

# Shifting Values | Prioritising Prosperity

Exploring how to feasibly introduce postgrowth transitions creating legitimacy in traditionally growth-based societies on the example of Germany.

## Acknowledgements

Master thesis - P5 report

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My grandparents Gerlind and Peter

My parents Heike and Philip

Most of all Alina

## Abstract

Germany is on a path of building significant amounts of new housing stock which implies high resource use and associated emissions. However, fundamental principles of national spatial development are not in line with these policies and substantial sustainability transitions still lack legitimacy in parts of society. These parts of the nation spatially coincide with areas where the people's basic needs are not met as well as in other areas. This thesis explores how interlinking notions from the theory on human needs satisfaction with cultural politics can help to build legitimacy which is a precondition for substantive societal transformations such as introducing satiation for sustainability purposes. Achieving this legitimacy makes sustainability transitions feasible. The interlinking can be used to create criteria for practices that are capable of putting this interlinking into action. These criteria are:

- Synergistic satisfying behaviour
- Outside of traditional market logics
- Bottom-up in nature
- Integrative mode of operation
- Networking

Spatial types for strategic degrowth prefiguration are developed and tested in the city of Dessau. Implementing these can support society moving towards introducing satiation as a core principle. The implementation of the spatial types can happen inside of the existing urban fabric and has the potential to utilize spaces that are under-utilized right now like fallow areas or vacant buildings. Starting off from the existing elements in space, physically and programmatically, greatly increases the feasibility of such approaches.

## Keywords

satiation  
legitimacy  
Soziokultur  
strategic degrowth prefiguration  
sustainability transition  
human needs-based development  
Dessau  
Germany

## Glossary

### Satiation

Satiation refers to a society meeting all its essential needs. The idea that needs can be fully satisfied goes against one of the oldest, least challenged axioms of economy, effectively stating that greater consumption always leads to greater satisfaction. The idea implies that human wellbeing is multidimensional and that economic growth cannot be the one and only answer on how to improve it. (Pettini & Musikanski, 2023; Savini, 2024b)

### Legitimacy

Whether or not something (e.g. a spatial measure) has the backing of the people concerned with it and/or its consequences. Key issue in substantial societal transitions. Issue of spatial justice and feasibility of transitions. May be created through societal discourse, for example through the process of Prefiguration, Popularization & Pressure. (Meissner, 2021; Savini, 2024b, 2024a)

### Prefiguration

Prefiguration refers to the process of performing practices that differ from the existing bigger context they are performed in with the goal of proving their viability. In a movement this can mean that its ends are already reflected in its means. The first step of and prerequisite to cultural societal change. (Meissner, 2021)

### Spatial Justice

Is social justice through a spatial lens. At TU Delft Bouwkunde it has been conceptualized in three dimensions: distributive justice (concerning the spatial distribution of burdens and benefits of having a society), procedural justice (concerning the systems and processes governing space) & recognitional justice (concerning how to deal with the diversity of humans in all kinds of dimensions connected to identity in a just way) (Rocco, 2023)

### Degrowth

Is a perspective on development which acknowledges that traditional economic growth is not sustainable and can never be sustainable long term. It challenges almost all basic assumptions on

development in western industrialized societies. It acknowledges satiation as a core principle. Degrowth is a postgrowth approach that focusses on issues of downscaling. (Pettini & Musikanski, 2023; Savini, 2024b)

### Doughnut

Is for the intents and purposes of this thesis a general term describing the safe space for human development. It was introduced by Kate Raworth as a model for economics and is constructed of an upper and a lower limit to human activity. The upper limit is the sum of the planetary boundaries introduced by (Rockström et al., 2009) and the lower limits are social minimums (such as basic human needs). (Raworth, 2018)

### Soziokultur

Is a German term, it emerged from practice and is thus a bit of an umbrella term. As an introduction I will cite the federal association Soziokultur: "Soziokultur is a programmatic term referring to discourses, contents, forms of practice and organization which relate societal life and cultural expression onto each other. It opens itself towards diverse perspectives on what culture is, through means of cultural participation empowers civil engagement as well as creative-cultural competence of many - regardless of age, gender and origin - and is in this way searching for answers to the question how we want to life."(Bundesverband Soziokultur, 2024)

## Table of contents

Chapter 01 - Contextualisation	11	Chapter 03 - Theory formation	35	Chapter 05 - Research by Design	73	Chapter 08 - Discussion and Conclusion	105
400.000!	12	Part One: A society meeting all its fundamental needs	36	Priority #0: Redirect already rolling balls	74	Discussion	106
Plain necessity?	13	Part Two: The cultural politics needed for degrowth legitimacy building	39	Priority #1: Grow seeds	76	Conclusion	108
A national problem?	14	Part Three: Marrying the theories	40	Priority #2: Keep the microclimate in mind	78	Reflection	109
Why though?	16	Spatializing the criteria	42	Priority #3: Match the types	80		
The oxymoronic sustainability situation in Germany	17	#1 The Regular Guest	44	Priority #4: Add housing	84	Bibliography	111
Why housing is only the tip of the German sustainability iceberg	18	#2 The Happening	45	Priority #5: Sensible relations shape space	86	Figure sources	112
Dessau: a prime example	19	#3 The Specific Space	46	Relation of the priorities and the theory	88	Literature	114
Problem statement	20	#4.1 The Niche Platform	47				
		#4.2 The Greenspace	48	Chapter 06 - Scenario design	89		
Chapter 02 - Research design	23	#5 The Civic Platform	49	Scenario #1 - Enjoying	90	Appendix	117
Academic positioning	24	#6 The Center	50	Scenario #1 - Enjoying - Reference examples	92		
Conceptualization of legitimacy	26	#7 The Movement	51	Scenario #2 - Making	94		
Research question	28	Spatial types of strategic degrowth prefiguration	52	Scenario #2 - Making - Reference examples	96		
Methods	30	Chapter 04 - Analysis	55	Design conclusions	98		
Research design	31	Population dynamics in Dessau	56	Reality check	100		
Theory formation process	32	Focus area: Innerstädtischer Bereich Süd	58	Conclusions to be fed back into the theory	101		
Conceptual framework	33	Housing	60	Conclusions on the conceptual framework	102		
		Open space	64	Outlook	103		
		Cultural amenities	68				



## Chapter 01

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# Contextualisation

400.000!

A start for this thesis was a peculiar goal set up by the German federal government, at the time a coalition comprised of the social democrats (SPD), the green party (B90/Die Grünen) and the neoliberal party (FDP). They declared soon after they took office that it is their goal to have 400.000 new housing units (HU) built per year in Germany. The stated reason for this motion was a supposed shortage in the housing market which is felt by people not being able to find affordable housing. A lack of options for affordable housing is a real problem in many cities in Germany.

However, this massive undertaking, which was not fulfilled before the coalition broke, made me, a novice urban and regional planning student at the time, curious as I felt that it somehow was not coherent with what I had been learning about the goals of spatial development and with the priorities that we were taught in our studies. As the climate crisis (and other crises of overstepping planetary boundaries) had of course been in full swing already, a lot of my studies were putting the core matter of our studies into relation to these crises or were even making these crises core matter of our studies. From this education it was an important perspective inherent to the planner's identity to always critically question new building activity and to prioritize working with existing

stock as well as to prevent urban expansion. So naturally I started questioning the goal of building 400.000 new HU each year.

As the contents of my studies were defined by a commission of the 'chamber' of planners, they closely reflected the spearhead of the professional planning discourse in Germany. Thus it was no wonder that not only I myself questioned this but that my questioning of this issue reflected concerns of a wide array of planners in Germany, which in fact culminated in an open letter to the social democrat Minister for Housing, Urban Development and Building signed by a lot of planning scientists, teachers and practitioners in which a 'Abrissmoratorium' (a moratorium on demolition) was called for. This open letter did not directly criticize the 400.000 new HU per year but contrasted the implications of that goal with a variety of issues in getting the building sector in line with the German sustainability targets which it was not and still is not (Expertenrat für Klimafragen, 2024, p. 45). This discourse around the housing situation in Germany is the starting point for a venture into fundamental questions of sustainability transitions and more importantly societal emergence/formation of pathways.



Fig.: 1 Discourse on housing stock in Germany

## Plain necessity?

Starting off it is useful to further dissect the supposed need for 400.000 new HU per year. A first contrast I want to show emerges if one compares the emergence of this supposed need with statistics about the development in the amount of housing area per person since the German reunification. The housing area per person rose from 34,9 m<sup>2</sup>/p in 1991 to 47,5m<sup>2</sup>/p in 2023(DESTATIS, 2023). (As the ground data cannot be collected so often the uptick in 2010 is attributed to a correction based on new ground data.) That is an increase of around 36% since the reunification. Of course, this can be put into the context of changing living configurations and other trends but fundamentally, spoken figuratively, the same house where previously 3 people lived is now only housing 2 people with the third person building a new flat. So, do we have an actual shortage of housing or are we inflating the living area per person?

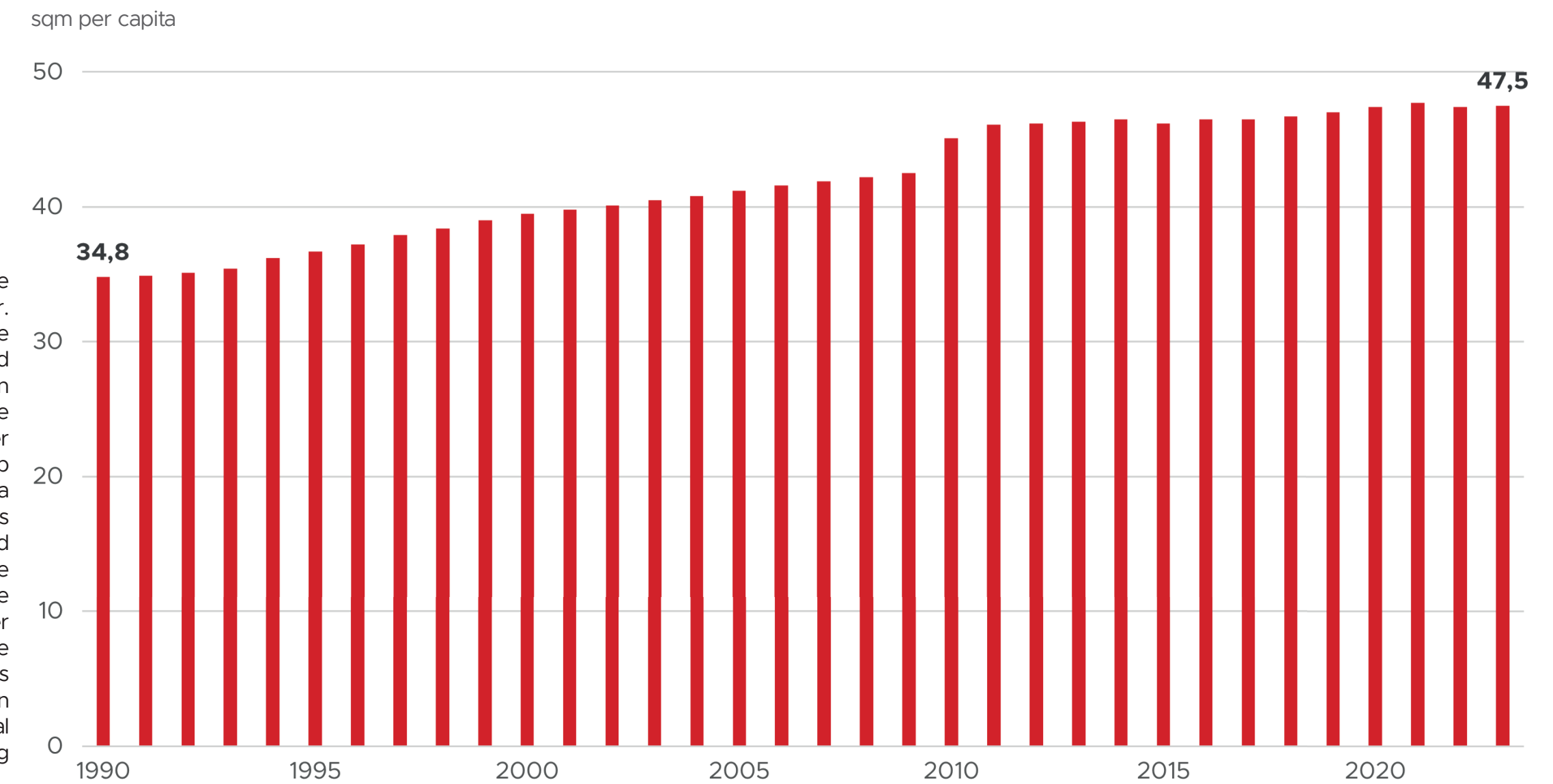
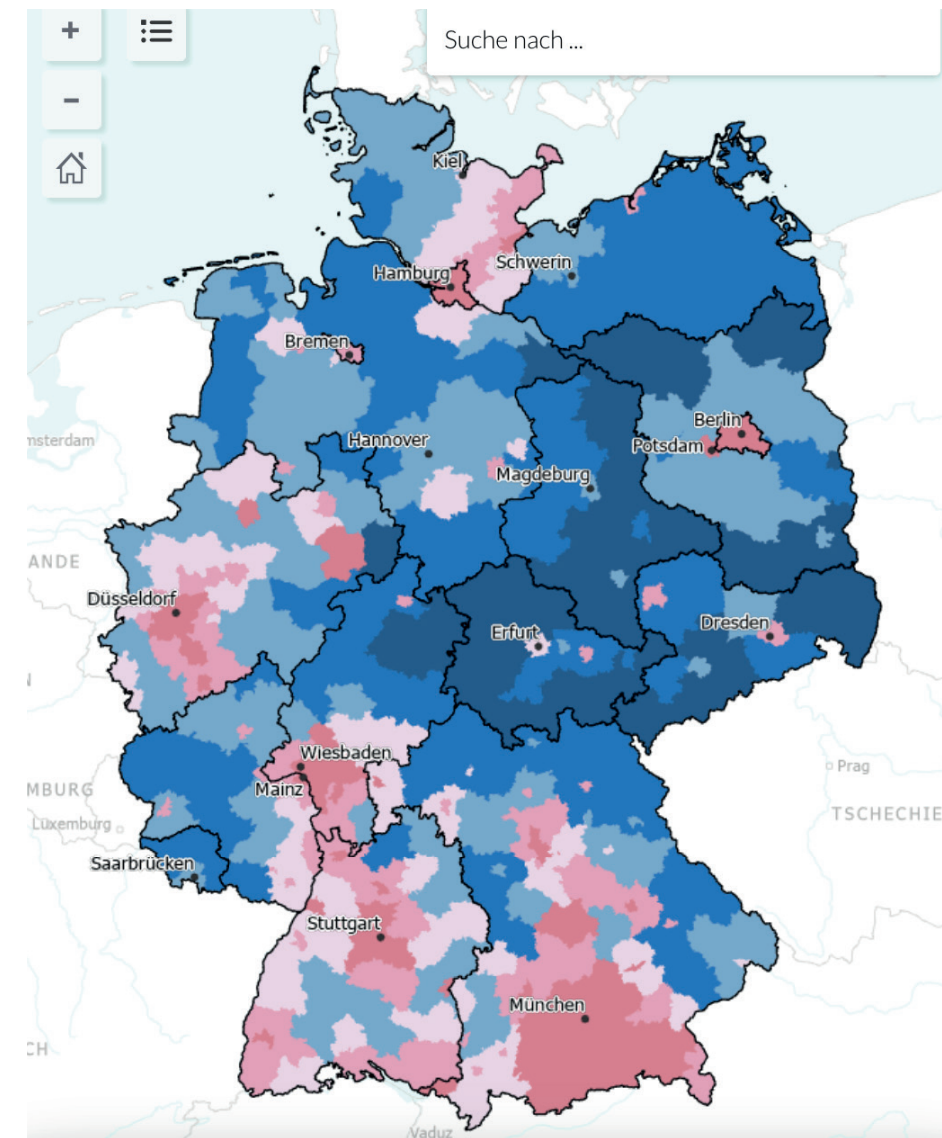


Fig.: 2 Average housing area per person by year (adapted from Umweltbundesamt, 2024)

# A national problem?

The situation becomes even more nuanced if you take a look at where this supposed need is located in Germany and if you contrast the supply/demand ratio in the hotspots of this supposed need with the areas of Germany where this is absolutely not a problem. A pattern emerges that the 'German housing shortage' is actually a phenomenon which exists predominantly in the former West-Germany and in commuting range of Berlin. A shortage of affordable housing is at the same time more predominant in cities than in rural areas. This can on one hand be seen on the differences in real estate prices (development area as well as offer rent values) and on the other, more important side on the distribution of empty housing units in Germany. On one hand booming towns mostly in western Germany are having soaring real estate prices (hinting at a great expectation to be able to make money with *new* developments) and soaring rents due to the amount of market demand while at the other hand entire strokes of land in east Germany where the ratio of empty housing units exceeds 10%. So not only is housing shortage not a problem in the entirety of Germany, but there is even significant unutilized capacity.



**Building plot prices in €/sqm**

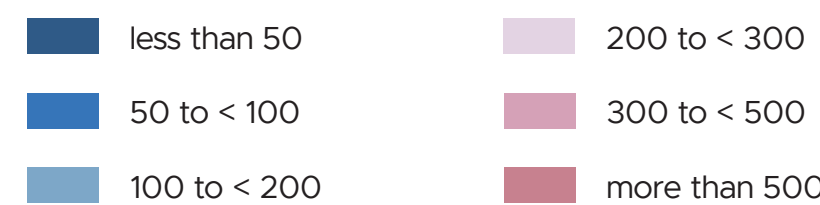
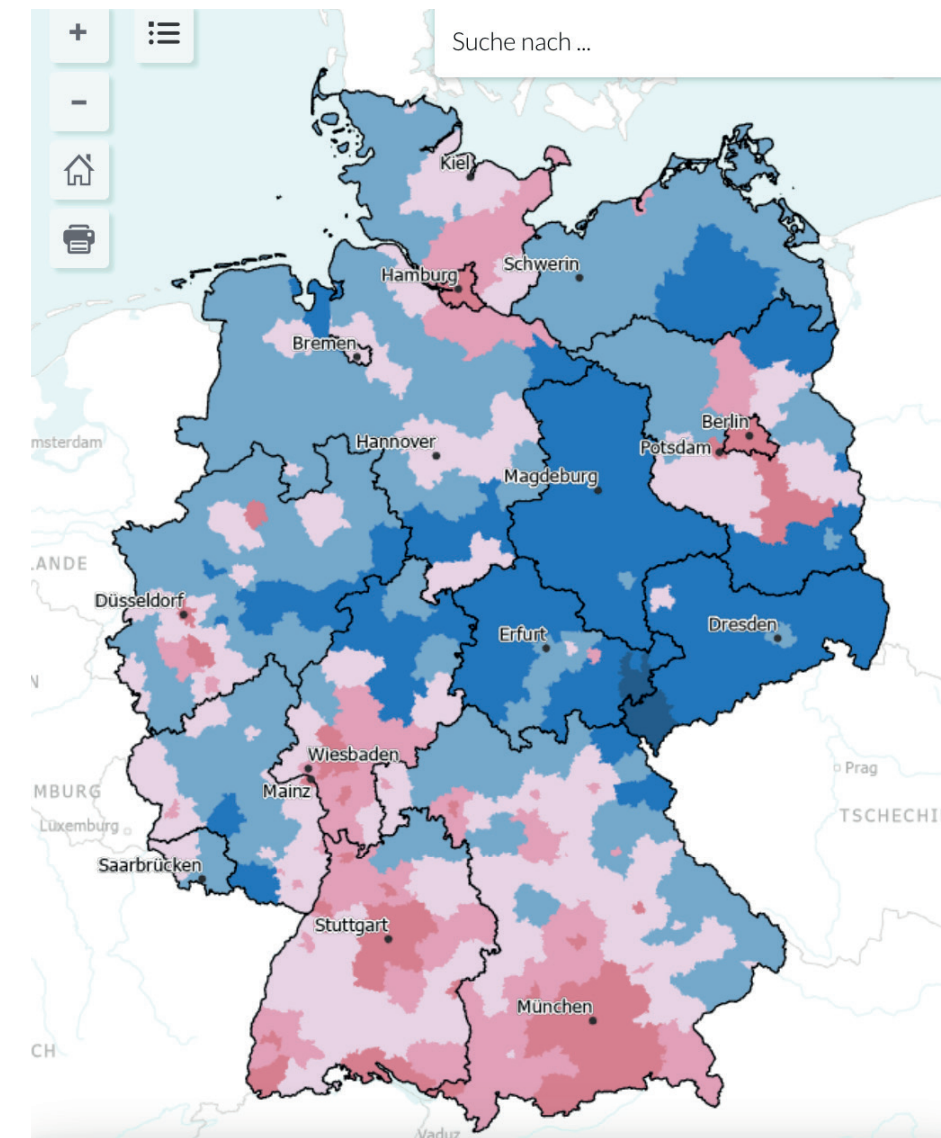


Fig.: 3 Building plot prices for detached and semidetached homes in 2022 by district (Nielsen et al., n.d.)



