."

"IF YOU GO ALONE YOU CAN BE FAST, IF YOU GO TOGETHER, YOU CAN GO FAR." African proverb

ENTERTAINMENT

BEHIND THE SCENES



NECKAR HOROSCOPE



ARIES March 21 - April 20

This month you must make many decisions, for your personal and professional life. The beginning of a future full of brilliance! The constellations are on your side just jump the barrier and immerse yourself in the river! Open the door to many better opportunities that are waiting for you.



TAURUS April 21 - May 21

This month you will travel to your dream destination, you will go through some difficulties in the beginning but also unforgettable moments. Always remember to take the bottle with you and send a photo to our newspaper team.



GEMINI May 22 - June 21

Things become difficult for you this month, but nothing like doing gardening work to free the mind of any concern, we recommend helping the group of Hidden Waters in their experiment "the Grünbächle".



CANCER June 22 - July 22

Mercury is retrograde, that means you should try to look for activities that distract you and make your life more entertaining, what if you go jogging along the river? The physical activity will be the key for you to overcome this month.



LEO July 23 - August 22

What you have been waiting for so long will knock on your door soon. You will find the love of your life under the bridge of Mercedstrasse the first Friday of this month after your rubber is spiked after having made the route of critical mass around the Neckar.



VIRGO August 23 - September 23

You finally need to get out of work, so much effort deserves its rewards. How about inviting the girl you like to watch a movie at night beside the river? Sounds romantic, right? The moon is aligned with your stars and this may be the opportunity you hoped for.



LIBRA September 24 - October 23

Remembering that old love? You need to go ahead, you better go to the river and take some time with yourself appreciating the landscapes framed around the river by the guys from Stuttgart am Neckar.



SCORPIO October 24 - November 22

Always of bad character and with a humor of dogs? You should take a rest today, grab your blanket and go to one of the hidden destinations that we indicated previously! Relax and empty your mind of problems.



SAGITARIUS November 23 - December 21

You should eat healthier, your body is important, this month we recommend attending the Neckarlab and eat lots of fruits! They are rich in vitamins and minerals! The best is that they are for free.



CAPRICORN December 22 - January 20

The adventure awaits you. If you are always open to new experiences you should try to find new hidden spots for relaxing around the river, the guys from Stuttgart am Neckar might need your help for that! Contact them!



AQUARIUS January 21 - February 19

You are in a difficult moment of your life, you need to think more what you do and concentrate on your career. We recommend you to start drinking mineral water, in Stuttgart you have many options, this will give you the nutrients you need and connect you with the nature.



PISCIS February 20 - March 20

You love the water! You can't live without it and this month Venus gives you the chance. What a better place to be that the Kanuklub, in which you can enjoy doing sports and having fun with your family and friends.

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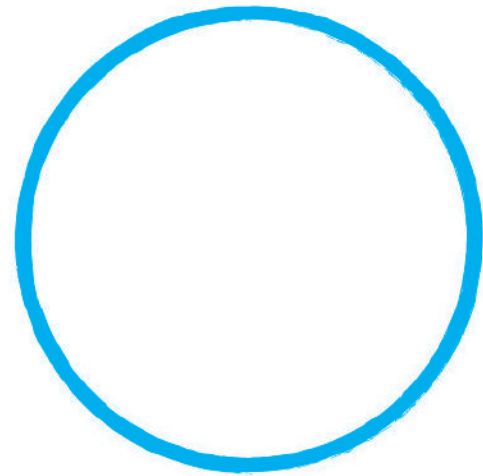


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SPECIAL THANKS TO...

IUSD - Universität Stuttgart Master Program
 SI - Städtebau Institut
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 ZIRIUS - Zentrum für interdisziplinäre Risiko- und
 Innovationsforschung
 IER - Institut für Energiewirtschaft und Rationelle
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 KGS - Kanu Gesellschaft Stuttgart e.V.
 Unser Neckar
 LIFT das Magazin
 Reallabor für nachhaltige Mobilitätskultur
 Friends, family and Neckar enthusiasts
 AND!!! To all citizens

... for your constant support, exchange of ideas and
 joining forces to make a better Stuttgart with its
 river Neckar.

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 **Integrated Urbanism
& Sustainable Design**



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**KULTUR
INSEL
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