

In the following text I will explore how places of work can be meaningful spaces on the personal scale of the individual as well as on a societal scale and how they can contribute to an urban experience. The basis for this is not an economic view of work and places of work, but one that puts human activity itself at the centre of consideration. In order to approach the intrinsic character of work and its role in human existence, I use several perspectives from the field of philosophy, in particular from philosophical anthropology.

The history of philosophy has produced many positions on work itself, ranging from an activity that is merely a urden to a glorification and a path to transcendence. Only this seems certain: work is an essential part of being human. Work is the human's means of shaping the environment and cultivating a way of life. Acting as Homo Faber made the world inhabitable for a species which does not assert itself through extraordinary speed, size or strength. On the one hand, it is utilitarian with the danger of alienating through profanity, on the other hand, it has the potential to be meaningful, be more than a result of purely rational or economic interests. On a material level, work can be an expression of an individual and promote self-consciousness and self-worth. To experience this self-creation, it is important to work for oneself, on something that gives one the opportunity to express themselves. These products of the work become representatives of the individual and can be assessed from the outside, allowing others to react and interact. Through this coexisting of the individual in a world surrounded by others, a stronger meaning emerges through the encouner and exchange with other people, leading to higher types of creativity. (Kovacs, 1986)

"Work is neither a blind mechanical process nor a form of mere business as the means of distraction from existential bored and despair; it is a way of self-creation and a mode of forming and transforming the world and nature. The individual is being socialized and educated through the performance of work; he learns discipline and acquires the regard for the will the needs of others.

Work has not only a personal but also a communal and social dimension; it promotes not only the sense of personal worth of the individual but it also creates a sense of brotherhood through the exchange of service. The very nature of work is collaboration. To work means to work with (someone) and to work for ("something", a meaning, a goal, a task, a concrete ideal, a value). The workplace, therefore is a social place, it is not entirely a private, personal, individual sanctuary. The natural, social and personal dimensions of work belong together. The activity and the discipline of work are educational for the individual as well as for society." (Kovacs, 1986) Hannah Arendt identifies and articulates a similar potential for transcendence in The Human Condition. She describes work as the fundamental activity of human existence and distinguishes between three different activities: Labour, Work and Action that range from individual to societal importance.

Labour, Work and Action

Labour is the activity of the Animal Laborans, the individual human being who pursues its basic needs for the mere preservation of life. That is, according to Arendt, it is a mostly reactive activity, because men is subject to the urge to preserve and maintain one' s own life. To achieve this, one produces goods for immediate consumption by themselves. Here the immanent ephemeral quality also becomes clear, which is connected with labour through the process of returning and passing, reproducing, producing and consuming goods.

In contrast to this, Arendt describes under the term work an activity that is designed to produce a worldliness, that physically locates the human being and thereby enables it to orientate oneself. To achieve this, men construct the world around them, they act as Homo Faber. This entails the production of durable objects. For Arendt, durable means that they can be used for a longer period of time than it took to produce them, which reveals the difference to the previously outlined concept of labour. Arendt sees her rendered image of human activities as hi-

erarchical. While she recognises that labour and work are necessary elements of human life, she also explains that it is action, the activity of highest value in her opinion, that makes the characteristic difference the, very essence of a human being.

With action, the modus operandi of the Zoon Politicon, she describes a fundamentally different activity than labour and work. First of all, there is the immateriality of action, because in contrast to the physical products of the first two activities, action acts between people as a societal element and combines several aspects at once. Something that, in opposition to the naturally lasting products of work, must be continuously cultivated and maintained by the individuals of a society in order to achieve a lasting form. (Arendt, 2002)

On the one hand, it is closely linked to her concept of freedom, as it breaks away from the constraints of the Animal Laborans and the telos of Homo Faber and is therefore free in Arendt's eyes. For Arendt, freedom means the human ability to bring something new into the world, while action is the execution of this very freedom. On the other hand, it is linked to plurality, because the plurality and possible synergies or frictions between individuals with different skills, perspectives and views allow unexpected novelties to emerge. For Arendt, plurality also includes the ability of human beings to enter into exchange with others and enables individuals to recognise themselves through confrontation with those. (Passerin, 2019) In order to make this confrontation and exchange possible, two elements are required. On the one hand, Arendt sees language as the purest vehicle with which an individual can express oneself and, in the following step, communicate and interact.