**Basic rent when re-rented in €/sqm**

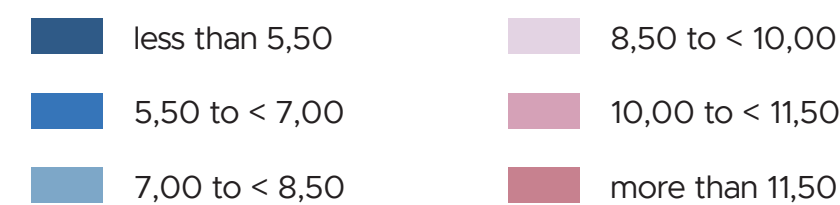
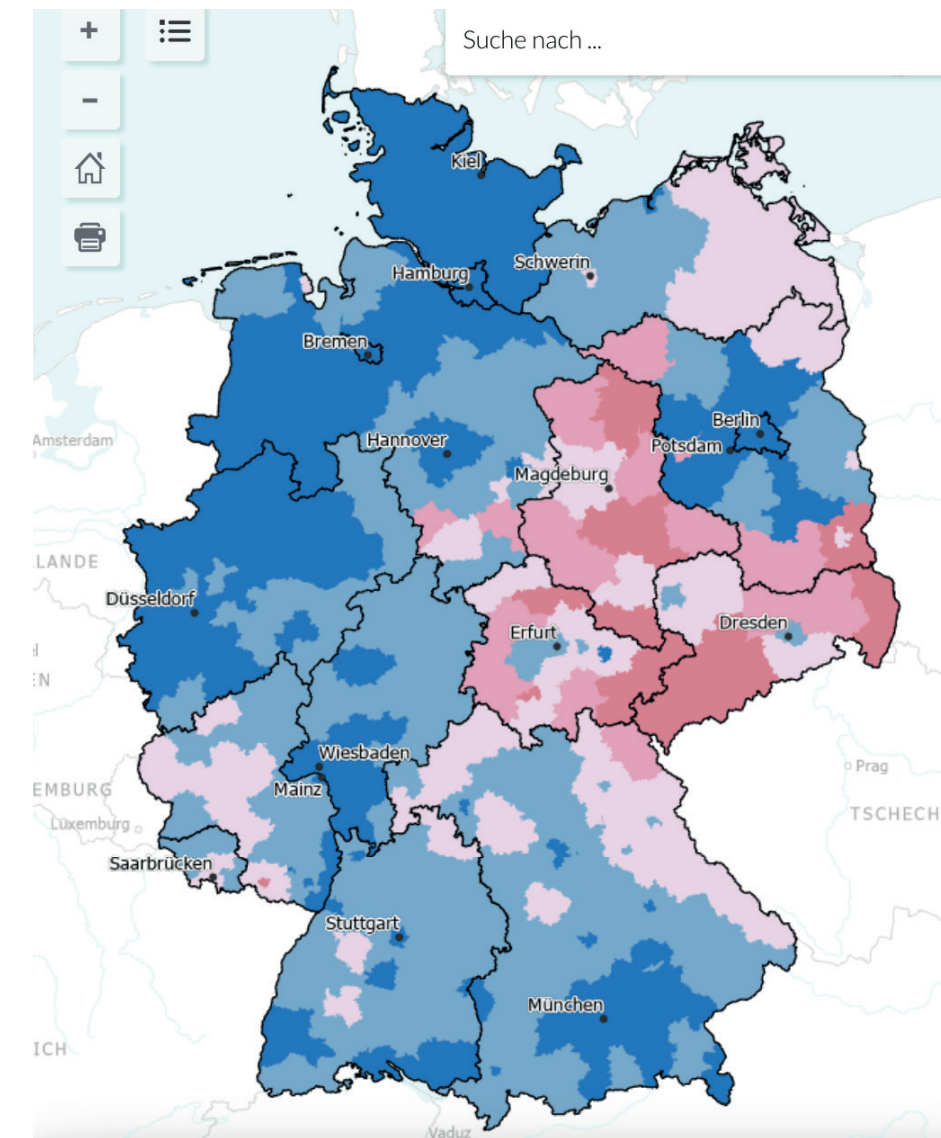


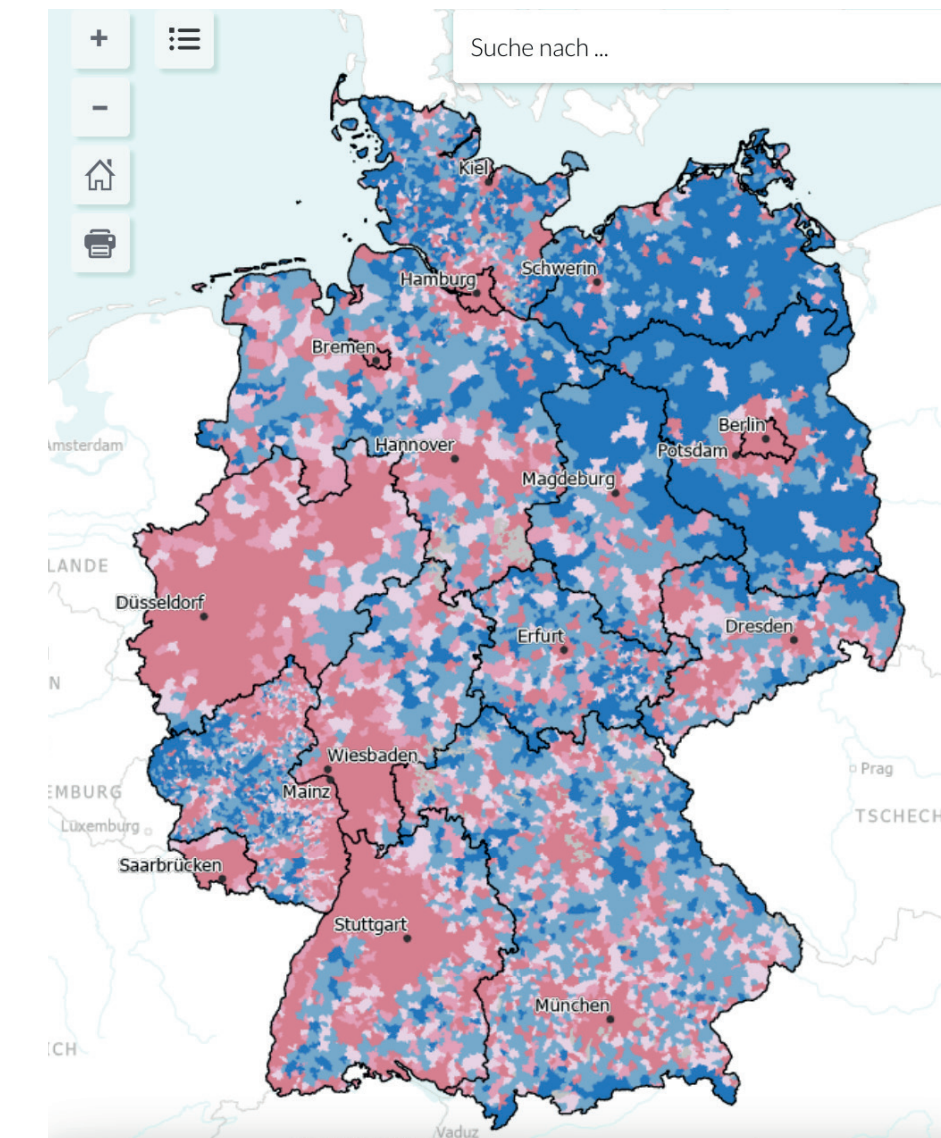
Fig.: 4 Basic rent when re-rented in 2023 by district (Brack et al., n.d.)



**Fraction of empty housing units of total housing units in %**



Fig.: 5 Fraction of empty housing units of total number of housing units in 2022 by district (Nielsen & Schürt, n.d.)



**Inhabitants per sqkm**

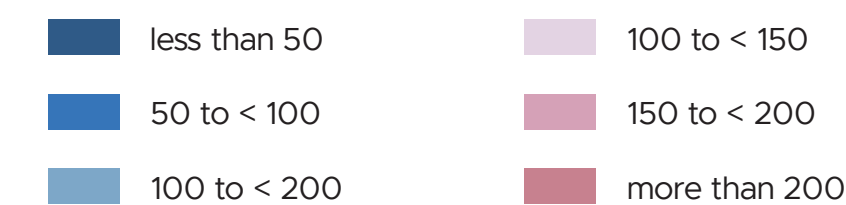
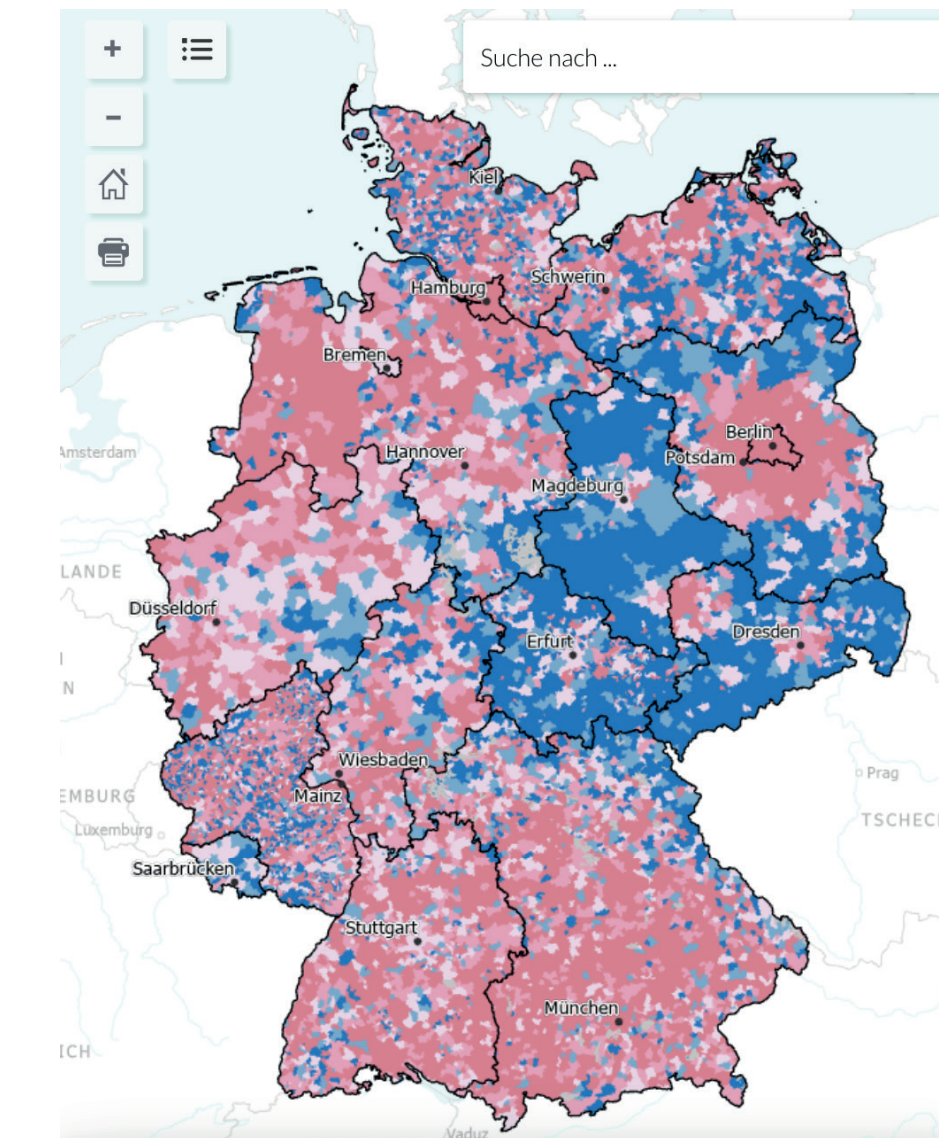


Fig.: 6 Population density in 2022 by municipality (Grohmann & Porschke, n.d.a)



**Average population development per year in %**

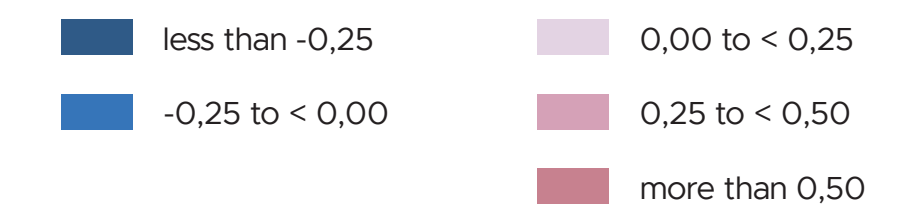


Fig.: 7 Dynamic of population between 2017 and 2022 per year by municipality (Grohmann & Porschke, n.d.b)

## Why though?

Average values of the six clusters	Urban			Rural		
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Social welfare quota (under the age of 65)	7,1	9,7	16,1	4,3	6,4	9,9
Yearly household-income per person	27.032	21.450	19.133	23.950	21.697	19.106
Amount of municipal taxes per person	1.498	1.007	720	1.039	773	577
Fraction of people leaving school without at least the lowest degree	6,0	5,8	8,5	5,3	6,0	9,0
Life expectancy of a newborn	81,7	80,8	79,6	81,7	80,5	79,7
Average yearly migration saldo of 18-29 year-olds (promille)	41,5	46,1	27,9	9,9	-2,1	-11,2
Fraction of households with an internet connection speed >50 mbit/s	90,1	92,7	88,4	73,2	64,9	50,8
Access index: average number of diverse provision locations within a 1 km radius from place of residence	5,3	5,4	5,4	2,2	1,2	1,0
Amount of countys within the cluster	19	51	51	89	133	58

Fig.: 8 Indicators used for the cluster analysis (Sixtus et al., 2019)

The developments on the housing market and the resulting discourse cannot be analyzed in isolation. The excess market demand in some parts of the nation as well as the lack thereof in other regions is the direct consequence of how the population is spatially distributed. We can see on the map depicting the spatial distribution of population density that while the structure is somewhat disperse throughout the nation, that western Germany is generally more densely populated than east Germany. If we take a look at the population dynamics the picture becomes clearer as the areas in Germany where there is significant free housing capacity are generally also the areas where there is a negative population dynamic. Whilst these dynamics might have at a small

scale quite distinct reasons, they can generally be attributed to people deciding on simple questions like 'do I like living here' and 'is there a perspective living here'. These questions have a lot to do with the issue of societal access (e.g. mobility, health, goods, education, culture). If we compare the areas in Germany with negative population dynamics to the spatial differences in societal access (Sixtus et al., 2019) the resemblance is striking and to be expected at the same time. Places most affected by both empty capacity, shrinking population and lack off societal access might be conceptualized as 'left behind places' although the term is subject to contestation (Pike et al., 2024).

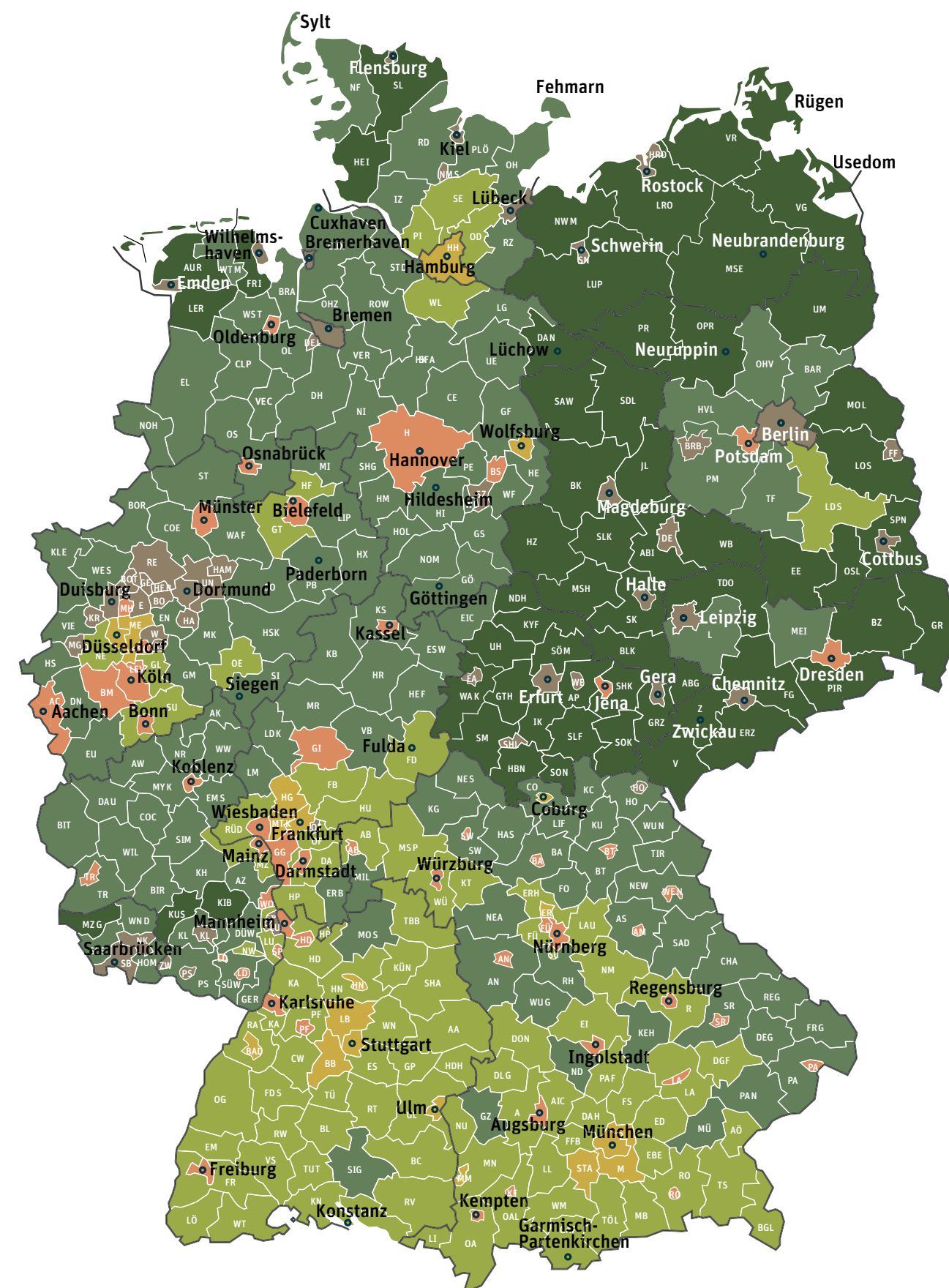


Fig.: 9 Cluster analysis „societal access“ at municipal level (Sixtus et al., 2019)

## The oxymoronic sustainability situation in Germany

As I hinted at before, there is a lot of incoherence in this juxtaposition between having a lot of unused housing capacity, an increasing amount of living area per person and claiming the need for and stating the goal of building 400.000 new HU per year. But the incoherence does not end within this juxtaposition but continues as one takes into account other stated goals which already have been cast into hard law: for the intends and purposes of this thesis the German federal spatial planning law as well as the general German Climate Protection Act ('Klimaschutzgesetz'). §1 Abs. 2 ROG defines the general vision under which all spatial planning activity in Germany has to happen:

“Directive-vision in fulfilling the task defined in Abs.1 is a sustainable spatial development which brings the social and economic demands on space into harmony with its ecological functions and which leads to a stable [as in durable/permanent], balanced at large scale spatial structure with equal valued living contexts in its parts”  
The way this should be achieved is also described in the paragraph after (§1 Abs. 3 ROG), where a combined system of top-down and bottom-up approaches is laid out. So, the top-down direction has to take into account the diverse needs of its parts, but ultimately the parts have to follow the top-down directives.

In this goal definition for all spatial planning in Germany there are several parts with which the situation I am discussing is not coherent with:

- **Sustainable:** The direction the government has taken is not sustainable as according to it there should be increasing development activity in the building sector which so far is already not hitting the sustainability targets
- **Balanced at large spatial structure:** The direction the government has taken is not coherent with this part as the spatial structure is not balanced now and the direction of the government will not alleviate this circumstance but rather strengthen the dynamics at play which go into the opposite direction
- **Equal valued living contexts:** as shown in the map about societal access, which involves things that are so basic that a lack thereof cannot be counterweighed with other things, there are no equal valued living contexts. As infrastructure for societal accessibility (health, goods, education

etc.) is often less viable to upkeep with declining population density the strengthening of such dynamics is counteracting this goal.

Although there is some leeway in defining what *harmony with the ecological functions of space* looks like, there are scientific findings in this field. Examples of these are the Planetary Boundaries framework introduced by (Rockström et al., 2009) or the Doughnut framework proposed by Kate Raworth which integrates the Planetary Boundaries as upper limits for all human activity with social basic requirements as minimums of human activity (Raworth, 2018). While there is a number of Planetary Boundaries that need to be addressed in order to not jeopardize a livable future of human life on this planet and while some of them are somewhat addressed by German legislation the big issue in the planetary boundaries (which is of course interwoven with the other ones) is climate change due to greenhouse gas emissions. The issue of climate change specifically is being addressed by the German 'Klimaschutzgesetz (KSG)' (*climate protection law*) which is one of the most conflict ridden pieces of legislation in recent times, as it has been revised multiple times either due to courts deciding that it is not far reaching, rigid enough or by politicians adjusting it to be more flexible (Expertenrat für Klimafragen, 2024, p. 92; Flachslund & Levi, 2021, p. 16). Regardless of the tug of war around it, it does exist and it is binding and it does set out 2045 as the year that Germany should reach net-carbon-neutrality. Every available way to reach that goal should be taken as it is tough to hit as is and as every early achievement in one sector makes reaching the total goals easier because it gives more flexibility to issues which are harder to solve. In addition to the issue of greenhouse gases there are plenty more issues inhibiting the viability of building new stock like nitrogen, surface sealing, resource use, availability of skilled workers needed for other efforts like energetic renovation of the stock which inhibit the viability of building new stock. New stock can still be sensible to build in some cases but Germany should be much more considerate about the impacts and thus more considerate and in depth when trying to address the issue at hand.

## Spatial Planning Act of the Federal Republic of Germany

- § 1 Task and guiding principle of regional planning  
(1) The entire territory of the Federal Republic of Germany and its sub-regions shall be developed, organized, and secured through regional plans, cooperation on spatial planning, and the coordination of spatially relevant plans and measures. In doing so,  
1. different requirements for a space need to be coordinated and conflicts arising at the respective planning level need to be resolved,  
2. provisions for individual uses and functions of the space need to be taken.  
(2) Directive vision in fulfilling the task defined in ¶ 1 is a sustainable spatial development which brings the social and economic demands on space into harmony with its ecological functions and which leads to a stable [as in durable/permanent], balanced at large scale spatial structure with equal valued living contexts in its parts.  
(3) The development, organization, and protection of the sub-regions shall be integrated into the conditions and requirements of the overall area; the development, organization, and protection of the overall area shall take into account the conditions and requirements of its sub-regions (countercurrent principle).  
(4) [...]  
(Raumordnungsgesetz (ROG) in the version of 22th December 2008)

## Why housing is only the tip of the German sustainability iceberg

When considering the complex system that a society is, it becomes likely looking at a single issue like housing that it might be a single but in fact not an isolated issue. It seems much more likely that such a phenomenon is rather one facet of a deeper lying problem complex. I deem this to be the case in Germany and the deeper lying issue at hand is a mismatch between proclaimed sustainability goals and the politics of actually getting there. A quick and dramatized perspective on this issue opens up in the overview of the political trend in Germany. There are multiple parties with varying approaches to sustainability which can be located on a simple scale between 'In favor of significant change for reaching sustainability' and 'against significant change for reaching sustainability'. If we consider parties over 5% national polling results at the time of writing (the general lower limit for parties to join the parliament) the two ends of this spectrum are the green party (in favor) and the AfD (decisively against; see quote). If we have a look on maps depicting polling results by state, we get a picture that is similar of the ones on the housing issue as well as on the issue of societal access: a distinct difference between west Germany as well as Berlin and east Germany. If Germany wants to reach sustainability goals gaining wide support for politics supporting this is a necessity. This support seems to be lacking nationwide, but especially in east Germany. The idea that solving the spatial disparities in Germany might help solving the German issues on reaching sustainability already comes to mind from the correlations I have drawn up. The conceptualization however of social stability as a prerequisite for sustainability has been long standing in theory as exemplified by the 5 P's from the preamble of the United Nations Agenda 2030 (United Nations, 2015, p. 3f). The need for Germany specifically to enhance the national equality in order to effectively tackle sustainability transitions is also highlighted in a very recent publication 'Earth4All Germany' published in combination by the two well renowned organizations 'Club of Rome' & 'Wuppertal Institut' (e.g. Club of Rome & Wuppertal Institut, 2024, p. 105f). If one wants to tackle the German issue around housing, the unequal valued living contexts and the German sustainability transition one should improve the situation in east Germany.

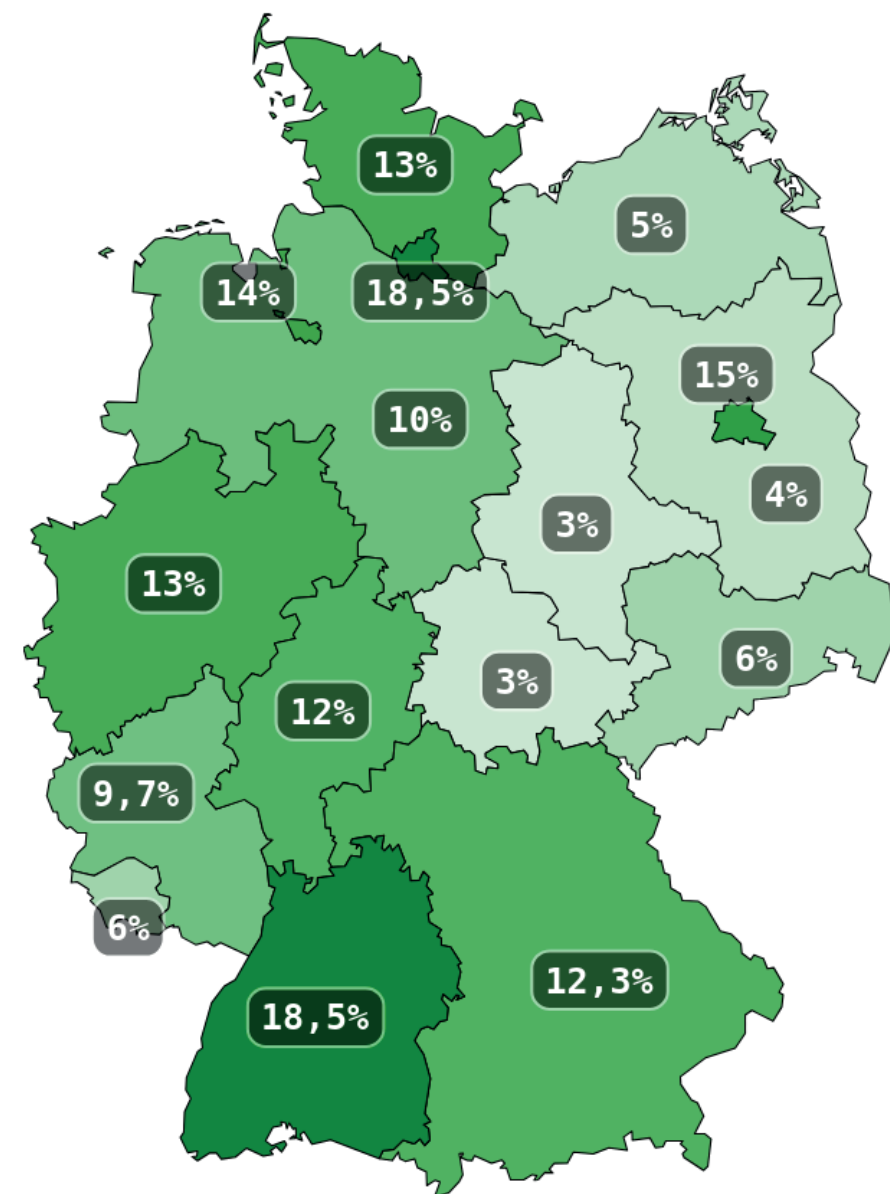


Fig.: 10 Current weighted polling averages of the green party („B90 / Die Grünen“) at state level (dawum, 2025a)

„The most vocal criticism of the just transition policies of the government comes from the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) party, which has spearheaded an aggressive media and political campaign against scientists and government officials working on the development of different energy and climate policies. The AfD influence relies on firmly rejecting the science behind the anthropogenic explanations, given to climate change, disregarding the overwhelming empirical evidence, and disseminating narratives that claim climate change policies are undemocratic, top-down mandates.“ (Aleksieva et al., 2024)

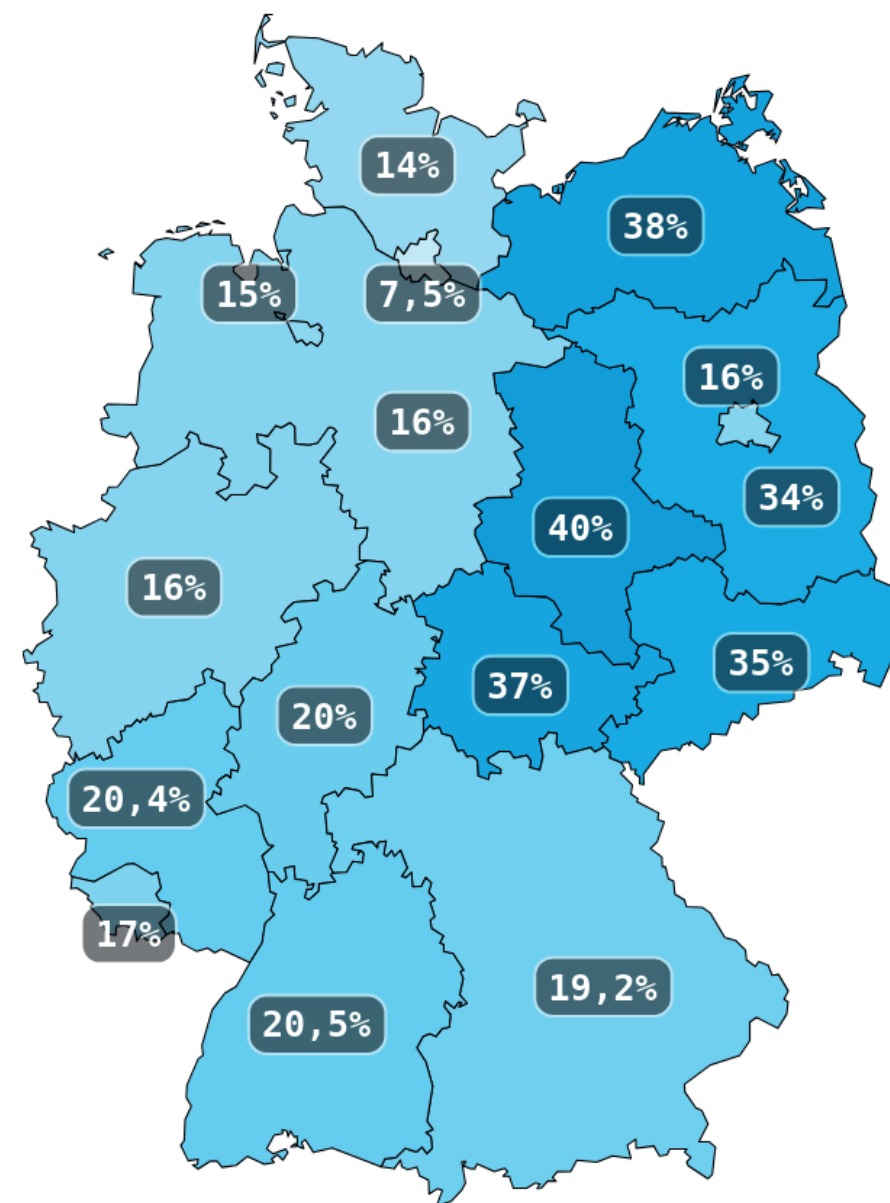


Fig.: 11 Current weighted polling averages of the right-wing party (AfD) at state level (dawum, 2025a)

## Dessau: a prime example

A good case example for the east German issues is the city of Dessau. It is situated on the gradient between the moderately denser south and the less dense north of east Germany. It is a typical east German city according to the cluster analysis on societal access. It has high votership for the AfD and little for the green party. It has a shrinking population. It is not in the vicinity of Berlin. It has a lot of empty housing capacity and they pose structural problems for the municipality as well. The surrounding region is combining characteristics found throughout east Germany. Thus, for studying specifics about possible solutions to the problem(s) described, Dessau is a good case.

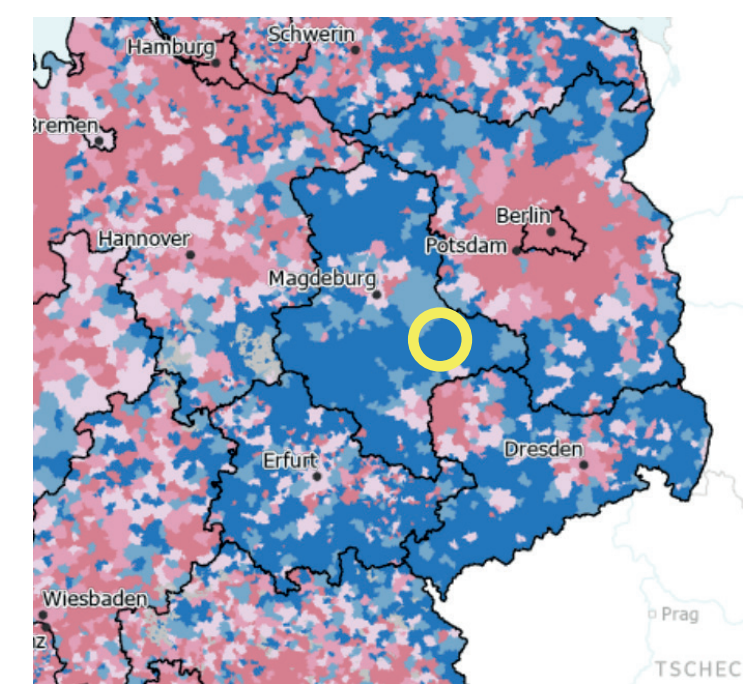


Fig.: 13 Fraction of empty housing units of total number of housing units in 2022 by district (Nielsen & Schürt, n.d.)

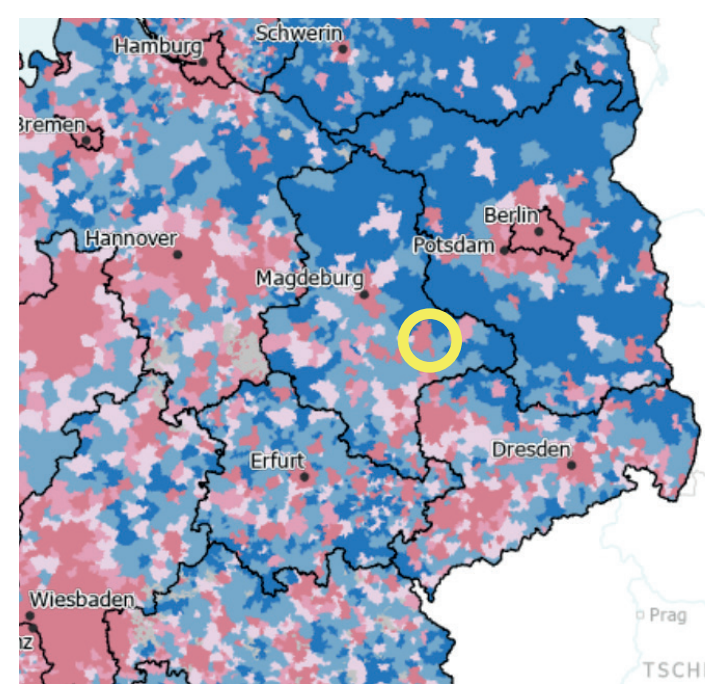


Fig.: 14 Population density in 2022 by municipality (Grohmann & Porschke, n.d.a)

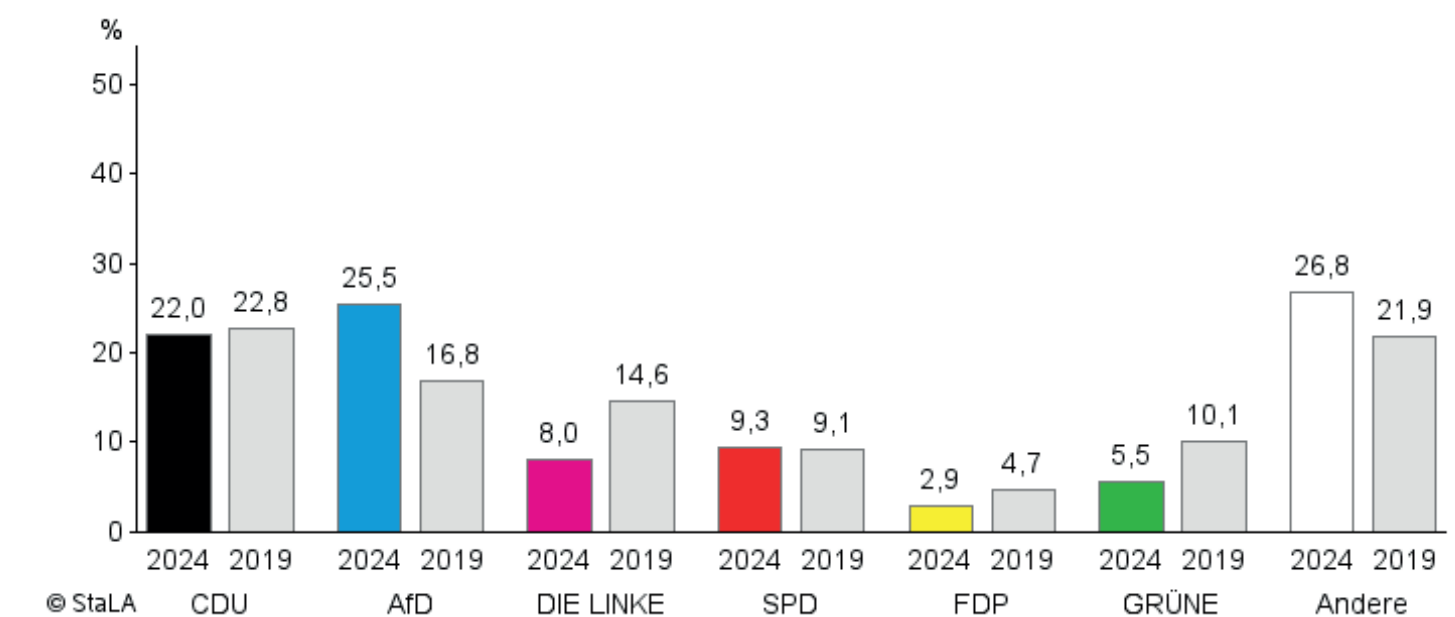


Fig.: 12 Election results for the Dessau city council on 06/09/2024 (Statistisches Landesamt Sachsen-Anhalt, 2024)

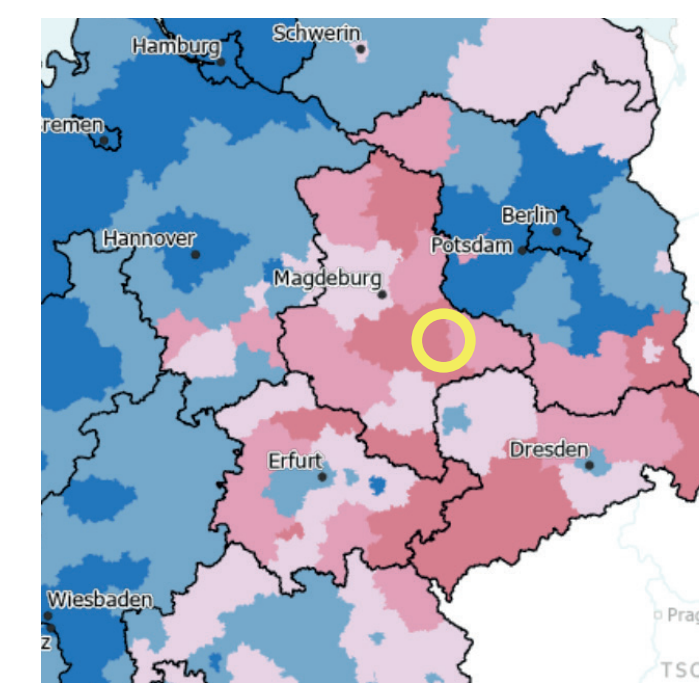


Fig.: 15 Dynamic of population between 2017 and 2022 per year by municipality (Grohmann & Porschke, n.d.b)

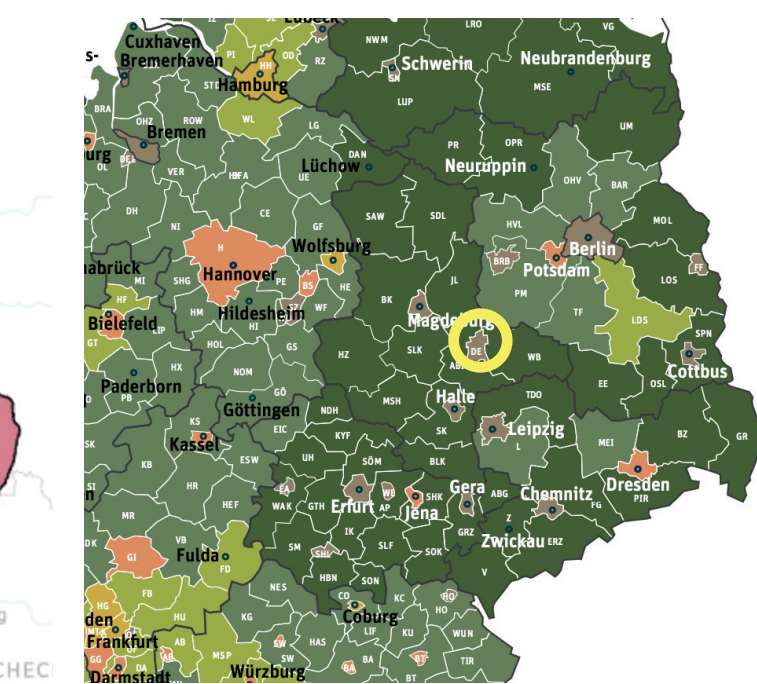


Fig.: 16 Municipal-level cluster analysis on different indicators of social, economic and supply access (Sixtus et al., 2019)

# Problem statement

Germany is on a path of building significant amounts of new housing stock which implies high resource use and associated emissions. This is not in line with sustainability efforts. The ultimate cause of this is national scale disparity in the quality of living contexts. The regions experiencing this also experience significant frustration with sustainability efforts which pose a threat to the success of national sustainability efforts. To improve the quality of living contexts and follow sustainability efforts one cannot rely on materialistic growth, thus an alternative approach is needed to restore the quality of living contexts as well as housing. A fundamental change in the approach to spatial development in Germany is necessary.

Housing project "Summer of Pioneers"  
**Twelve young people move to Dessau on a trial basis: What their experiences have been like**  
 In the „Summer of Pioneers“ project, young people move to Dessau-Roßlau to try out life in a rural area. The city aims to attract them with affordable housing and high quality of life.  
 Von Steffen Höhne Aktualisiert: 14.10.2024, 10:56

Herlo Gerdes steht auf seinem Balkon in Dessau-Roßlau. Er nimmt an dem Projekt "Summer of Pioneers" teil, das junge Großstädter Menschen nach Dessau lockt. Foto: Steffen Höhne

Empty housing stock in Saxony-Anhalt  
**Time to get out of Dessau-Roßlau**

The city reflected in the mirrors of the Bauhaus museum: Lots of space, plenty of housing space - what's missing is people  
 (Foto: Klaus-Dietmar Gabbert/picture alliance/dpa/dpa-Zentral)

Money needed for renovation  
**Association spokesperson defends sale of hundreds of apartments in Dessau**

**More than 2.700 apartments without tenants - Dessau-Roßlau has the highest housing vacancy rate in the country**  
 The association for housing industry has recorded the housing vacancies. Dessau-Roßlau stands out when it comes to municipally-owned housing  
 28.08.2022, 09:09

In Dessau-Roßlau stehen viele Wohnungen leer. Foto: Rutke Thomas Rutke

**High housing vacancies in Saxony-Anhalt**  
 Housing vacancy rate, 15/05/2022

Quelle: Zensus 2022

21 %
16 %
12 %
8 %
4 %
0 %

Fig.: 17 Press echo on empty housing in Dessau (collage of Eckwert, 2024, Herrmann, 2024, Salpius, 2024, MDR Sachsen-Anhalt, 2023, Höhne, 2022, "Über 2.700 Wohnungen ohne Mieter - Dessau-Roßlau mit höchster Leerstandsquote im Land", 2022)

## **Chapter 02**

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### **Research design**

# Academic positioning



Fig.: 18 Front pages of the papers shaping the academic positioning (Rydin, 2024; Savini, 2024a; Savini 2024b)

As explained in the previous chapter, the goal of my thesis is to find a way to upgrade the quality of life in the parts of eastern Germany which have surplus housing capacity to utilize this capacity as a step towards sustainability. As this effort is ultimately a sustainability effort the way this upgrading is achieved also must be sustainable. This leads to the academic context and part of the problem.

## Degrowth as a route towards sustainable development

This thesis builds on a recent discourse between Federico Savini and Yvonne Rydin in the journal 'Planning Theory'.

The discourse started with an article of Savini (2024b) in which he focusses on issues around degrowth as an alternative approach to sustainability. He characterizes degrowth as envisioning a planned reduction of an economy's material throughput accompanied by a planned improvement of ways to achieve wellbeing without significant environmental impact. He calls for strategic planning in the realm of degrowth and for degrowth in the realm of strategic planning while he proclaims that “[...] the strategic challenge for degrowth is to establish whether and how popular consensus can be built around a multitude of actions aiming to downscale economy’s material throughput.”(Savini, 2024b, p. 2). Due to its radicality, the degrowth approach is not present in current politics. Building consensus for it is essential to make it a feasible strategy. To achieve this, Savini defines the *what*, *who* and *how* he thinks are key to degrowth strategic planning. Furthermore, he proposes two processes he deems necessary to address these.

**What:** Savini calls for satiation as the core driver of degrowth transitions. He characterizes satiation as a society meeting all its essential needs. By focusing directly on satiation societies can leave out growth as a necessity for needs satisfaction cutting on unnecessary consumption.

**Who:** Savini identifies the agency in establishing satiation as a core societal principle as inherently

diffuse. He draws on degrowth scholarship frequently characterizing governmental institutions to be incapable of initiating the necessary change as well as on an understanding of the state not as a single actor, but a self-producing system comprised of social norms and institutions. Consequentially, for the state to change, the social norms and institutions must change, which means that society must change. He considers there to potentially be a requirement for partnership between political organizations, civic organizations and grassroots movements.

**How:** Savini draws heavily on Meissner (2021) and prominently features the sequence of prefiguration, popularization and pressure. Fundamentally, first new alternative practices have to emerge from the “cracks in the current system” (Savini, 2024b, p. 6) then, by proving the advantages and by networking, these alternatives have to be stabilized and grown in followership before a large coalition of followers can start exerting pressure on the existing system to change. He acknowledges this process not to be a monolithic prefiguration, popularization and pressuring on *the degrowth* but rather as many individual practices which help to come closer to a society with degrowth ideals.

Further Savini introduces two processes he deems to be key when envisioning strategic planning for the introduction of degrowth: *synergy* and *regionalization*.

**Synergy:** As he sees the agency as diffuse as well as the prefiguration being comprised of many different reductionist practices, he considers the banding together of mutually supportive or embedded practices for coproduction and cooperation in order to increase the overall impact of these practices on society. This synergy is not limited to the 'horizontal' integration of civil society but is very beneficial in the 'vertical' one between civil society and state entities as well.

**Regionalization:** Savini proposes regionalization (put simply the production of the region as a relational space by means of practice density) as a core issue for degrowth strategic planning as he sees these relational spaces as arenas for contestation and negotiation of social norm. He

deduces that these spaces are a breeding ground for synergy. He champions the region as a good fit scale-wise for degrowth.

## Pragmatism vs. radicalism

Yvonne Rydin (2024) wrote an answer, which she characterized as postgrowth, in which she follows two main lines of criticism. One line is concerned with the role of the planner and it takes up Savini's call for radical answers with which she feels many planners could be estranged. She argues that it is a slippery slope for planners to take too much of a particular stance and that taking a radical stance at trying to evoke change would be posing problems with their different responsibilities (e.g. representative politics, professionalism and their local communities). She frames a society in which concepts like excess and overconsumption are deemed bad as “Orwellian” (Rydin, 2024, p. 2). She poses questions about who gets to decide what is 'enough' and what is 'too much'.