On the other hand, this aforementioned confrontation can only happen through the presence of other people and therefore only in a public space. Thus, I would also like to introduce Arendt's ideas of private and public space which are closely related to the three activities and in particular action and why it is relevant for architects and urban planners who aim to create urban qualities but







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also push the boundaries of the profession beyond the spatial dimensions.

Private and Public

While labour and work are located in a private space and serve their individual users, public space is necessary for Action. Arendt's concept of a public space is unlike the ommon definition, not described through its physical nanifestation or its accessibility but stretches far beyond it. It is rather an intangible space where the political and social sphere of Action takes place. Public space thus takes on an even more important societal function, although it does not have to be accessible to everyone at all times like a public square, for instance. Even spaces with limited access such as cultural and educational institutions or even seemingly mundane places of work can be paces of plurality and freedom and thus become public spaces and spaces for action.

Considering this now on an urban scale and treating a city or parts of it as public space, it has to be more than its mere physical appearance and attain a social level, as described in Vita Activa. This means that a maximum of reedom and plurality must find its way into the cityscape on an individual level of the inhabitant as well as on an rban scale.

This is only possible if a city offers and juxtaposes a broad spectrum of publicly visible functions that reflect the plurality of its inhabitants. Fortunately, this urge for heterogeneity is not a paradox, but a synergy between plurality and urban qualities, as Louis Wirth shows in his text Urbanism as a way of Life, in which we find similarities to Arendt's approach towards a societal meaning. Wirth is looking from a sociological perspective for the criteria that define a city and create urban qualities, nam ing in particular three factors: size, density and the social structure of the inhabitants. While the first two criteria are purely quantitative parameters, the structure of the inhabitants is a qualitative one. He argues that a heterogeneous structure of the city's inhabitants contributes positively to urbanity. Urbanity is therefore relying on an

amalgamation of people from different social, economic and geographical backgrounds, as the following quotation shows, despite its partly questionable choice of words from today's point of view: "The City has thus historically been the melting-pot of races, peoples, and cultures, and a most favourable breeding-ground of new biological and cultural hybrids. It has not only tolerated but rewarded individual differences. It has brought together people from the ends of the earth because they are different and thus useful to one another, rather than because they are homogenous and like-minded."

He also argues that quantitative data is often inaccurate, because density or size usually only corresponds to reality at night, when people are at their homes, but urbanity always arises where human activity is present. (Wirth, 1938)

Despite these findings, Wirth goes on to render a rather negative view of people living together in an urban environment, implying that individual subgroups become increasingly isolated and that this eventually weakens the social cohesion between the various groups. He does not reach the formative societal capacity of public space that Arendt describes, and that appears in its strongest form in urban spaces that are consequently spaces for action. In combination of Wirth's statements with Arendt's concept of public space and the intrinsic capacity of human beings to express themselves, I conclude that a city needs to offer a dense and rich variety of spaces for different activities in order to facilitate a maximum of heterogeneity, incidents, chances, encounters and exchanges which thus become spaces for action.



Spatial Patterns of Maastricht

Maastricht, as the city of research, has a long history as an industrial city, with the production sites of a paper mill and a ceramics factory still in the immediate proximity to the city centre and having their roots in the industrialisation during the nineteenth century. Nevertheless, maps that locate land uses in the city also show that new workplaces are settling in particular in the outer fringes and that the city centre is becoming increasingly domesticated and homogenised by consumer activities, mainly serving the tourist sector. This is further promoted by the development of new suburban industrial areas in the currently not very well-connected area north of the city, as planned in the course of the Belvedere Plan, whose legal status and validity have been partially withdrawn. (Geerts, 2021)

This also means that the visibility of the diversity of activities is lost, as these labour and work activities, are consequently largely hidden from the public eye, although a stronger presence of such activities would contribute to the plurality mentioned by Arendt and thus help to further foster the use of public space as a space of human interaction. The reintroduction of heterogeneous uses such as the combination of industrial and domestic activities, labour work and action brings not only the aforementioned spatial qualities but also, bringing them to visibility and supporting a city as a space of actions rather than reactions.