The other line of criticism argues that Savini's intention of a fundamental societal change would be so ambitious that it might take years and decades and juxtaposes this with the urgency of the environmental situation we find ourselves in. For both the lines of criticism she proposes to be more pragmatic and engage with existing seeds of change both in theory (she proposes the foundational economy discourse as an alternative) and in practice where she suggests working with SMEs and accepting profit motives. She seems to allege that Savini's approach only relies on reductions in consumption to achieve a reduction in material throughput and advocates for a focus on efficiency increases in existing structures.

## Satiation and legitimacy building

Savini (2024a) wrote an answer on this piece. He structures her criticism into four main points. “a) the choice between pragmatism and institutional thinking in times of urgency; b) the definition of essential needs and the role of planning therein; c) the place of profit and the foundational economy in a postgrowth society; and d) the profile of a postgrowth planner” (Savini, 2024a, p. 1). I will list

his answers in the order ending with what I deem most important for this thesis.

D) Savini accepts that his approach is radical (it targets the root of problems) and opposes the status quo. He simply juxtaposes the discomfort of some planners that Rydin describes with the discomfort that many planners experience “[...] with the fact that their daily work and usual tools are unable to meet climate or social targets” (Savini, 2024a, p. 4).

C) Savini acknowledges the foundational economy as being in line with his approach. He rejects the allegation that he outright does not accept profit motives and states that they have to be married to notions of satiation.

B) Savini juxtaposes Rydin's framing of a society where there are central notions of what is essential and not as “Orwellian” (Rydin, 2024, p. 2) with the reality that our current systems are filled with preconceived values (e.g. building codes, minimum parking requirements, different taxes, nature conservation regulations etc.) engrained in planning instruments and that the only real difference between current reality and his approach is what these instruments are used for, which he currently identifies as managing city regions' ambitions for economic growth. He states that satiation should drive these instruments and acknowledges that degrowth efforts need to start off from already existent prefigurative practices. He states that beyond a bare minimum of need the essential is always constructed by society and thus subject to politics. His conclusion is that degrowth planners should start with the experiences of people whose needs are not met as well as of the people who are right now already engaged in trying to meet these.

A) On the question of urgency Savini states that efficiency-oriented efforts have over decades been shown to be insufficient. He warns that pragmatism quickly amounts to business as usual and that, if it is understood as doing what is necessary, the issue of legitimacy remains valid. He identifies the challenges of degrowth not only to be in identifying practices that are to be phased out but to build legitimacy to do so as a

society. The radical strategic planning approach he presented in his initial paper can be an answer to that question of legitimacy building.

## Positioning of this thesis in the Savini-Rydin discourse

In my research I want to find answers to both the German case of sustainability transition as well as the Dessau case on the specific issue of unutilized housing capacity and to issues of degrowth strategic planning that arise from the Savini-Rydin-discourse. I follow Savini's argumentation about having to be radical but I see Rydin's point about the urgency of the situation. I deem Savini to be right about legitimacy being the core issue of degrowth (and in fact of all transitions which are substantial enough to match the substantiality of the issue of sustainability) and I find the question of who defines minima and maxima very important. In fact, I follow Savini in that his approach is an approach to legitimacy building and would specify that the question of legitimacy for degrowth is the question of finding popular consensus on the question 'what is enough/what is too much'. The urgency of the situation has two sides in my view, Savini highlights the urgency of finding good solutions, Rydin highlights the urgency of finding fast solutions. Both sides can't be ignored.

# Conceptualization of legitimacy

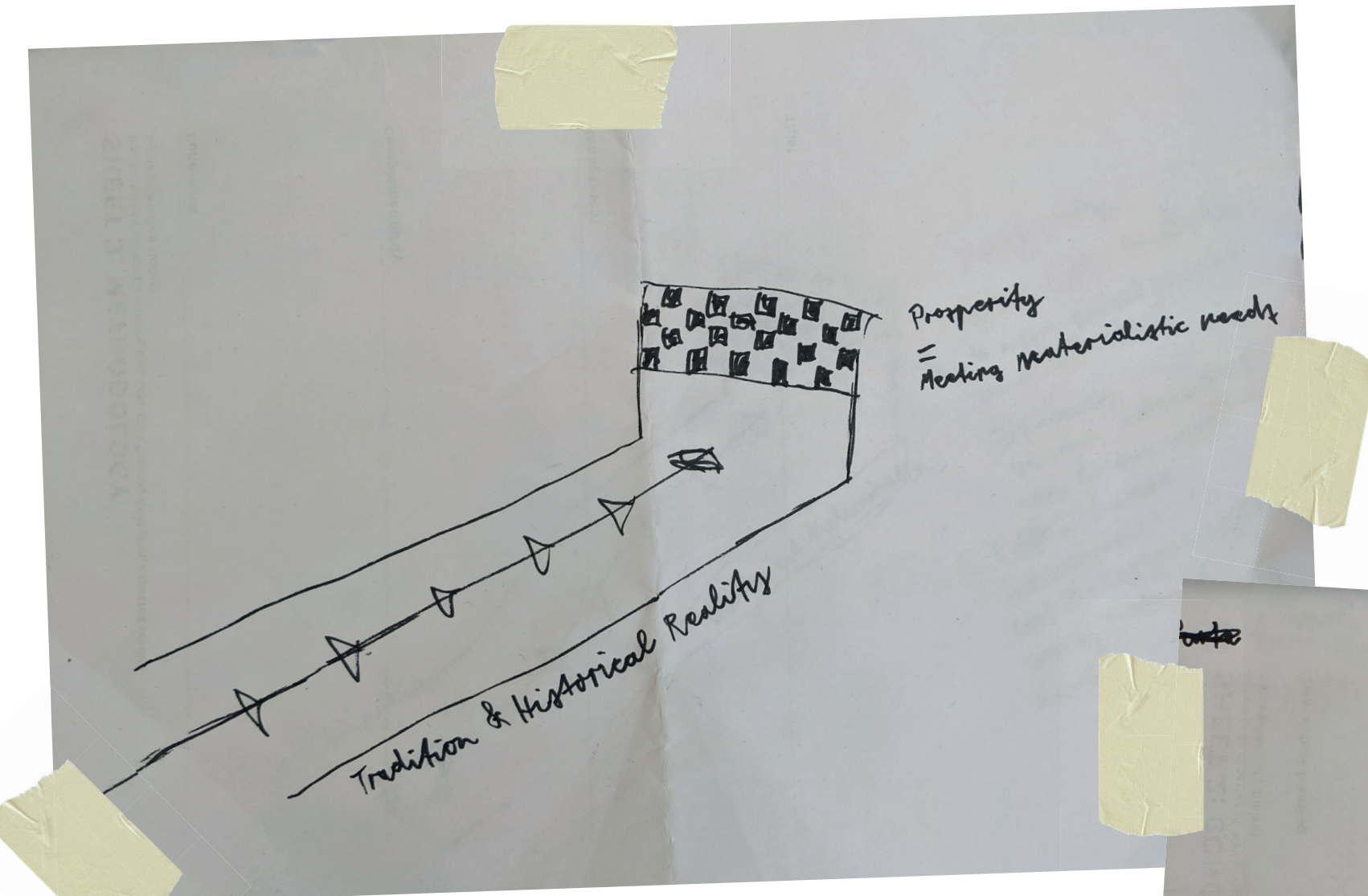


Fig.: 19 Sketch traditional prosperity

I have sketched how I understand the current German situation with regards to legitimacy and the move towards prosperity within planetary boundaries starting from where society came from. The height of the pathway represents how far it lies from traditional notions on prosperity as well as development and thus how much a society coming from these notions must adapt when it tries taking that path. In the first sketch (see Fig. 19) we see the traditional struggle for prosperity. In times when the most basic needs were not fulfilled the meaning of prosperity was pretty much materialistic. The resulting way to reach prosperity was material accumulation: classical economic growth.

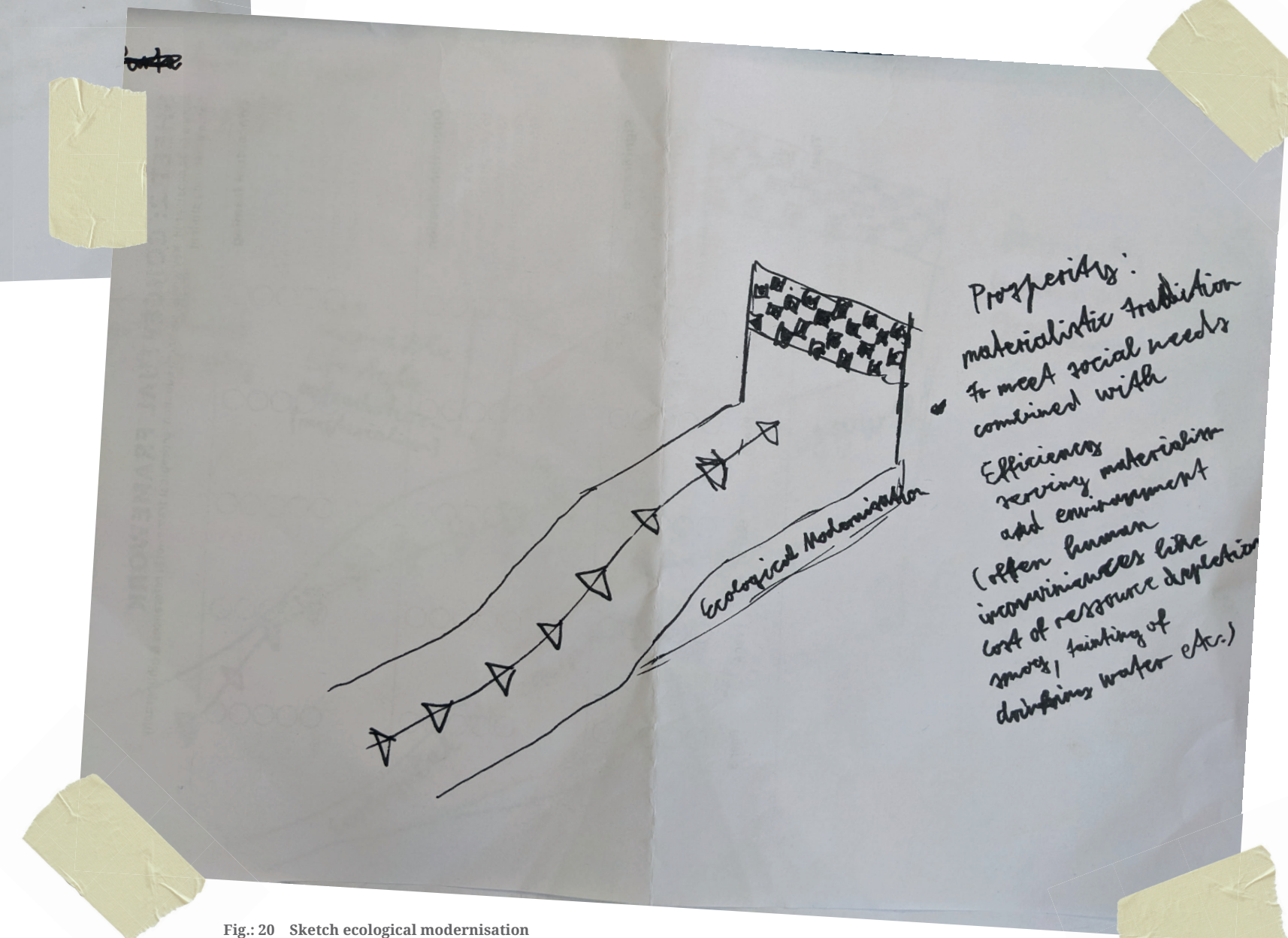


Fig.: 20 Sketch ecological modernisation

In the second sketch (see Fig. 20) I tried to capture the societal situation with ecological modernization as the paradigm (Næss et al., 2020). The most basic needs are fulfilled but materialism is still strong and turbocharged by the possibility to utilize resource intensive processes. The understanding of prosperity shifts to utilizing materialism to meet social needs. In the materialistic tradition accumulation is equated to social status. Sustainability concerns are to be met inside the materialistic accumulative framework through efficiency increases not through substantial societal changes (ecological modernization).

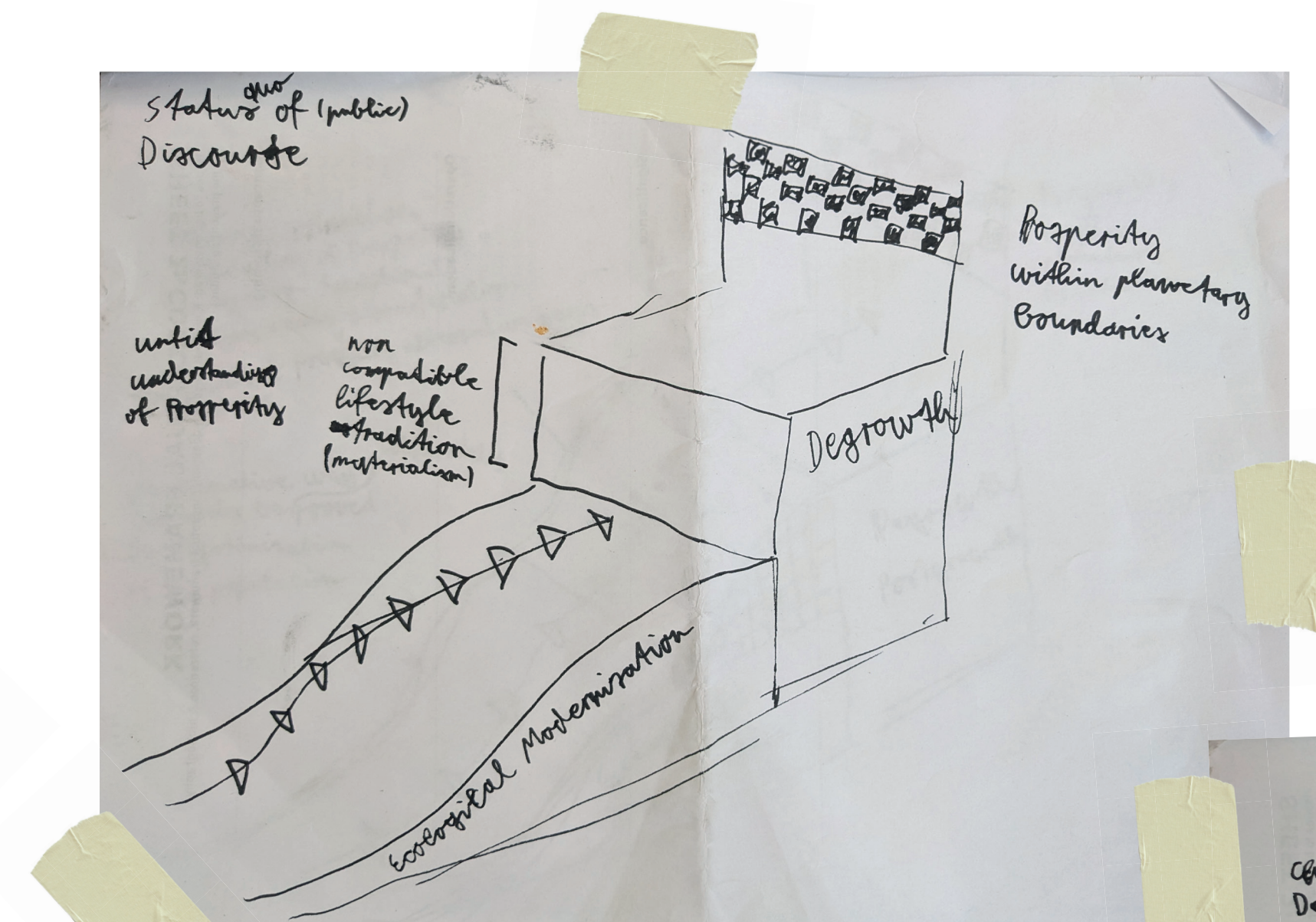


Fig.: 21 Sketch current situation

In the third sketch (see Fig. 21) I tried to depict our current situation. Society at large is still working in the materialist tradition. People concerned with sustainability realize that materialistic accumulation (traditional economic growth) is never going to be sustainable long term (Wiedmann et al., 2020).

They recognize that increases in efficiency are needed but do not suffice to stay inside the planetary boundaries. From the understanding that there are minimum needs that are to be met but that a long-term prosperous future for humanity is

jeopardized if we overstep planetary boundaries, an upper and lower limit to human development is constructed. This subset of society sets out prosperity within planetary boundaries as the goal. The general society is still in the traditional mindset, thus efforts to move society towards the 'new goal' are not possible as we run into walls which in fact are a lack of willingness of society as the goal set out is not in line with the majority of society's traditional understanding of prosperity and the way towards it (lacking legitimacy).

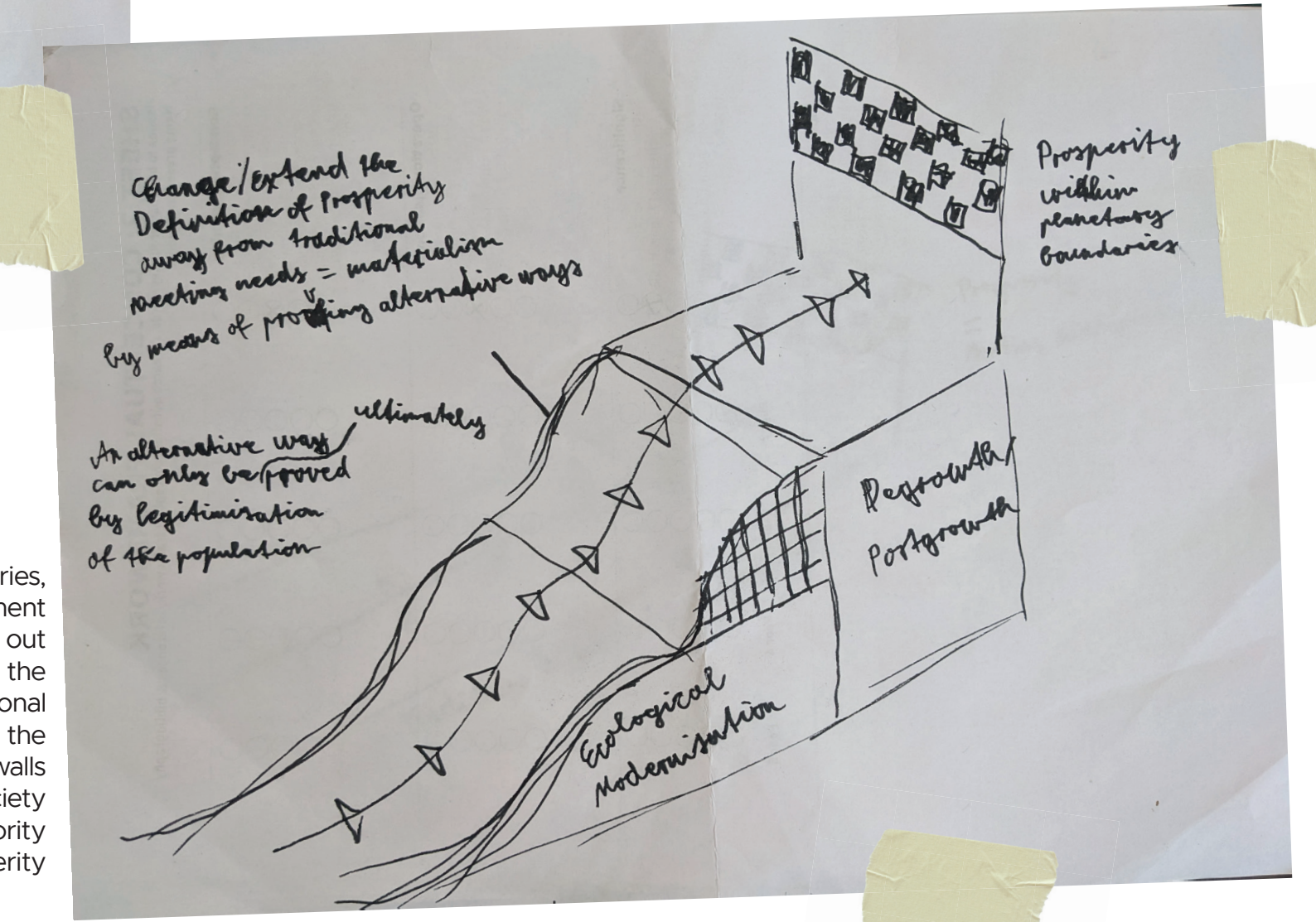


Fig.: 22 Sketch ramp building

The fourth sketch (see Fig. 22) depicts the fact that one cannot expect society to just make the jump and quit with its tradition in an instant. Still, it remains a fact that the goal must be prosperity within planetary boundaries which necessitates a societal shift away from traditional materialistic accumulation. But as change is dynamic, society does not have to jump to reach the goal, it can build on the change that has happened in the past and build up to reach the goal. As society is a self-producing system, we need to 'build a ramp' in the form of societal processes and structures that can facilitate this societal change. Building the ramp in a way that society can move up by itself means building legitimacy.

## Research question

The resulting main research question is:

### Why is satiation a good driver for sustainability transitions and what changes of urban spatial elements are associated to feasibly introducing it in Germany?

In order to answer this question it is necessary to answer parts of it first.

#### 1.1 What is satiation and why should it be the core driver of sustainability transitions?

#### 1.2 What is feasibility in the context of satiation and substantial societal transitions?

#### 1.3 How can satiation be feasibly introduced?

#### 2.1 What is the German case of sustainability transition and satiation?

#### 2.2 What can be a spatial approach to tackle the issues around introducing satiation as a core driver of the German sustainability transition?

#### 2.3 What changes of urban spatial elements in Dessau can support the feasible introduction of satiation?

## Germany as a case

As I have established, the missing link in the quest for sustainable development is the 'ramp', the issue of legitimacy. If legitimacy for it can be built, degrowth can feasibly be introduced. Savini also identifies this as the key issue and acknowledges that we have to build on existing efforts. This is the issue I want to research in my thesis. Germany is basically at the third sketch (see Fig. 21). The overall goal of prosperity within planetary boundaries is set politically and legally, but the legitimacy to do what is necessary is not there, mainly in areas where needs are not sufficiently met. With the German concept of Soziokultur (see glossary) Germany already has existing efforts in fostering processes of societal self-production. Germany is thus a good case for the study of the missing puzzle piece, because the preconditions (metaphorically: the rest of the puzzle) are already met. Dessau at the city scale is a suitable case for exploring the spatial implications of this transition.

## Research objective

Seeing that it takes time to achieve the necessary depth in a societal shift and that this process should start off from existing efforts, I want to find a solution to start building the 'ramp' as soon as possible. This 'ramp building' sets into motion the process of prefiguration, popularization and pressure which enables society to answer questions of basic needs and excess itself so that the answers ultimately have the legitimacy necessary for real impact. As no specific answers for this exist, I will try to build theory on Savini's approach, further refining and specifying by means of enriching it with other theory as well as specifying along the bi-scalar case of Germany and Dessau. Focussing on satiation might be a good way to meet the needs in areas with significant empty housing capacity in a sustainable way and thus poses a possible solution.

Part of RQ (Keyword)	Sub-RQ	Aim	Methods	Related Theories	Outcome	Anticipated Answer/Proposition
Satiation as a driver of sustainability transitions	1.1 What is satiation and why should it be the core driver of sustainability transitions?	<b>Understanding</b> the field of sustainable transitions and the role of satiation in it	Literature review	5P model of sustainable development, Satiation, Degrowth	Normative <b>construct</b> "Dos and Dont´s" sustainability transition	Materialistic growth cannot be sustainable, thus needs must be satisfied without it, focus on "fundamental <b>needs</b> ", <b>satiation</b> as core development principle
Transition based on legitimacy building	1.2 What is feasibility in the context of satiation and substantial societal transitions?	<b>Understanding</b> how substantial societal transitions work; <b>Relating</b> notions of satiation and cultural politics	Literature review, Theory formation	Satiation, Human needs, Cultural politics, Legitimacy, Co-creation	Normative <b>construct</b> "Dos and Dont´s" for feasibly introducing satiation	Process of innovation (pioneering, establishing, adoption/proliferation), diffuse agency in adoption of satiation being an issue of <b>legitimacy</b> , legitimacy being created by high participation, ideally co-creation
Feasibility	1.3 How can satiation be feasibly introduced?	<b>Understanding</b> (spatial) characteristics of practices and how their contexts contribute to the feasible introduction of satiation; <b>Evaluating</b> the theory formation process	Literature review, Theory formation, Research by design, Scenario design, Expert interviews	Satiation, Human needs, Cultural politics, Legitimacy, Co-creation	<b>Criteria</b> for practices and context	<b>Emergent Degrowth</b> adopted from prefigurative pioneers "grown" on culture substrate
Germany (case)	2.1 What is the German situation of the sustainability transition and satiation?	<b>Understanding</b> the German context; <b>Analysing</b> the spatial context in Dessau	Literature review, Policy review, Spatial analysis		Specific <b>context</b> , Problematisation for case	Germany has the goal to be sustainable but doesn't yet understand it means adopting degrowth; with <b>Soziokultur</b> it has historically already developed interfaces between state and citizens in the cultural dimension understood in an extended definition of the term, prefigurative practices are already happening
Dessau (design test)	2.2 What can be a spatial approach to tackle the issues around introducing satiation as a core driver of the German sustainability transition?	<b>Identify</b> current processes and projects that can benefit the introduction of satiation; <b>Applying</b> the synthesis of the established understandings of sustainability, transitions, and urgency to the Dessau case	Theory formation, Best practice review, Spatial analysis, Policy review, Research by Design, Site visit		<b>Analysis</b> of housing, public space, culture and relevant aspects of the municipal planning documents, <b>Spatial principles</b>	<b>Principles</b> for spatial planning and design to incorporate satiation into urbanism
Urban spatial elements	2.3 What changes of urban spatial elements in Dessau can support the feasible introduction of satiation?	<b>Testing</b> how to design for the feasible introduction of satiation	Theory formation, Best practice review, Spatial analysis, Scenario design, Site visit		<b>Scenarios</b> showing the spatial characteristics prefigurative practices can have	Tests of the <b>spatial implications</b> of prefigurative practices in Dessau

Fig.: 23 Research design explained following the sub-research questions

## Methods

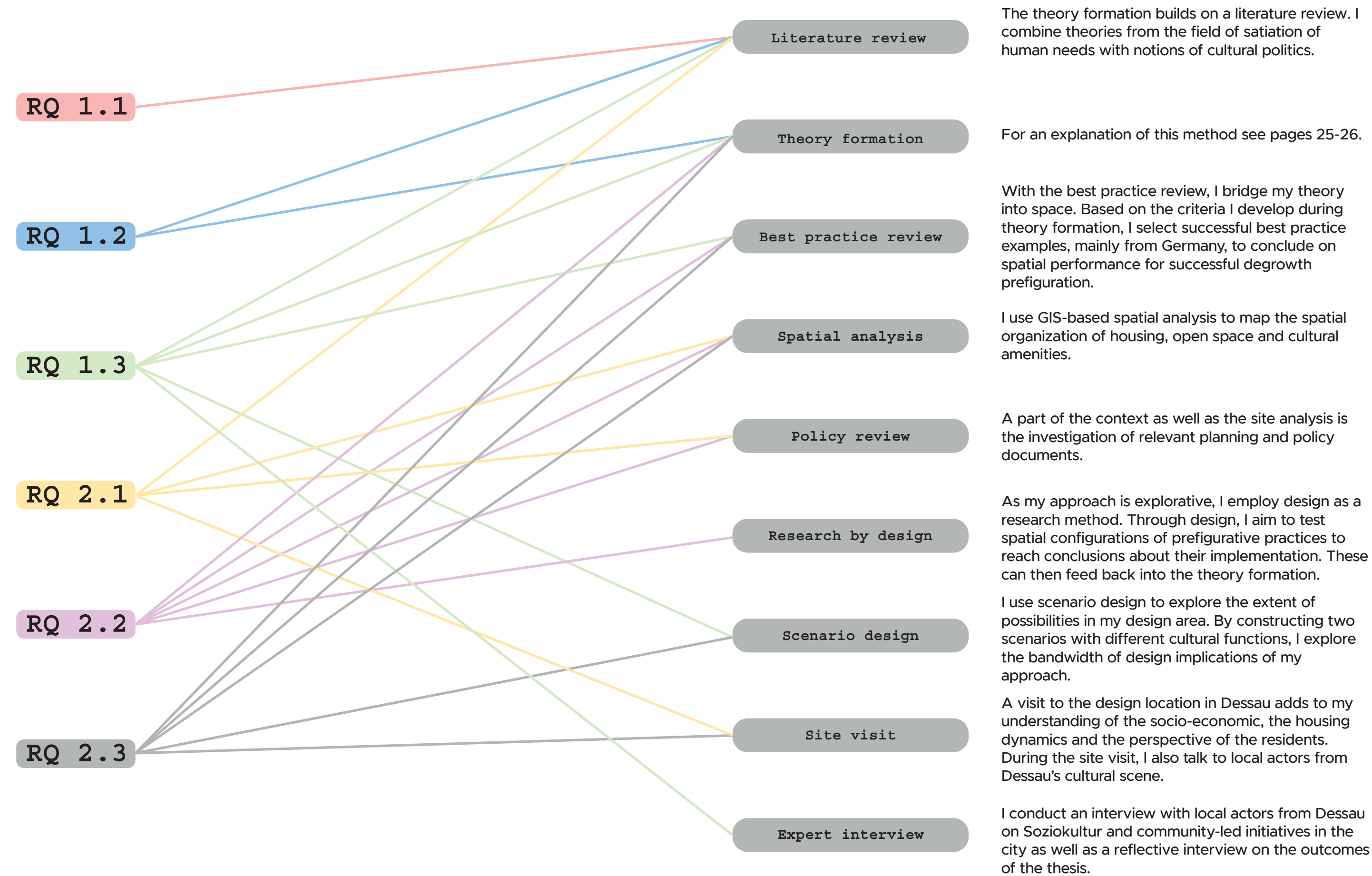


Fig.: 24 Overview methods  
30

## Research design

Theory formation, specification and refining

Evaluation, abstraction and generalization

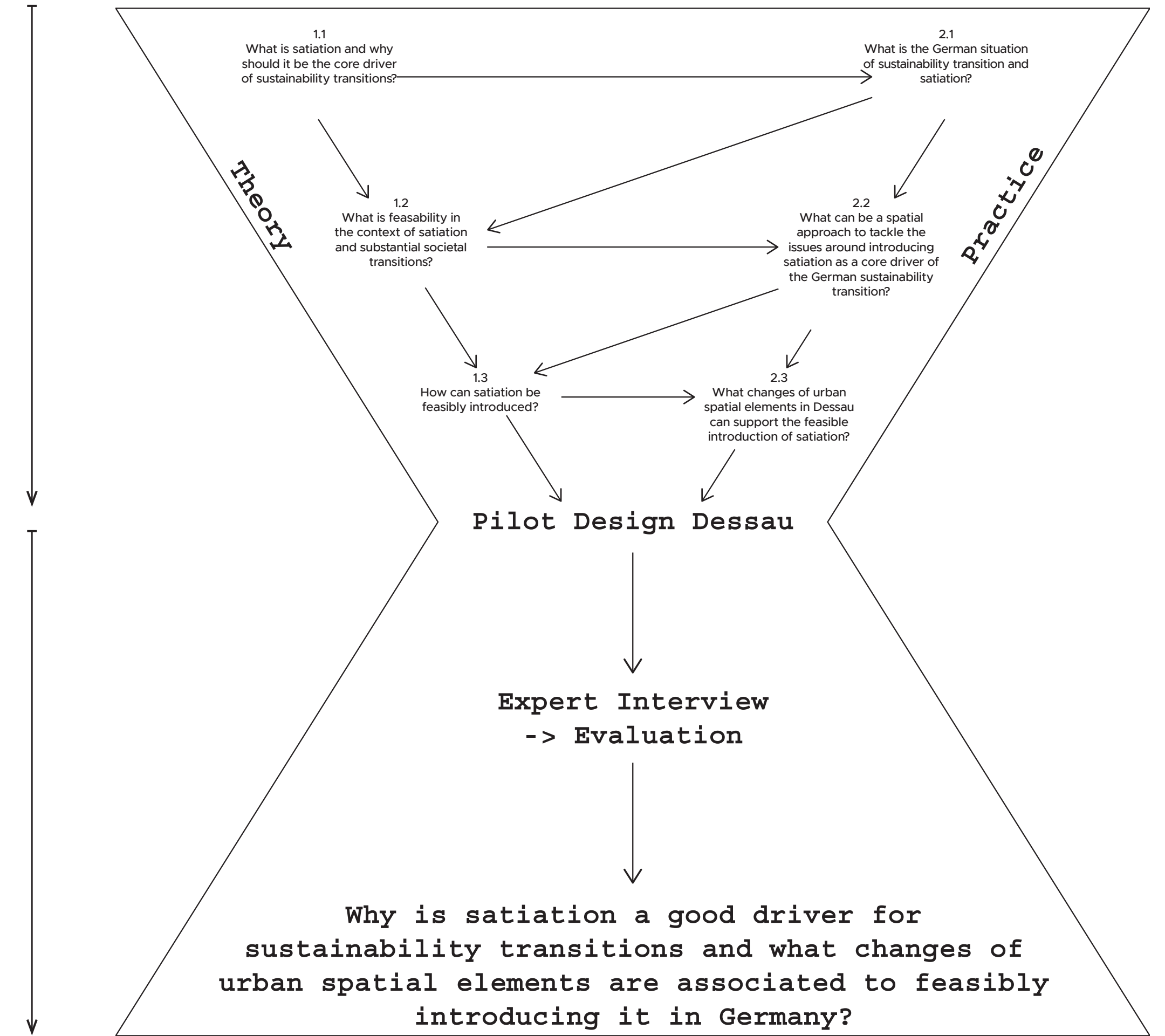


Fig.: 25 Interplay between theory and practice research in the research design

## Theory formation process

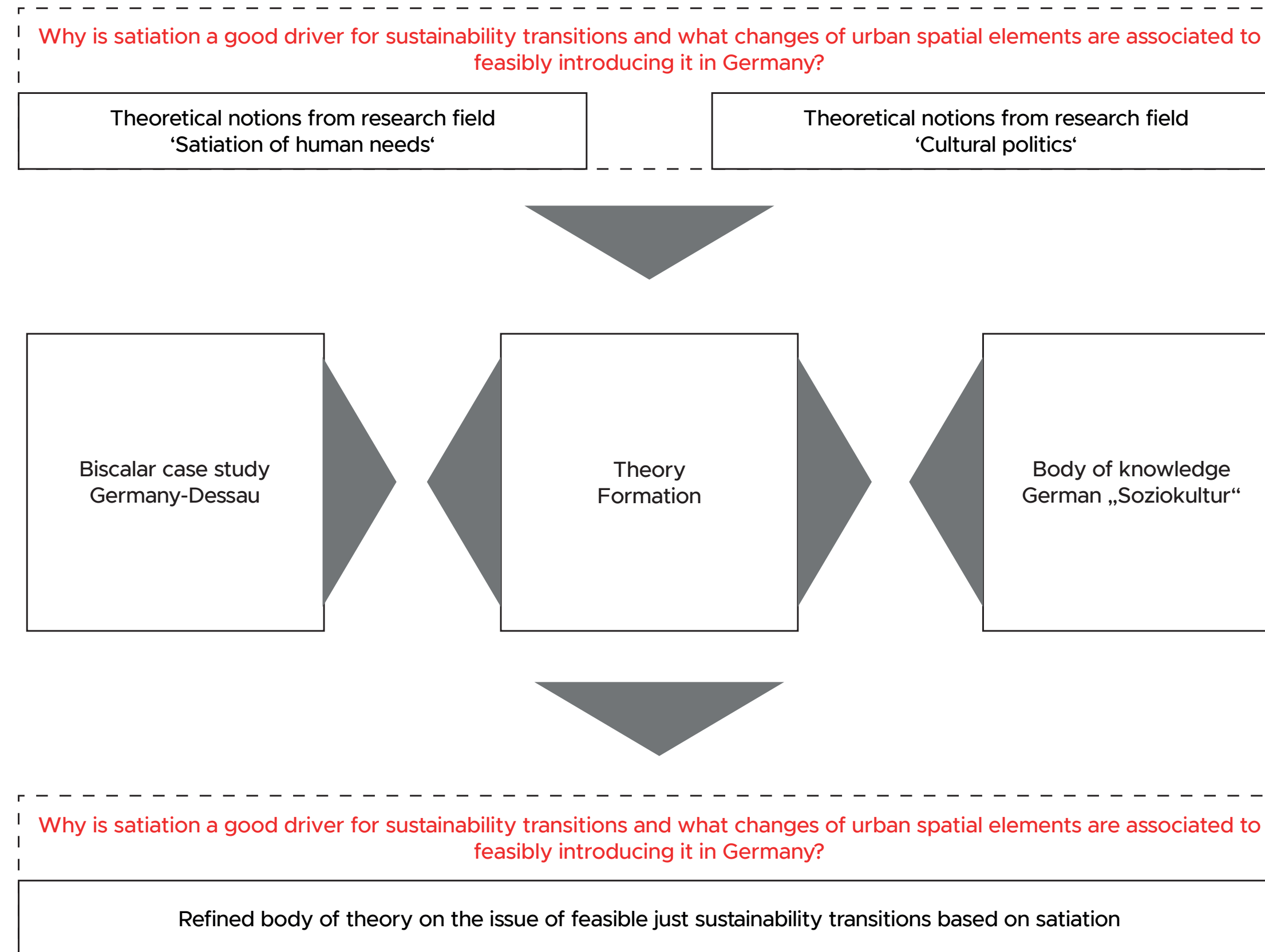
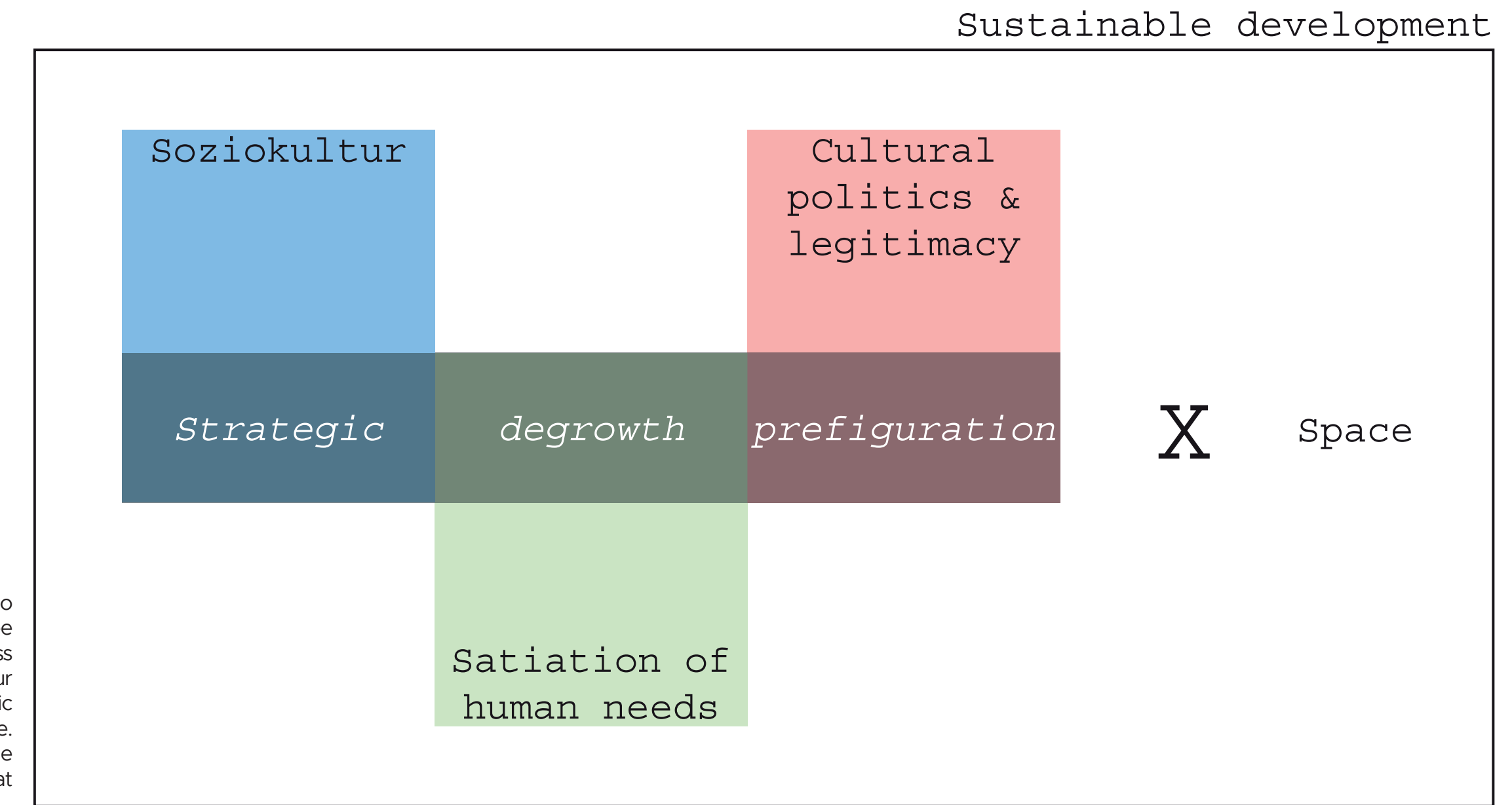


Fig.: 26 Theory formation process (adapted from Balz, 2019)

## Conceptual framework



The elements I use to ground the theory also form the base of the conceptual framework (see Fig. 27). The notions discussed in the process of theory formation and the lens of Soziokultur come together in the aim to investigate strategic degrowth prefiguration in relation to space. Altogether, this forms an approach to sustainable development in Germany that tackles issues at the core.

Fig.: 27 Conceptual framework

## Chapter 03

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# Theory formation

## Part One: A society meeting all its fundamental needs

In his initial paper Savini constructs three dimensions of strategic degrowth: Depth (What?), Agency (Who?) and Trajectory (How?) (Savini, 2024b). To better operationalize strategic degrowth in space it is necessary to further examine them. On the question of the strategic target of degrowth, the **depth**, Savini begins by tracing degrowth to be commonly positioned oppositional to capitalism due to its requirement for sustained surplus accumulation whilst highlighting how this commonality does not lead to coherent strategic implications (Savini, 2024b, p. 4). He subsequently states that degrowth's **agency** is to replace social norms driving the increase in an economy's material throughput by ones centering the principle of satiation. This **trajectory** he defines as "a society meeting all its essential needs" (Savini, 2024b, p. 4). Whilst this definition might be a useful heuristic for his purposes and whilst his intentions become clearer through the context he is using this in, his work leaves it unclear what needs are, how they function and what renders them essential. If the intent is to further operationalize pursuing satiation as a core principle of degrowth it is necessary to have a more tangible understanding of what it means and what hinders its achievement.

### Satiation as a trajectory for degrowth

As the intent is to change society towards establishing the principle of satiation, it is useful to look at the status quo of the relationship of our society and satiation. This relationship is further examined in one of the two papers Savini refers to when introducing the concept: "Doomed to Consume? Non-satiation as a Flaw in the Current Economic Paradigm and What Communities Can Do About It" by Anna Pettini and Laura Musikanski (2023). In this paper the authors investigate the axiom of insatiability within economic theory which is summed up in the following. They characterize the ultimate purpose of economic theory to serve the wellbeing of people. They detail how the axiom of non-satiation is fundamental to mainstream economic theory. "In most traditional economic research, the non-satiation axiom has been considered to correspond to universal human nature and underpins the concept that greater economic growth is associated with

greater prosperity for individuals, communities and nations.

To this day, in many cases, scholars, policymakers and community organizers take it for granted that people naturally tend to want more and more because this increases their well-being." (Pettini & Musikanski, 2023, p. 65). The authors explain that the axiom enables the utility function and in turn the fundamental economic models used by mainstream economics and is thus embedded in policy relying on mainstream economics and their models. The axiom is also expressed in the use of the homo oeconomicus in neoclassical economics which makes a rational choice of consumption based on individual preferences. Pettini and Musikanski detail that this produces models in which the cumulative utility of everybody involved is maximized when production and consumption are pushed to the limits. This leads to the inverse understanding that preferences of people are best met by increasing production and consumption. This is then conflated with people's needs being best met in this way as well as the notion of welfare. The underlying issue is that preferences as the term is used by economics are purely individual and must adhere to axioms like the non-satiation one, which however is not the case for actual human needs. Furthermore, there is inconsistency as the general notion of welfare is aimed at meeting the needs of many to a decent degree, whilst the cumulative utility of a system is ambiguous on the issue of distribution across the participants.

Whilst in economics needs (as *preferences*) are modelled as individually defined, insatiable, indefinite in their number / everchanging, this apparently could not lie a lot further from the understanding that has developed outside of economics. The authors proceed to describe in considerable length how current economic approaches reliant on non-satiation fail to meet human needs and introduce more differentiated perspectives on human needs opening up the possibility for satiation. One of the approaches to human needs prominently cited originates from the author Manfred Max-Neef who takes a perspective from the point of development.

### Human needs as the basis for satiation

Having understood how the opposite of the goal of satiation is embedded in our society as non-satiation in the form of an assumption that simply does not withhold, the question of how needs and their satisfaction work and what renders needs essential remains unanswered. In the search for a needs theory that fits the purpose of this paper I got successful with a paper by Cardoso et al. (2022). In this paper the authors search for a model of human needs that is state-of-the-art regarding the main debates in the field of human needs theories as well as operational for the assessment of performance of cities for humans, for which they argue economic metrics to be insufficient going for human needs as an alternative. They go into depth examining the different requirements of the academic human needs debates and continue to explain how these current requirements are very closely related to the debates on urban phenomena, specifically "[...] how urban settings provide an ideal arena where the challenges

emerging from these developments [in the human need debates] play out and become relevant." (Cardoso et al., 2022, p. 2654). As the role of this paper in my work is to guide me towards and validate an operational human needs framework, I will not go into detail on this paper at this point. The authors propose the previously mentioned needs framework by Max-Neef as a good fit given their prerequisites. They comprehensively detail how the Max-Neef model specifically can connect demands from the human needs debates as well as urban assessment debates giving me the confidence to build my further steps on this framework as well. I have included a graphic from the paper summarizing the match (see Fig. 29).