Workspaces

Material extraction	Distribution
raw materials + chemicals	transport + storage
recycling	vehicle sale + repair
	wholesale food
Manufacturing	wholesale other
metals + machinery	Consumption
rubber + glass	professional service
manufacturing other	retail
construction	horeca

Workspaces can be meaningful places, both personally and spatially, as various examples in the following paragraphs are going to demonstrate. First of all, however, it is important to understand that it is not a matter of places whose primary focus is to exchange time and skills for a salary, but rather a more profound understanding of workplaces, such as Martin Heidegger's, which allows us to recognize the genuine significance of these spaces. Heidegger calls these places, the World of Work, places that allow us to do something, places that enable us to be

concerned about the activity itself. (Gibbs, 2008) In this way, he underlines the usability and potentiality of these spaces, considering them almost as a tool, like a hammer. What precisely can be produced with a tool or a space is determined on the one hand by the intention of the user, and on the other hand by the range of possible applications that a tool can be used for. However, it is important that this is never about the tool itself, but about the significance and the meaning that it allows one to achieve. In this way, the place of work can be a space for meaningful activities, but at the same time, he warns against treating a worker's efforts as a consumable resource, as is likely to be the case in many salaried employments. (Heidegger, 1992) Workspaces integrate individuals spatially, creating a bein-here and enabling pathways of engagement and exchange or comfort and safety. "Many times, this means to extend and expand one's body to other bodies. To create a collective body through networks of kin, to be able to collectively weigh heavy, to resist displacement, to become space." (Pourabbasi & Abbasi, 2022)



The film *Mon garage, mon paradies* shows how a garage can offer a space for personal retreat but also a space that promotes social cohesion and can therefore be meaningful place on a wider scale. The men and women work and sometimes live in their self-built garages, which become imaginative interior spaces. In the evenings, they meet to drink together, talk about their concerns and worries or go to the sauna (in a garage, of course). Here, the extraordinary poetic potential of the industrious uses becomes evident.

In an interview, director Natalja Yefimkina emphasises the garage's potential as a place for a broad diversity of individuals:

[...] "we were there once before with a feature film, I was in the directing team and was responsible for the extras, and that is why. Everything I had to get, I got in the garages and then I realised that the whole life takes place in the garages and that is why I went back and made this film. [...] I wanted to create a sociology of a country, through the people, through the ordinary people, and in the garages you find the young as well as the old, you will find the outsiders as well as the engineers or the musicians, and that's why I was able to tell a story of Russia from the bottom up through the garages."

The garages become personal refuge where meaningful work and employment can be carried out, acting as the bonding device between the users, creating social relationships and give optimism in an otherwise harsh environment. This is especially illustrated by the example of a protagonist who does metalwork for his neighbours and family. He describes quite drastically, what his garage means to him since he has been suffering from Parkinson's disease. "The garage is our saviour, I spend half my life in the garage, if it wasn't for the garage I would have shot myself long ago if I had anything to do it with." (Yefimkina, 2018)



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I visited a similar space of confidence myself, although was run by a welfare organisation and therefore much more institutional than the self-managed garages mentioned previously. The AK Werk in Kirchen is a company where people with mental and intellectual disabilities work who are unable to find a job on the primary labour market. In this way, they are able to participate socially, increase their self-esteem and have a structured daily routine. From n economic viewpoint, the company is able to cover its osts by assembling cable chains and distributing them o local manufacturers. The staff hierarchy is very horizontal, most of the employees work independently can organise their task themselves. This leads to an increased sense of responsibility and ownership, which is the reason many employees rearrange and redesign their workplaces themselves to better fulfil their tasks. A sense of appropriation can also be seen in a great amount of small details that decorate the individual workspaces, such as photos and banners from rival football teams. The rooms are equipped with the most basic furniture, much of it seems improvised, some of the furniture is built by the employees themselves in order to adapt it to the demands of the job ut also to their personal needs. In addition to workplaces, places of retreat and gathering are an important element of the everyday working life and have been established with the help of simple means such as canopies. Under the canopy of the distribution area, employees from different departments meet for short breaks with a smoke and a coffee. If a staff member needs some silence or privacy, again a canopy sheltering an emergency exit at the back of the building serves as a place of retreat. In my perception, a societal ambition could be to not only accommodate people with disabilities, such as the employees of AK Werk, in their own system, but to promote greater inclusion and mixing with other parts of society. This would lead to a improved visibility of this group of people, and make workplaces more heterogeneous and meaningful, although it has to be taken into account that such a system also assures the employees that their special needs and requirements can be met.