Max-Neef (1992) proposes an approach to human needs that understands them as an interrelated system. He states that except for subsistence there exists no hierarchy between them but that they can complement each other or be weighed in trade-offs as they exist simultaneously. This is a strong difference to the hierarchical portrayal of needs in the widely referenced pyramid of needs

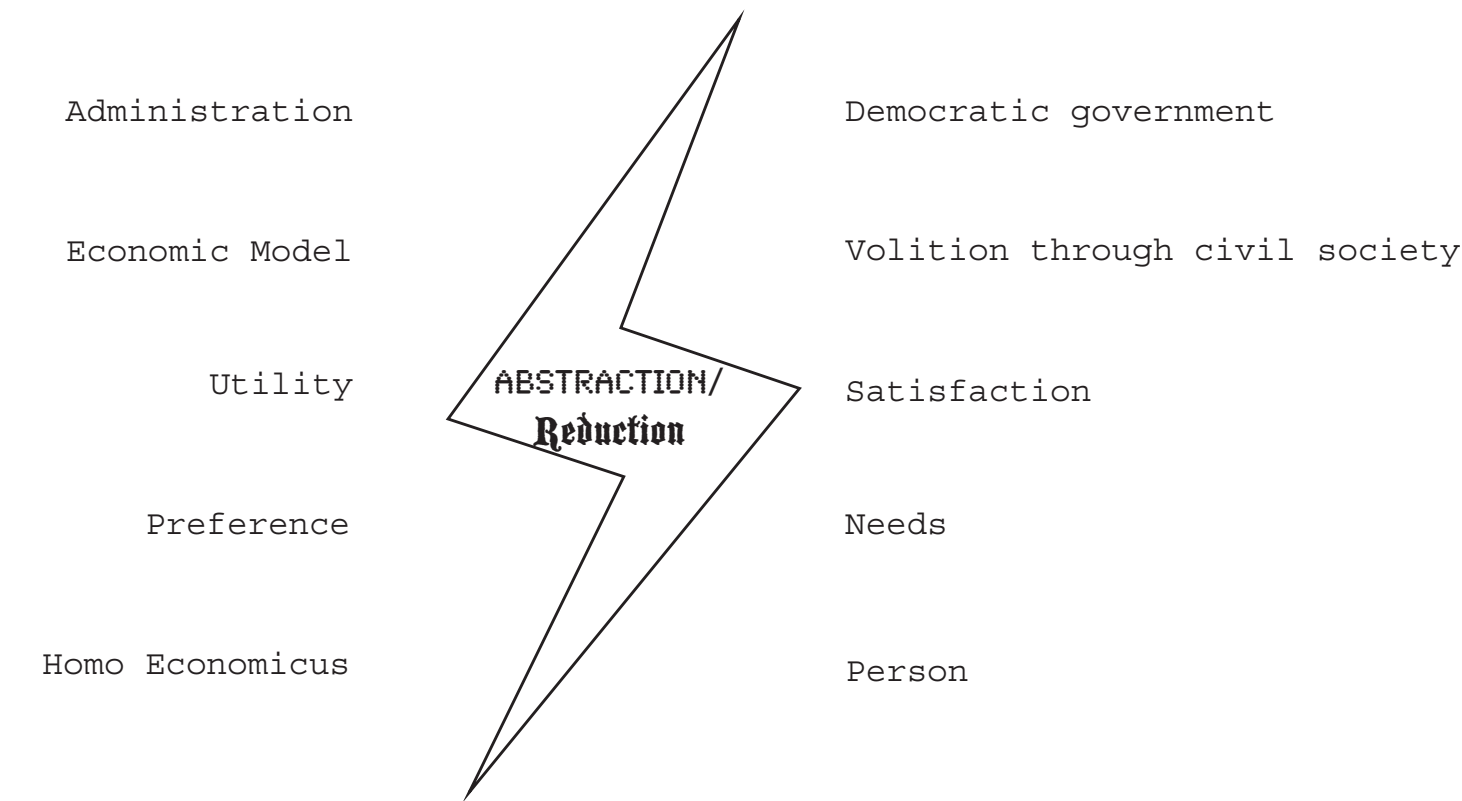


Fig.: 28 Difference between economic models and reality

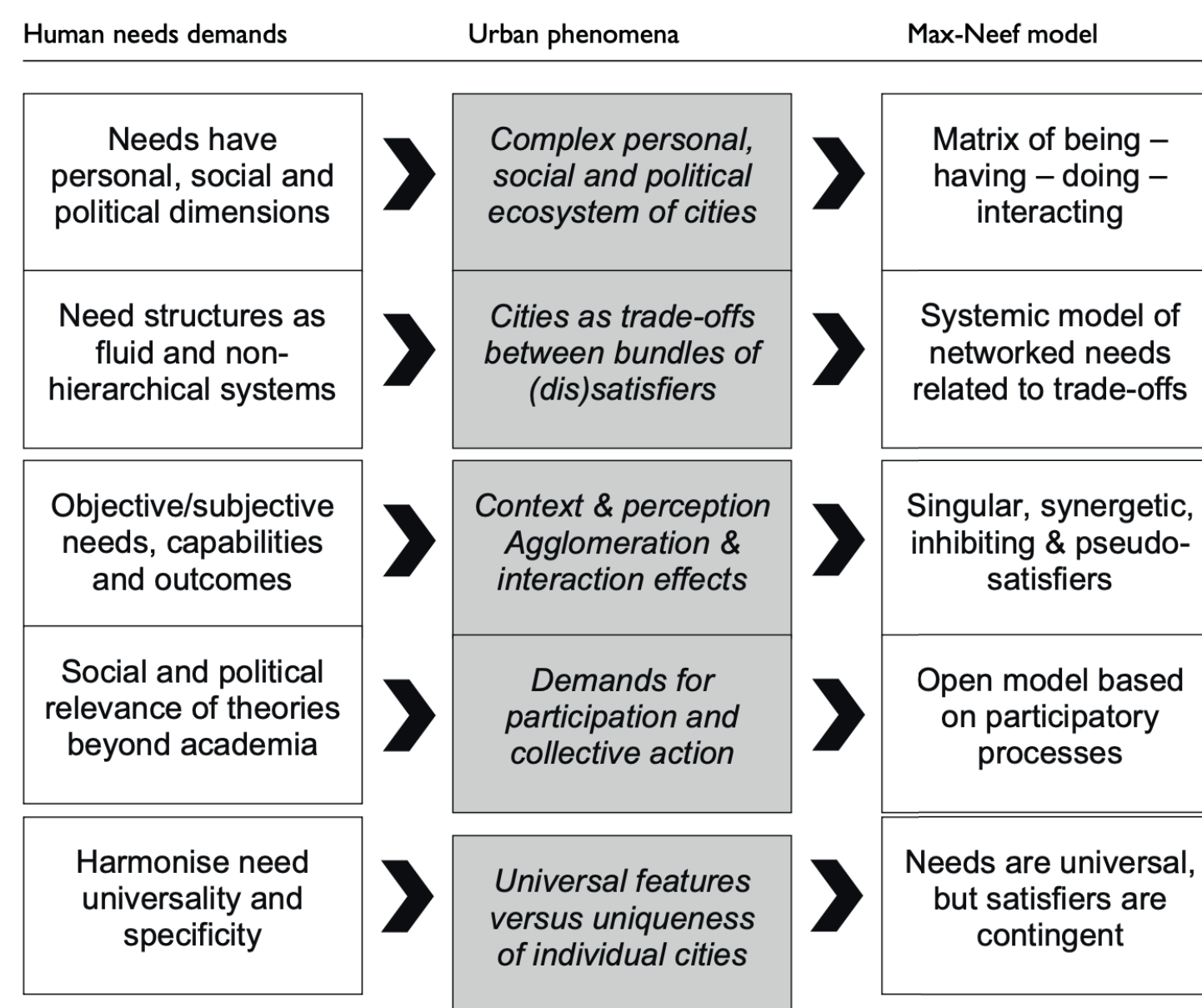


Fig.: 29 Overview match Max-Neef model (Cardoso et al., 2022)

introduced by Maslow. Another notable aspect of Max-Neef's model is that he makes a clear difference between fundamental needs, which are universal, limited, few and effectively stable at the human time scale, and satisfiers which are unlimited, can vary depending on the context (in all conceivable dimensions including culture) and do not one-on-one correspond to the fundamental needs. It is notable that according to him needs are not checkboxes to be ticked, need satisfaction rather happens in differentiated facets, the most obvious one being different intensities.

Max-Neef structures the actualization of needs into forms of Being, Having, Doing, Interacting which

he calls existential categories. Being captures personal or collective attributes (expressed as nouns); Having registers institutions, norms mechanisms, tools (in the abstract meaning of the term) etc.; Doing includes personal or collective actions; Interacting refers to locations and milieus (temporal & spatial), Max-Neef uses the word interacting for the lack of a better English alternative to the Spanish 'estar' or the German 'befinden' both of which refer to either being in a place or being in a state (e.g. a home, a state of privacy or a landscape). Together with his set of nine fundamental needs (subsistence, protection, affection, understanding, participation, leisure, creation, identity and freedom) he constructs a

matrix in which satisfiers can be projected.

Max-Neef expands the understanding of poverty from a strictly economical one to a more general state of a need not met. In this sense he speaks of poverties in plural. He states that poverties generate different pathologies diverse in nature and scale which are the core problem of unmet needs. His view of needs is a functional one, from his perspective every unmet need creates potential as he sees them not only as a matter of mere survival but as a driver of culture and society. In their power to motivate people they are potentially able to be turned into a resource. With regards to a perspective on society through the lens of human needs he states that it is not only about the opportunities for needs actualization that people have but more importantly the context in which these opportunities originate and in how far people are able to influence these contexts.

As mentioned before according to Max-Neef satisfiers are every "way" which through the dimensions of Being, Having, Doing and Interacting contributes to the actualization of human needs, they are in a constant dynamic of stabilization and change. Economic goods are artifacts which strengthen or weaken the effect of a satisfier.

To clarify these relations, it might be useful to construct an example: We start off from the need for *leisure* in the existential dimension of having. One could choose different satisfiers such as *games* or *peace of mind*. Let's go with *games*, artifacts of which could be a *copy of Mario Party*, a *box Settlers of Catan* or *Never Have I Ever*. This example also illustrates the two main ways in which relying on markets for needs satisfaction limits agency for it. The first is the quite obvious fact that not even all artifacts (in this case *Never Have I Ever*) of satisfiers are economic goods, so reducing needs to preferences (as described previously an individual consumption choice between goods) severely limits the agency in the choice of satisfiers and artifacts but the fact that the choice is an individual one also plays a major role.

Max-Neef describes experiencing needs and consequentially quality of life as ultimately subjective but characterizes economical

perspectives on development as being too confined by the use of preferences which he classifies as "subjective-particular". The crux in his view is that when researching relations between human beings and society the social character of subjectivity which he coins the "subjective-universal" must not be ignored. In his view considering the subjective-universal in economics would mean challenging the assumptions on which market rationale is founded and would be a step in constructing a human economy by means of cultural considerations. He describes the expression of needs through satisfiers as varying according to historical and cultural circumstance which have subjective as well as objective dimensions and concludes that satisfiers are thus the cultural and historical manifestation of needs and that goods are the material manifestations of these satisfiers.

Max-Neef makes it clear in what way our relationship to productivity and goods is to be questioned: "When, however, the form of production and consumption of goods makes goods an end in themselves, then the alleged satisfaction of a need impairs its capacity to create potential. This creates the conditions for entrenching an alienated society engaged in a productivity race lacking any sense at all. Life, then, is placed at the service of artifacts, rather than artifacts at the service of life. The question of the quality of life is overshadowed by our obsession to increase productivity." (Max-Neef, 1992, p. 202). How a society places life at service of artifacts in practice is what is described in the previously summarized paper (Pettini & Musikanski, 2023).

Max-Neef gives an elaborate and sensible argument why fundamental human needs are effectively stable at the human timescale, of which to this work only the consequence is important, which is why this will not be explained here.



Fig.: 30 Matrix of satisfiers and needs

Max-Neef proposes five types of satisfiers for analytical purposes:

- Violators & Destructors:** Supposed satisfiers of a need, which inhibits the satisfaction of the same and possibly even others.
- Pseudo-Satisfiers:** Satisfiers which seemingly satisfy a need but in fact do not
- Inhibiting Satisfiers:** Satisfiers which (over) satisfy a need but seriously inhibit the satisfying of other needs
- Singular Satisfiers:** Satisfiers satisfying one need and being neutral with regards to other needs
- Synergistic Satisfiers** (Max-Neef used the term “synergic”): Satisfiers which either satisfy more than one need or support the satisfying of other needs

Max-Neef states that satisfiers of the first four categories tend to be exogenous to civil society as they “are usually imposed, induced, ritualized or institutionalized [...] traditionally generated at

the top and advocated for all.”(Max-Neef, 1992, p. 205). On the other hand, he states that endogenous satisfiers are the product of bottom-up processes of volition making them anti-authoritarian. Overall he judges that development aiming at human needs satisfaction inherently cannot be structured top-down and that “It can only emanate directly from the actions, expectations and creative and critical awareness of the protagonists themselves.”(Max-Neef, 1992, p. 211). The construction of synergistic satisfiers does not have to be a process dedicated and expressively associated to that goal, it can also happen through exploration of alternatives by action. He thinks that the deliberative processes underlying this bottom-up approach to need satisfaction-based development are synergistic satisfiers themselves. He acknowledges that a systemic approach to need satisfaction can only be applied when the needs are satisfied to a pre-systemic threshold as needs which are not satisfied to any degree may produce urges so strong that they inhibit any other efforts. In the systemic approach to needs, he states, synergistic

satisfiers will perform better which are to be developed in deliberative bottom-up processes. The anti-authoritarian nature of the synergistic satisfiers does not however mean that they should provoke/deepen the conflict between civil society and the state but rather should be understood as informing the way in which development is conducted, which opens up the possibility that these processes can be used and initiated top-down. The focus on needs in development as described so far does not exclude conventional goals but “[...] the difference with respect to the prevailing development styles lies in considering the aims of development not only as points of arrival, but as components of the process itself. In other words, fundamental human needs can and must be realized from the outset and throughout the entire process of development. In this manner the realization of needs becomes, instead of a goal, the motor of development itself. This is possible only inasmuch as the development strategy proves to be capable of stimulating the permanent generation of synergic satisfiers.”(Max-

Neef, 1992, p. 212f). With regard to the culture change associated with degrowth another small quote from Max-Neef sums up the essence of why Max-Neef theory is important: “Cultural change is, among other things, the consequence of dropping traditional satisfiers for the purpose of adopting new or different ones” (Max-Neef, 1992, p. 200).

## Part Two: The cultural politics needed for degrowth legitimacy building

As described before Savini (2024b) describes the agency for the establishment of satiation as a leading societal principle as being inherently diffuse. This is due to the understanding of a self-producing integral state instead of a monolithic actor. Savini traces this conceptualization of agency to be rooted in Gramsci’s theory on the state and introduces a hegemonic conceptualization of growth. “According to this framework, agency is diffused (or distributed) because it is practiced in everyday choices to repair, share, divest, gift, and regenerate peoples and nature” (Savini, 2024b, p. 5).

For the sequence of prefiguration, popularization and pressure, which he uses in order to approach building the necessary legitimacy in this framework to ultimately establish satiation, he draws heavily on the work of Meissner (2021) of which I will summarize here the relevant parts to this work. In this work Miriam Meissner argues that cultural politics should be considered a key set of instruments for degrowth movements.

In the article Meissner states that culture is already considered a key issue in degrowth discourse as implementing degrowth concepts would imply deep changes to our society both in the institutions as well as in culture. She characterizes the issue of the order of those two in degrowth to be sometimes understood as a chicken-egg problem, the answer to which being that changes in both must go hand in hand. Recognizing that degrowth transitions can never be solely mandated from the top she states that “The reason why culture is relevant to a degrowth politics is that it can drive degrowth from an embedded bottom-up position.” (Meissner, 2021, p. 515f).

She goes on to explain that some cultural politics are already rooted in degrowth discourse in the form of the act of inspiration. She calls this the *cultural politics of prefiguration* and states that this is about exploring alternative practices, testing them and ultimately inspiring others to recognize the existence of these alternatives. “In a socio-historical context where growth habits, values and ideology are mainstream and discursively naturalized, prefiguration can show on a tangible and experience-based level that – to quote

a common activist slogan – ‚another world is possible‘, and even desirable” (Meissner, 2021, p. 516).

Meissner argues that cultural politics for degrowth can and should extend beyond the realm of prefiguration, proposing to adopt and adapt Stuart Halls concept of *politics of production* for this purpose. Based on this she introduces ‘ideology’ being a neutral concept as a network of ideas associated to an articulating political principle (in this case degrowth) through which people perceive the world and construct their reality. The association of an ideology and its ideas to an articulating political principle is characterized not as an automatism but rather as the outcome of a process of appropriating and interconnecting existing cultural practices. Through widespread adoption ideologies can become substantial societal forces. Meissner explains that the use of this conceptualization for degrowth is the understanding that “political interests and ideologies are neither a given, nor built from scratch. Instead, ideologies must be actively assembled from existing social interests and cultural practices” (Meissner, 2021, p. 518). For degrowth she deducts that its ideological struggle to detach certain meanings of concepts in society and replace them with new ones (e.g. the meaning of a ‘good life’) might necessitate connecting degrowth ideas to the interest of diverse groups in society which at their core are not concerned with degrowth (e.g. labor unions, artists etc.). Meissner conceptualizes these politics of production in two dimensions: *cultural politics of popularization* and *cultural politics of pressure*.

In the part of her paper concerned with the cultural politics of popularization Meissner goes into considerable depth describing how growth is engrained in our societies and especially in pop culture. She goes further, explaining how even practices which at first glance seem reductionist and thus in line with degrowth are tying in with growth culture. She characterizes the power of common pro-growth ideologies in the ability to co-opt almost anything allowing for a high degree of internal incoherency. With regards to degrowth she identifies it to currently focus too much on prefiguration and too little on popularization and

in that risking self-isolation. Therefore Meissner states: “Any system that seeks to challenge this hegemony [of growth] – such as degrowth – will have to find a way of subsuming cultural narratives, practices, values and identities in a way that is equally inclusive (i.e. integrating a wide range of incoherent cultural forms) while at the same time maintaining a basic level of integrity with its articulating political principle and key goals” (Meissner, 2021, p. 522). She calls for degrowth “to produce an alignment with existing popular cultural practices and these goals” (Meissner, 2021, p. 522) including creating strategic alliances as well as for acceptance that some part of the resulting movement will appear different from traditional degrowth ‘aesthetics’. She sees that degrowth has good potential for that as its goals already cater to a broader target group.

For her part on the cultural politics of pressure she identifies that culture can be an important means for building political pressure to advance a degrowth transition. Meissner states that this is a very broad subject opting to narrow her further research in the paper on direct action / activism. As this is not inside the scope of this work I will not detail this here but rather emphasize the broad range of possible strategies to put pressure on official entities to change institutions.

To conclude with Meissner, I want to cite from her conclusion: “Degrowthers need to mobilize practices and identities in contemporary popular culture, and connect them to the political project of degrowth – even if this means a loss in internal coherency. [...] Only by practicing cultural politics across the dimensions of prefiguration, popularization and pressure will it be possible to



Fig.: 31 As simple as possible: the integral state

achieve a substantial transformation of cultural hegemony while at the same time resisting vested interests in their efforts to maintain ‚business as usual” (Meissner, 2021, p. 528).

One the note of pressure I want to cite two passages from Savini to further illustrate the broad nature of pressure. One end of the spectrum certainly is activism, perhaps even ‘sturdy’ one, but the other end is far from that.

“A degrowth transition is therefore likely to follow a nonlinear trajectory. It is [...] likely to involve activists, progressive public employees, the self-employed, and civic organizations whose daily work adheres to degrowth principles. Degrowth practices thrive on synergies among one another. This increases degrowth’s popular legitimacy, building a political movement that pushes for regulatory change. And that change enables new practices and reinforces this transitional loop. [...] This understanding makes it possible to overcome the divides between those advocating grassroots movements and those promoting the state. It also puts controversies between radicalism and reformism, which often fragment social movements, into perspective. In short, strategic reflection would foster multiple trajectories, enacted in synergy to achieve social change. Degrowth strategies can refuse to comply with certain rules and interrupt the pursuit of growth. They can hack existing processes by reframing them as degrowth. They can demand the removal of existing rules [...]. Or they can reinterpret existing rules and practices in an ecological fashion [...]” (Savini, 2024b, p. 7).

“Synergy occurs when civic practices and governments recognize that they are either ‘mutually supportive’ or ‘embedded’ in each other (Evans, 1996) and this creates the condition for coproduction (Ostrom, 1996). This coproduction, fostered by planners, can create a powerful movement for change. However, for this process to succeed, governments need to value these alternative practices as drivers of transformation. In sum, in a condition of diffuse agency, for a deep shift in values, strategic planning begins by recognizing that a multitude of prefigurative practices of reduction are legitimate makers of the future that need to cooperate. Planners can be the stewards of this cooperation” (Savini, 2024b, p. 11).

## Part Three: Marrying the theories

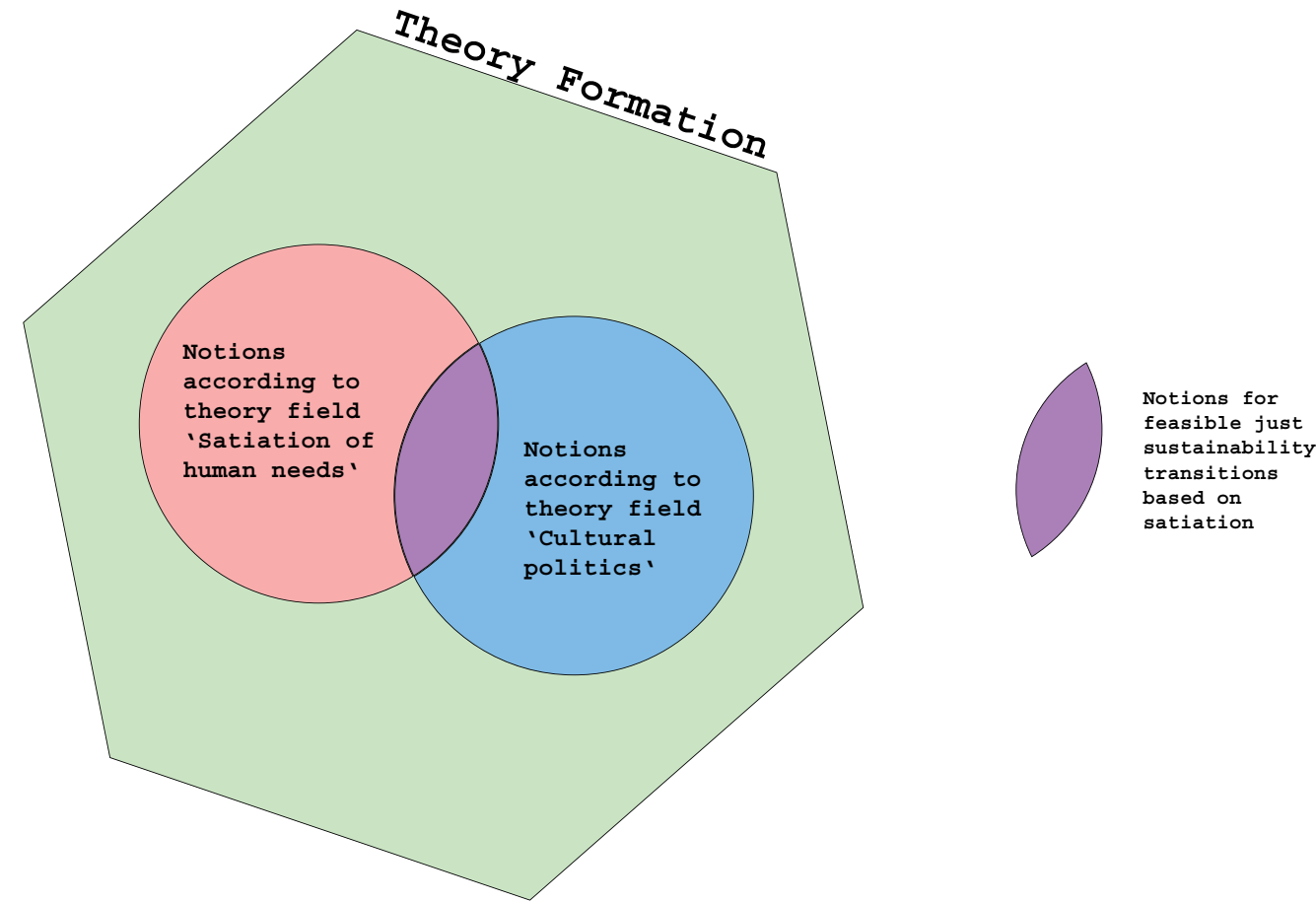


Fig.: 32 Theoretical notions overlapped during the process of theory formation

After going into depth on the foundational theory on satiation as well as on legitimacy building for degrowth the next step is to make conclusions on each and unite them in one construct.

On the question how to fill Savini's call for satiation as the core driver of degrowth with meaning it is useful to look at two of his foundational definitions: degrowth means reducing an economy's material throughput whilst increasing services capable of delivering wellbeing without significant ecological footprint; satiation means meeting all essential needs of a society.

The first step is to apply Max-Neefs human needs model to answer the question what renders needs essential. There are two answers one can find, which both hold true at the same time. Max-Neef acknowledges that there is a minimum to which all fundamental needs must be satisfied for the human to work in a 'normal' way. This requirement will be assumed fulfilled in this work as the scope is to reduce excess in highly growth and productivity

focused contexts like Germany. This also relies on Savini's use of satiation as exemplified by this quote: "Satiation become, in turn, thresholds beyond which excess, overconsumption, luxury, profit, and accumulation (of land, assets, housing, etc.) can be identified as 'unacceptable' or 'immoral' against the backdrop of human consumption transgressing planetary boundaries (Gough, 2017)" (Savini, 2024b, p. 5). This use of satiation to tackle excess is also present in Savini's response to Rydin: "Beyond a bare minimum of need, the essential is defined in ways that are historically contingent, geographically specific, and politically constructed. This process of definition is clearly political" (Savini, 2024a, p. 3f).

For the second answer the beauty in Max-Neefs approach is that he has a very similar approach, as his model (beyond the threshold to ensure humans don't act erratic) is non-hierarchical. There are fundamental needs, but society can choose through the subjective-particular as well as the subjective-universal how to satisfy them as well

as how to prioritize them. If the goal is degrowth as defined by Savini and the agency is diffuse and bottom-up in nature the best that can be done to provide a 'ramp' is to enable society to choose its own ways of satisfying which may be less heavy in terms of material throughput than the ones 'prescribed' by markets as well as supporting effective and efficient need satisfaction so that the threshold of essential need satisfaction, wherever it may lie, can be reached with the least amount of inputs. This is a core function of accepting that degrowth cannot be mandated top-down: whilst theoretically the planetary boundaries may be able to be translated into personalized thresholds, and even if we assume that states could accurately monitor and somehow penalize this, this type of top-down 'ecocracy' could only be reached voluntarily by a democratic society and as the legitimacy for such things is not remotely present, legitimacy must be build starting from where we are now into a direction of reduction. The first step of which is enabling society to choose what it really deems important beyond growth imperatives as

well as enabling it to maximize effectiveness and efficiency in reaching it. That means embracing Max-Neefs synergistic satisfiers as they and the process to construct them fulfil this function.

When trying to combine the theories on satiation and on legitimacy building another beautiful thing reveals, as the consequences of the theories match up nicely. Constructing potential synergistic satisfiers as a society through exploration of alternatives is de facto prefiguration. The adoption by the civil society of synergistic satisfiers amounts to popularization with subsequent pressure. The fact that agency in construction and adoption of synergistic satisfiers lies with a strong civil society matches up to what it means to successfully do the sequence of prefiguration, popularization and pressure. The pressure step resembles the anti-authoritarian nature that Max-Neef attributes to synergistic satisfiers. The fact that Max-Neef states that this anti-authoritarianism does not mean that the construction of synergistic satisfiers should deepen conflicts between state and civil society

**Satiation through effective and efficient need satisfaction**

**Legitimacy building through cultural politics**

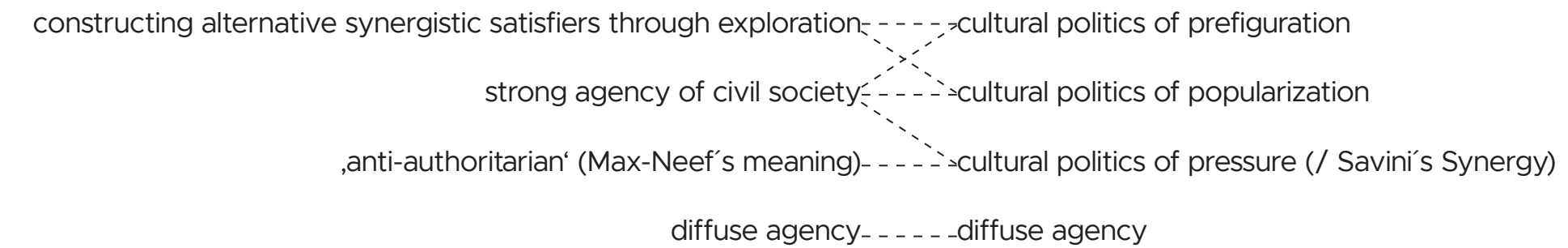


Fig.: 33 Match between the consequences of the theories

as well as the possibility according to him that processes of constructing synergistic satisfiers can be initiated by official entities matches up closely to the broad range of possibilities to facilitate pressure, including the concept of synergy as Savini introduces it. The agency in both the theory of Max-Neef as well as of Meissner (and Savini) is diffuse.

The fact that the consequences of both theories on the depth as well as on the trajectory of Savini's proposal match up combined with the coinciding of efficient needs satisfaction through synergistic satisfiers also being more effective than relying on market dynamics for needs satisfaction provides me with the grounds to claim that there is room for an integrated approach to maximize the utilization of housing stock through leveling up the quality of live as well as supporting strategic degrowth.

### Criteria for prefigurative practices

To conclude the theory part, I want to construct five criteria for prefigurative practices that are fit to advance strategic degrowth as described by Savini.

#### 1. Synergistic satisfying behavior

As the goal is reduction of excess, prefigurative practices exploring alternatives to the current ways of societal operation must aim at effectiveness and efficiency in needs satisfaction as well as being bottom up for legitimacy building purposes. This is what synergistic satisfiers deliver so a practice fit for strategic degrowth must adhere to that.

#### 2. Outside of traditional market logics

As every human activity has a footprint the crux is whether it is excessive or not. As Max-Neef, Pettini and Musikanski describe, in our current society, productivity is not a means to an end anymore but an end itself. This is what is driving excess as

excess is what is unnecessary. As we cannot predefine top-down what is an unnecessary practice / satisfier, the only way to ensure that practices do not promote excess is to make sure that they are not playing the traditional market dynamic game of productivity as an end. As we are in a market-driven society, it is clearly to be expected that most practices still have to engage with markets, which is not a problem as long as being successful in a market is not their primary goal.

#### 3. Bottom-up in nature

As the goal is to promote the construction and adoption of synergistic satisfiers and building legitimacy it is clear that fit practices must be bottom-up in nature meaning that the 'contents' of a practice should be bottom-up. In line with Max-Neefs description of the anti-authoritarian nature and Savini's description of Synergy this does not mean that practices can't be initiated top-down.

#### 4. Integrative mode of operation

As popularization is one of the goals of strategic

degrowth it is necessary to be open to scaling up as well as preventing self-isolation. The goal is to diffuse and explore eventually spreading into society. Being welcoming to anybody wanting to participate is thus another key criterium.

#### 5. Networking

This is another criterium which is founded in the demand on fit practices to not only do prefiguration but be fit for popularization and pressure as well. Networking is a precondition to create alliances and create pressure as this is what enables different practices to find common interest as well as organizing political activity. It is also a key to the strong agency of civil society needed for Max-Neef requirement for a strong civil society capable of taking a leading role.

Being able to define practices fit for strategic degrowth in only five criteria is only possibly because the different 'legs' of theory connected to Savini's theory overlap in their consequences.

## Spatializing the criteria

In order to make the first step towards a design to find out more specifics on the question how satiation could be introduced in Germany it is time to start spatializing. The goal is to find out how to create the conditions to enable bottom-up strategic degrowth prefiguration. To make a start I chose some best practice examples according to the previously derived criteria for fit practices. The aim is to construct dimensions of spatial performance for strategic degrowth prefiguration in order to further characterize space types based on a larger best practice analysis at a later point.

The chosen best practice examples were systematically chosen by their adherence to the criteria, which can be seen in Fig. 34. The chosen examples where: A FabLab from the city of Nuremberg, a project setting up and running health kiosks in the region around Seltenrain in Thuringia (a project included in the IBA Thuringia), a project called 'Aufgeschlossen' where uses for unused churches where searched for (a project included in the IBA Thuringia), the 'Mietshäusersyndikat' a syndication project that aims at mutually support acquiring renting properties as assets with the mean of providing affordable rentals reinvesting the savings from owning instead of renting into backing more acquisitions based on a democratic structure, as well as a commune located in Niederkaufungen, a village close to the Documenta city Kassel.

### Dimensions of spatial performance

When doing an exploratory analysis on the ways that space plays a role for these practices the first dimension I could identify was the dimension of space use as the point of a practice. All chosen best practice examples have space use as a point of the practice in different forms. For the 'Mietshäusersyndikat' space use is the end of the practice. For 'Aufgeschlossen' space use is the starting point of the practice. For the commune and the FabLab space use is the mean to the end of creating a place. In the case of the health kiosk space use is the means to create places which themselves are a means to provide a societal function.

The second dimension was kind of obvious as space serves functional requirements with different practices. A FabLab might require a considerable amount of electricity to run the machines and a requirement of good access as their participants originate from around the city, a neighborhood garden is only a neighborhood garden if it is located in the neighborhood.

During the exploration I got intrigued by the fact that space use was a point of every practice I had chosen, so I asked myself if there could be

practices matching my criteria which do not have space use as an obvious point of the practice and what would be the performance of space in that case. To test this, I deliberately came up with a theoretical example satisfying all my criteria whilst having as little requirements on space as possible. My hypothetical practice was an open dancing group provided by a volunteer. Hypothetically the group could go dancing in different random public spaces (such as parks or a parking lot) every week. Nonetheless a well-suited space could benefit the practices in multiple ways. For example:

- Being able to go to the same space every time makes it easier to organize
- Being able to dance in a sheltered space would make them independent from the weather
- Having a good sound system makes it more fun and attractive
- Being able to have a wall to hang info, photos etc. would provide possibility for identification as well as ease organization
- Being in a building with other dance groups could open up networking opportunities

My conclusion from that exploration was that whilst a practice might not have hard functional requirements it still might benefit significantly from well suited spaces, being 'turbocharged' by its space.

The next dimension I was able to identify is the role that space can play in unleashing their transformative potential in the sequence of prefiguration, popularization and pressure. Examples are the availability of space which seemed to play a big role in enabling prefiguration; central location, clustering of sorts and other factors might contribute to popularization, having a dedicated space can help build pressure through institutionalizing a practice.

The last dimension I could identify is that space can play a role in needs satisfaction directly. The needs of participation, creation and identification came to mind. Additionally, the existential category of interacting seems to be related to space often..

Having deducted spatial dimensions to capture the performance of space for strategic degrowth prefiguration I collected an assortment of 27 best practice examples. I tried to collect a broad variety of practices.

### Choice of examples

My experience and background provide me with insight into different types of practices of grassroot culture. During my youth, I was an active member of the FabLab association in Nuremberg and this interest in culture carried over to when I did a volunteer year in a district cultural center / district office for culture ('Kulturbüro Muggenhof', part of the 'Kulturwerkstatt auf AEG' in Nuremberg) immediately after finishing my school. In that year I gained knowledge about this kind of culture, insights into working to support it, and an overview of and interest in the cultural landscape of Nuremberg. During my undergraduate studies in Kassel, I worked in a grassroots cultural center ('Färberei'). Culture has also been a lens through which I experienced many field trips, personal travel as well my time in the Netherlands.

I acknowledge that drawing on personal experience may make it difficult to understand

how I reached conclusions in my review as well as it may distort the selection of possible best practice examples. My knowledge of the different practices influenced my assessment of the criteria, but it did provide me with insight that is not documented in any accessible way. However, I never relied solely on my memories but reviewed every best practice example by their online presence (Website and/or social media).

I selected an array of successful (well established) practices, as different as possible while being consistent with the five criteria I derived for strategic degrowth prefiguration. The best practice analysis I pursue in this thesis is explorative in nature, as to my knowledge there is no existing theory on spaces for strategic degrowth prefiguration yet. While I tried to select practices as different from each other as possible as described above, it is impossible due to this circumstance to tell with any certainty whether I have searched in an array of practices wide enough to have found all relevant data. I have provided a list below in which the practices of which I had prior knowledge are written in *Italics*.

### Reviewed practices

- *Inter-generational/Inter-cultural cooking (in Kulturwerkstatt Nuremberg)*
- *Theaterlabor (theatre lab), Nuremberg*
- *Allerleih (library of things), Kassel*
- *Bollywood/Bangra course Sonhi Sing (in Kulturwerkstatt Nuremberg)*
- *Brückenfestival (bridge festival), Nuremberg*
- *Mobile cinema*
- *100 Dancibel (in Kulturwerkstatt Nuremberg)*
- *Musikzentrum (music center), Nuremberg*
- *Dynamo Windrad (sports association), Kassel*
- *Luisse Jugendzentrum (youth center), Nuremberg*
- *Abenteuerspielplatz Goldbachwiese (adventure playground), Nuremberg*
- *Fablab, Nuremberg*
- *Gesundheitskioske (health kiosks), Seltenrain*
- *Borgo-Ensemble, Nuremberg*
- *Desi (autonomous socio-cultural center), Nuremberg*
- Allmende-Kontor e.V. (urban gardening association), Berlin
- Gartendeck e.V. (urban gardening association),

- Hamburg
- K\*AFF, Osnabrück
- Kommune Niederkaufungen (commune), Kaufungen
- Werkstattthaus (crafts house), Tübingen
- *Z-Bau, Nuremberg*
- *Aufgeschlossen (reuse of old churches), Thuringia*
- *Kulturwerkstatt, Nuremberg*
- *Kulturbüro Muggenhof, Nuremberg*
- Streuobstwiesen (orchard), Pirmasens
- *Mietshäuser Syndikat (housing syndicate), Germany*
- *Tegelwippen (tile flipping), The Netherlands*

### Type building

For every best practice example, I qualitatively documented the way in which the practice adheres to the criteria for strategic degrowth prefiguration. Then I noted the spatial characteristics which I deemed particular to the practice. In a last step I analyzed the ways in which the space the practice is situated in performs according to the dimensions of spatial performance for strategic degrowth prefiguration I deduced earlier.

In the next step I explored ways to cluster these practices. The most sensible way I could come up with for informing further design steps was the dimension of space taking to space producing. I figured out when looking at the set that there is a difference between space in general and "space for culture". Simply put space is available but space in which culture can happen has to be produced. The practices are aligned along an axis between 'needing space' and 'producing space' and clustered into types which were then examined for their commonalities in the dimensions of spatial performance for strategic degrowth prefiguration.

Fig.: 34 First best practice examples in relation to the five criteria

# #1 The Regular Guest

<b>Interkulturell. Kochen. Integration. im. Norden</b>	<b>Synergistic satisfying behaviour</b>	<b>Outside of traditional market logics</b>	<b>Bottom up in nature</b>	<b>Integrative Mode of operation</b>	<b>Networking</b>
<b>Description of Practice in prefig terms</b>	Intercultural/Transcultural social cooking evening every Monday	non-commercial	project initiated and run by a non-official circle influenced by participants	yes	yes, through the Kulturbüro, part of "regional" network in Ravensberg
<b>Spatiality of practice</b>	utilizes the project kitchen and associated room in the Kulturwerkstatt				
<b>description of space performance</b>	no	ready to cook and eat, good access	having this in a public building makes it so much more easy and institutionalized	through being in a know cultural center popularization can be aided	identification (we are one group in this bigger construct)
	Spaceuse as the point of practice	Space serving functional requirements	Space turbocharging practices	Space unshackling transformative potential	Space being directly involved in needs satisfaction (Artifact of satisfier(s))

<b>Theaterlabor. tibi</b>	<b>Synergistic satisfying behaviour</b>	<b>Outside of traditional market logics</b>	<b>Bottom up in nature</b>	<b>Integrative Mode of operation</b>	<b>Networking</b>
<b>Description of Practice in prefig terms</b>	open theater workshops in the Kulturwerkstatt	free participation	based on a free theater initiative/group; focus influenced by participants	everyone welcome to participate	yes through the initiative and through the Kulturbüro
<b>Spatiality of practice</b>	rooms in the Kulturwerkstatt for practice	stage in Kulturwerkstatt for performances			
<b>description of space performance</b>	no	yes, although slight enough space and good lighting etc. good access	regular access in a sheltered place manifests the practice	through being in a know cultural center popularization can be aided	no
	Spaceuse as the point of practice	Space serving functional requirements	Space turbocharging practices	Space unshackling transformative potential	Space being directly involved in needs satisfaction (Artifact of satisfier(s))

<b>Rockfestival</b>	<b>Synergistic satisfying behaviour</b>	<b>Outside of traditional market logics</b>	<b>Bottom up in nature</b>	<b>Integrative Mode of operation</b>	<b>Networking</b>
<b>Description of Practice in prefig terms</b>	free public music festival with regional focus under a bridge over a significant green space	free	Association based	yes, anyone welcome to join or to participate	yes with others from the surrounding area; in a know cultural center; focus on regional focus; focus on significant green space
<b>Spatiality of practice</b>	A specific bridge	Has to be approved by the municipality	requires equipment, tents, bars, toilets etc		
<b>description of space performance</b>	mean (by now an end)	bridge provides a roofed area which is a good condition to have an event	the iconic bridge location gave the practice its identity	availability, the uniqueness and nice setting helped popularization	the ability to transform the space together with the attendees is participation which leads to identification
	Spaceuse as the point of practice	Space serving functional requirements	Space turbocharging practices	Space unshackling transformative potential	Space being directly involved in needs satisfaction (Artifact of satisfier(s))

<b>Mobiles Kino</b>	<b>Synergistic satisfying behaviour</b>	<b>Outside of traditional market logics</b>	<b>Bottom up in nature</b>	<b>Integrative Mode of operation</b>	<b>Networking</b>
<b>Description of Practice in prefig terms</b>	an association dedicated to bringing cinema to ward and public spaces.	non-profit	association structure	movie enthusiasts are welcome to engage	A lot of cooperations, a lot of networking in the realm of screening locations
<b>Spatiality of practice</b>	centralized storage	decentralized screening locations; in public, special etc			
<b>description of space performance</b>	end	being able to host with own staff through the association is participation which leads to identification	through being in a know cultural center popularization can be aided	cool screening location enable the practice and help with the popularization	participation, leisure
	Spaceuse as the point of practice	Space serving functional requirements	Space turbocharging practices	Space unshackling transformative potential	Space being directly involved in needs satisfaction (Artifact of satisfier(s))

On the side of needing space the first type of practices is **'Regular timed small scale non-permanent practices'** these are for example an intercultural cooking group. They need space but do not produce any themselves. Space use for them is not the point of the practice. Their functional requirements are not very specific and not hard to fulfil. From a functional perspective good access might be needed as their target groups are not necessarily local. They are turbocharged by having a sheltered space with regular access possibility. In terms of transformative potential being clustered with other practices aids in popularization. Generally, space does not play a role in direct need satisfaction for them, a space may be providing opportunities for identification.

Fig.: 35 Analyzed examples Type 1: The Regular Guest

<b>Allerleih Kassel</b>	<b>Synergistic satisfying behaviour</b>	<b>Outside of traditional market logics</b>	<b>Bottom up in nature</b>	<b>Integrative Mode of operation</b>	<b>Networking</b>
<b>Description of Practice in prefig terms</b>	an association with the goal of running a shared good of things (library of things)	non-commercial, non-profit. 3k per month, enabled by volunteering	the selection of things can be influenced by the members	everyone is welcome to use or participate	yes, as part of the library, a partnership with another entity of a similar nature
<b>Spatiality of practice</b>	located in the public library of Kassel central and secure	second place for better things in the location of a (former) building (better building, good accessibility by car in Kassel)			
<b>description of space performance</b>	no	yes, space to host all the things, good access	The location in the Public Library makes it easy to operate	the location enabled the practice and helps popularizing it	no
	Spaceuse as the point of practice	Space serving functional requirements	Space turbocharging practices	Space unshackling transformative potential	Space being directly involved in needs satisfaction (Artifact of satisfier(s))

<b>Bollywood / Bangla. Kurs. Sonhi. Sing</b>	<b>Synergistic satisfying behaviour</b>	<b>Outside of traditional market logics</b>	<b>Bottom up in nature</b>	<b>Integrative Mode of operation</b>	<b>Networking</b>
<b>Description of Practice in prefig terms</b>	A free course to learn Bollywood and Bangla	free	offered by a volunteer who loves the activity; partnership with another entity of a similar nature	everyone is welcome to join	yes, via the Kulturbüro
<b>Spatiality of practice</b>	a multifunctional room in the Kulturwerkstatt				
<b>description of space performance</b>	no	yes, although slight enough space and good lighting etc. good access	regular access in a sheltered place manifests the practice	through being in a know cultural center popularization can be aided	no
	Spaceuse as the point of practice	Space serving functional requirements	Space turbocharging practices	Space unshackling transformative potential	Space being directly involved in needs satisfaction (Artifact of satisfier(s))

# #2 The Happening

The next type of practice is **'Irregular bigger events'** such as for example festivals. Space use is not necessarily a point of their practices although it doesn't hurt to be place specific. Functionally, the requirements vary as the space must be suitable for the type of event (e.g. fitting the size, providing electricity or technology) which is variable. Generally, they do not require permanent space or regular capacity, the one exception is a practice which needs storage space as their event, although irregular, happens multiple times each summer which makes it sensible to have their own stock of equipment. These practices get turbocharged by space having a representative function. The observed effect is that they benefit from characteristic spaces which are out of the ordinary for the type of event (e.g. open-air cinemas in a park or a swimming pool). In the dimension of unshackling transformative potential, the location hosting the event may provide networking opportunities helping popularization. 'Cool' locations help practices to popularize as well. In conclusion, space is not involved directly in needs satisfaction, it may provide opportunity for identification.