We want to positively change ne public spa mediate vicini

edre not a highly qualified Ill with high-tech equipment everywhere. We work with ba-, let's say craftsmanship andards, and organise a lot elves. The tables are all lf-built. They just identify



Another interesting example that offers workspaces, a community as well as an interesting double meaning is located in the south off Maastricht, near the city park. Het Werkgebouw is collective of small businesses, artists and designers. It is a former military building in the Tapijnkazerne that was previously used as a warehouse and was renovated and transformed in 2013 with the aim of creating workspaces as well as forming a community that uses and operates these spaces. Behind them, there is another façade made up of a bricolage of window formats and colours that invite you to look in or even enter through the often open doors and creates an inbetween space. Surprisingly, the interior does not reveal the individual units, but rather a large space with individual object-like room constructions at the back of the building and an accumulation of tools and materials such as wooden boards or steel barrels. Occupational units, if separated at all, are divided by movable partitions such as rollable shelves. A shared kitchen serves as a meeting point for coffee or collective lunches, but also during working hours the members support each other to make Het Werkgebouw also a social construct. "We all have our own workshop, but we share our knowledge and benefit from each other's network. We regularly visit each other, drink a cup of coffee together and ask each other's opinion. Occasionally we use each other's tools or machines. More and more often surprising collaborations arise between disciplines and with materials that at first sight have nothing to do with each other." In addition to the workshop rooms, there is also the Toonzaal, a showroom that is used by each member for two months of the year and in which the products made here are exhibited or workshops on arts and crafts are organised. This public access and the impact achieved is very important for the community, as is the activation of the surrounding urban space. "We want to positively change the public space in our immediate vicinity. For example,

at the Tapijnkazerne we turned a dilapidated gas station into a swing station and we made a special urban furniture. In short, where we are, it becomes more fun." Het Werkgebouw, the adjacent buildings of the university, the in between situated square with an old petrol station and the city park create interesting relationships in the public space and for Maastricht untypical and multilayered urban qualities emerge. In the afternoons, students linger here or children play and swing, the workspaces expand outwards, saws are being rolled out of Het Werkgebouw, wooden slats are sorted and cut while walkers stroll along the ruins of the old city wall just a few metres away. (Het Werkgebouw)

for an inclusive and just city.

For my project, anthropological philosophy offers interesting principles and insights that contribute to comprehending work as a human activity and recognising and cultivating meaningful work. Work can become meaningful on different levels, whereby the individual level forms the basis, with a possibility to develop further impact in a collective way. That this is not just a philosophical intellectual exercise is shown by concrete examples, even if these situations are often more complex than theoretical ideas. If these or other ways of meaningful workspaces find their way more often into an urban context, they also increase the diversity within a city, promoting exchange and interaction between different residents, activities and social strata. This heterogeneity ultimately contributes to social coexistence and thus unfolds its society-shaping effect that is much needed

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Photos & Illustrations

1. Varda, A. (2000). [Still] Les glaneurs et la glaneus 2. own illustration 3. Yefimkina, N. (2018). [Still] Mon garage mon paradies 4. Yefimkina, N. (2018). [Still] Mon garage mon paradies 5. own photo 6. Bogaerts, B. (2016). [Industrious activities in an urban context]. Architectureworkroom.Eu. https://www.architec. room.eu/en/projects/528/atelier-brussel-productive-metropolis 7. own photo 8. Photo by Dilara Turgut 9. own illustration