Fig.: 36 Analyzed examples Type 2: The Happening

<b>100 Dancibel</b>	<b>Synergistic satisfying behaviour</b>	<b>Outside of traditional market logics</b>	<b>Bottom up in nature</b>	<b>Integrative Mode of operation</b>	<b>Networking</b>
<b>Description of Practice in prefig terms</b>	breakdance battle meet-up, many young participants	non-commercial	initiated by a local dance crew	everyone is welcome to participate in the battle	through the Kulturbüro (eg present in open day)
<b>Spatiality of practice</b>	used the big event hall and the foyer of the Kulturwerkstatt				
<b>description of space performance</b>	no	yes, event technology, size, access	enabled having a proper professional event helping to make it a serious thing	through being in a know cultural center popularization can be aided	Space being directly involved in needs satisfaction (Artifact of satisfier(s))
	Spaceuse as the point of practice	Space serving functional requirements	Space turbocharging practices	Space unshackling transformative potential	Space being directly involved in needs satisfaction (Artifact of satisfier(s))

### #3 The Specific Space



The next type of practice is the first of the permanent ones. These practices are 'Places with a specific usage': either due to discipline or due to target audience' examples for which would be a youth center or a sporting association. For them space use is a point of their practice but as a means to create places. Functional requirements differ from practice to practice but are rather specific due to the specificity of either the uses or the target group. Furthermore, having a somewhat dedicated space seems to be a requirement. On the other side of that requirement stands that these practices get supercharged by clustering as this provides them with opportunities for crosspollination as well as cooperation. For all their transformative potential the availability of space was a precondition for the emergence of their practice (prefiguration). For all of them space satisfies the need for identification.

Fig.: 37 Analyzed examples Type 3: The Specific Space

### #4.1 The Niche Platform



The following type is the first of the self-producing ones: 'Places with a clear area of interest, being a platform for that niche, self-producing'. A prime example of this type are FabLabs. For them, space use is a mean to an end as they use space to produce places. There are some functional requirements depending on the focus of the practice, but these are mainly ones to be commonly found. Decent access seems to be a requirement. What really turbocharges these practices is the ability to appropriate and adapt their spaces as well as a unique character of their spaces (e.g. distinct aesthetics). Availability of space is a precondition to the emergence of these practices (prefiguration). Unique places help with popularization. Generally, the space is involved in needs satisfaction in a sequence of participation which leads to identification.

Fig.: 38 Analyzed examples Type 4.1: The Niche Platform

## #4.2 The Greenspace

There is another type which is 'places with a clear area of interest, being a platform for that niche, self-producing (the greenspace type)' which is like the previous type but based on open air practices an example of which are urban gardening projects. They have space use as the point of their practices in form of a resource being a means to an end. Their functional requirement is the ability to appropriate the space and being outside. These practices can be turbocharged by their context (e.g. by creating a tension or being distinct or being plain beautiful). In terms of unleashing transformative potential, availability of space kicks these practices off (prefiguration). Nice and unique places help with popularization. Clustering with either practices of the same type or other types is possible and helpful for popularization and in some cases pressure due to networking. With regards to need satisfaction as a function of space this type also displays the sequence of participation leading to identification.

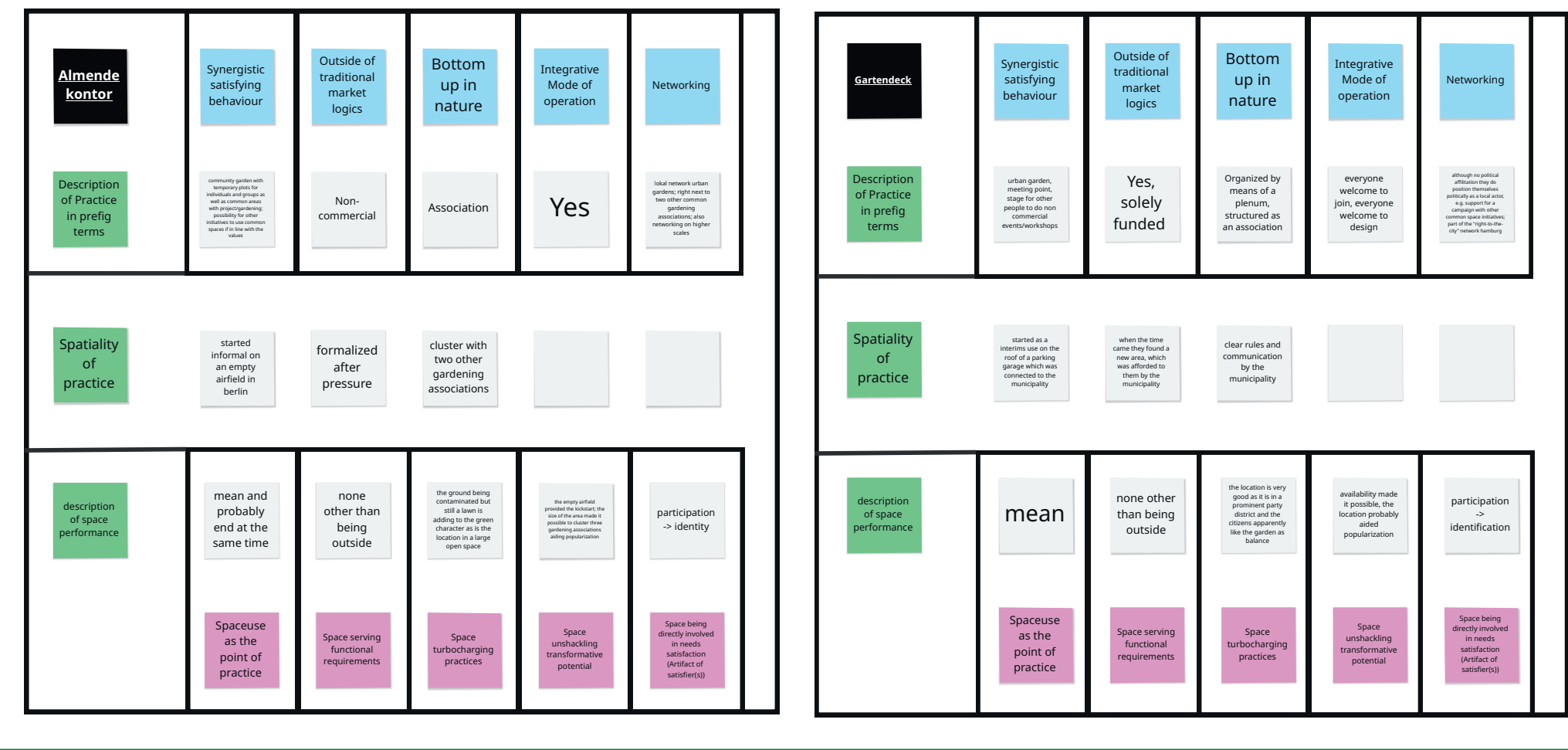


Fig: 39 Analyzed examples Type 4.2: The Greenspace

## #5 The Civic Platform

The next type broadens the target groups significantly: 'Places with general starting point values/intentions, being a platform not only for some core focus, being a platform as intention of the practice, self-producing'. For those practices space use is a means and an end at the same time as they are sometimes emerging starting from the availability of a specific space. The places belonging to this type have some more functional requirements: they must be able to appropriate their spaces, the spaces must be of decent size, and the space configuration must be suitable for sharing (e.g. being divided into rooms). As with other types, this type can be turbocharged through unique spaces. Additionally, turbocharging can also happen if the type exists in socially progressive/engaged contexts. As with other types, availability of space is a precondition for their emergence (prefiguration), unique and nice places support popularization. For these practices also the density of the practices they host supports popularization. Need satisfaction through space itself with this type also generally works through the sequence of participation leading to identification.



Fig: 40 Analyzed examples Type 5: The Civic Platform

## #6 The Center

The last type to be associated to specific spaces is **'Places with general starting point values/intentions, being a platform as a core focus, not or only in parts self-producing'** which are often larger cultural centers run or funded by a municipality. For this type, space use is a mean and an end at the same time, similar to the previous one. These types of practices have some functional requirements: they require a considerable size, good access as well as adjacent outdoor spaces. This type is in and of itself a turbocharger for other practices, but it is supported by distinctiveness of its space. The factors supporting the transformative potential of these practices are similar to other types: Availability as a precondition (prefiguration), nice and unique spaces aid in popularization as does the density of the hosted practices. The way in which space is involved in needs satisfaction directly once again is generally the sequence of participation leading to identification. Here there is a slight qualitative difference in the meaning of participation: Whilst for the other types participation often refers to physically appropriating a space (e.g. through painting or furnishing) in these spaces the participation lies in the fact that the place is defined by the users of the provided capacity and the type of community forming in that place. Participation can already mean regularly frequenting and using the place.

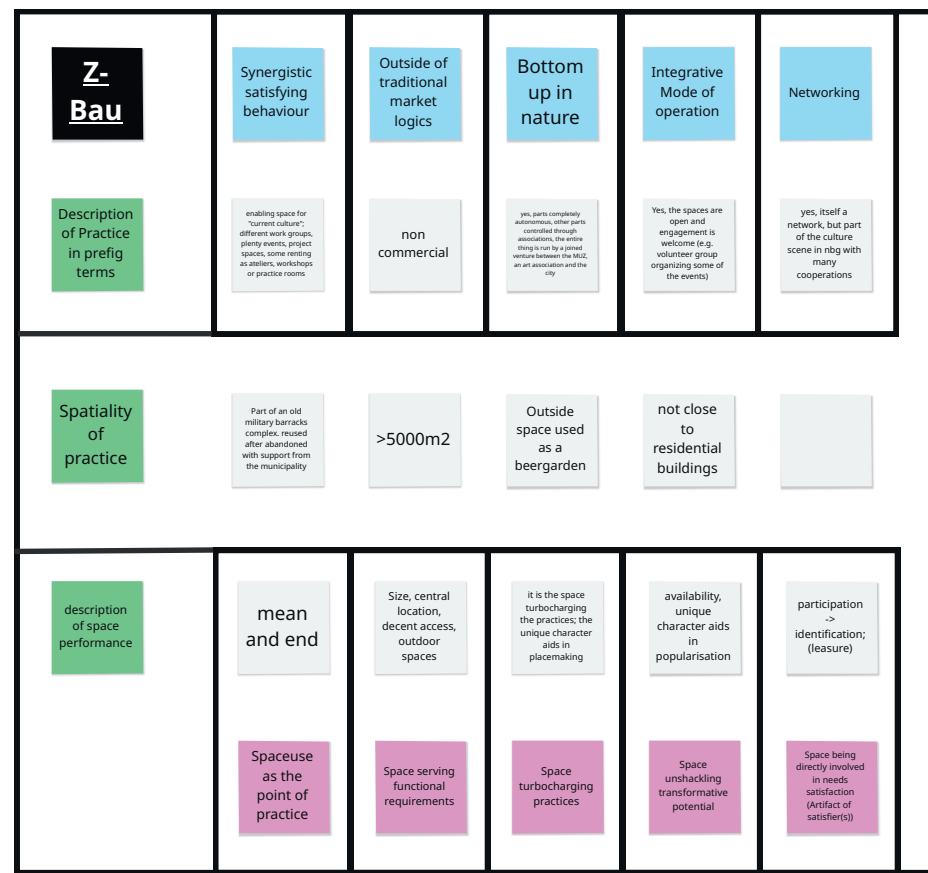
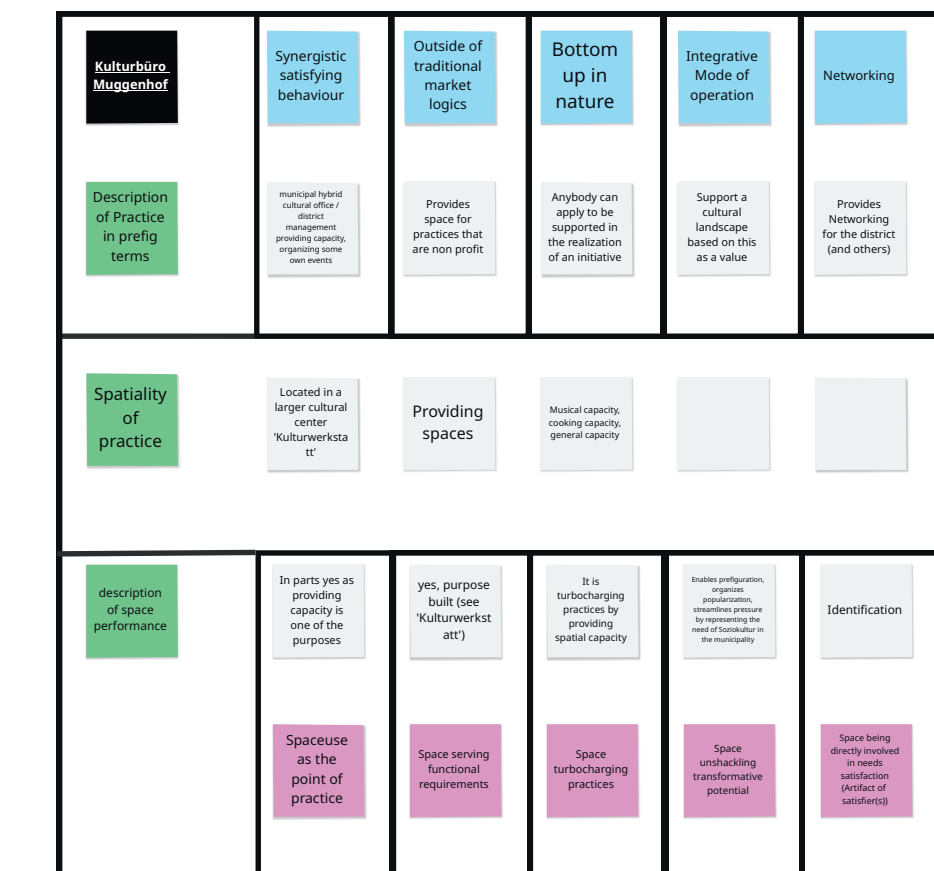


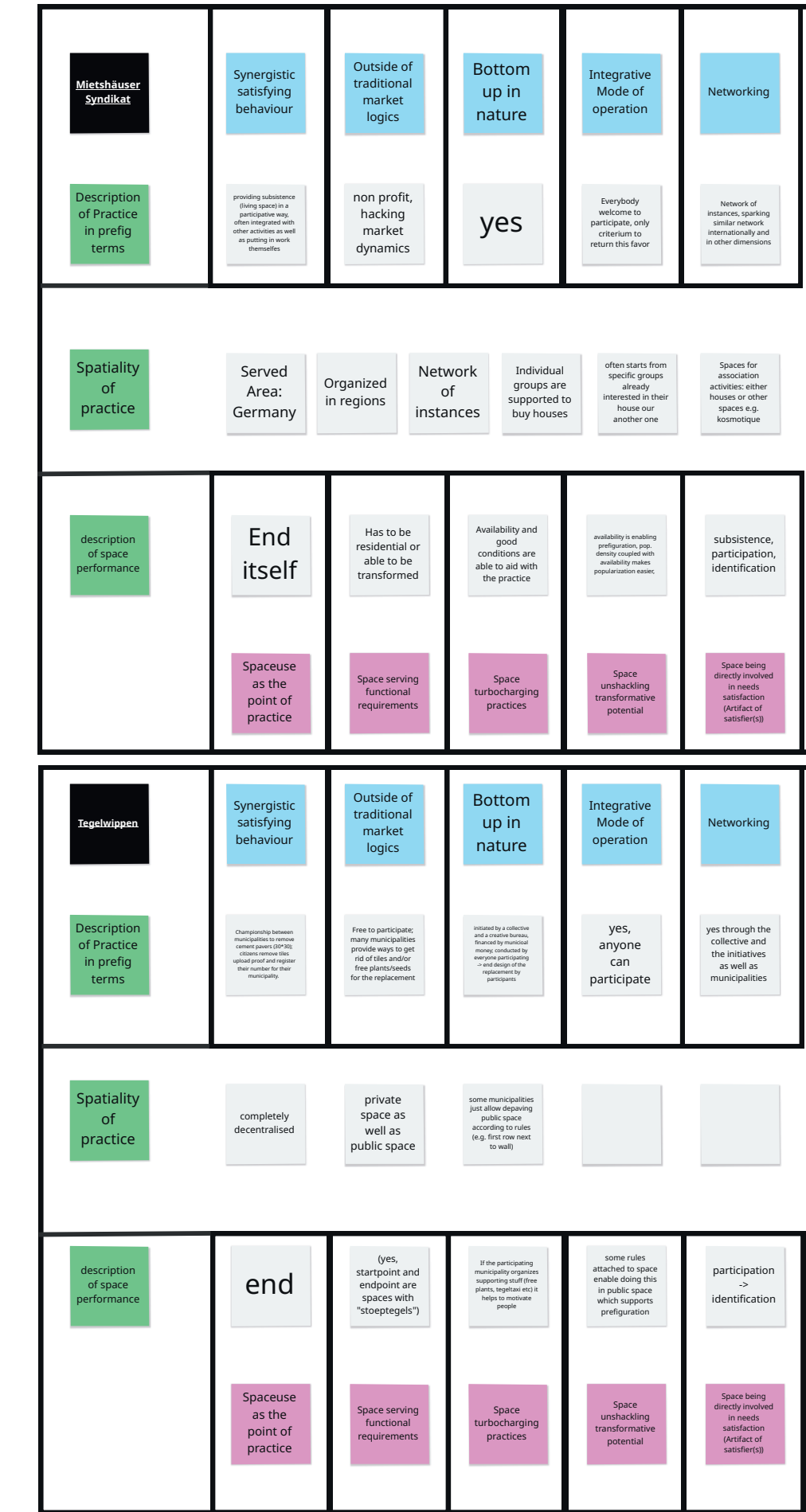
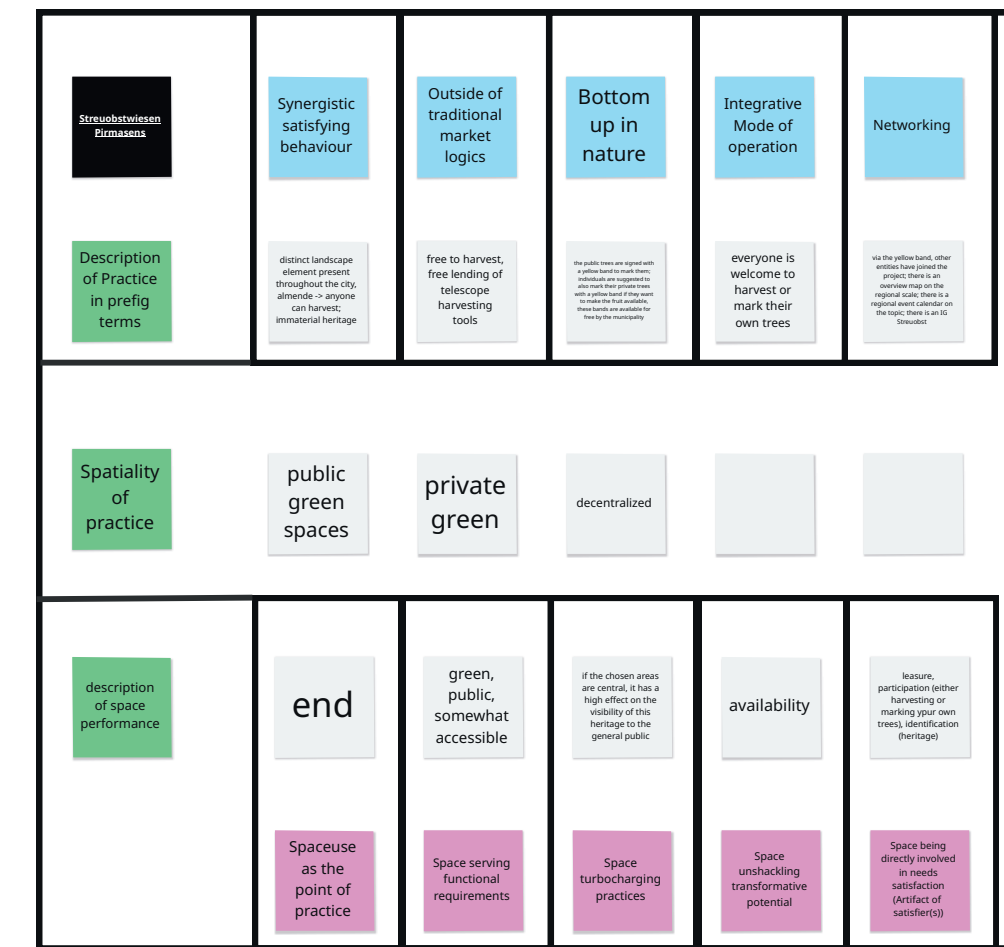
Fig.: 41 Analyzed examples Type 6: The Center



## #7 The Movement

The last type of practices is **'Decentral movements with the intent of effecting space'**. These are practices like the Dutch 'Tegelwippen' (tile flipping). For these practices space use is an end. The functional requirements differ as the practices are heavily space-centric in their nature. For turbocharging, availability of space helps but good conditions supporting the intention of the practice are far more important (e.g. for the de-paving efforts of 'Tegelwippen', municipalities can allow citizens to flip the row of tiles immediately next to their house, can provide free plants or gather the tiles). These efforts are also what supports popularization. These practices also display the sequence of participation leading to identification as a general pattern of space being directly involved in need satisfaction.

Fig.: 42 Analyzed examples Type 7: The Movement



## Spatial types of strategic degrowth prefiguration

### Why is Soziokultur located in the Conceptual Framework if you don't write about it?

I do! Having conducted a best practice study and subsequently constructed a typologisation of space for strategic degrowth prefiguration there is a notable observation to be made: all of the best-practices and the space types can be categorized as 'soziokulturell' stemming from the German 'Soziokultur'. Some of the practices even are designated (municipal) centers for Soziokultur.

I have presented all information relevant for designing with the types in a graphic (see Fig. 43). An addition to what I described on the previous pages is the graphing of hosting relations. On the left of the spectrum are the types that do not produce space but need to be hosted; The Regular Guest (1) needs to be hosted on a regular basis; The Happening (2) does not need to be hosted on a regular basis. The Specific Space (3) to The Greenspace (4.2) produce their own places but are limited in the practices they can host additionally. The Specific Space (3) is the most inflexible to host other practices due to the specificity of the practices. The Niche Platform (4.1) and The Greenspace (4.2) can host a variety of practices pertaining to their niche of interest, The Greenspace (4.2) is additionally limited due to the open-air nature. The Civic Platform (5) and The Center (6) are generally able to host a wide variety of practices, only specific functional requirements limit this possibility. The Specific Space (3), The Niche Platform (4.1), The Greenspace (4.2), The Civic Platform (5) and The Center (6) represent places.

Fig.: 43 Performance of the eight spatial types regarding the five dimensions of spatial performance

	Spaceuse as the point of the practice	Space serving functional requirements	Space turbocharging practices	Space unshackling transformative potential	Space being directly involved in needs satisfaction (Artifact of satisfier(s))
The Regular Guest (1)	No	Not very specific, not very hard to fulfill, as the target groups are not necessarily local, good access is a plus	All of them benefit from having a stable, sheltered space with regular access	Being in a cluster with other (preferably similar) practices aids popularization	Generally no, possibly identification
The Happening (2)	Mixed (One example is not but it would not have a negative impact if it were)	Needs to suit the type of event (One example needs the space permanently due to specificity of equipment needed)	Representative function (look fancy or professional, to be our of the ordinary)	Representative locations help popularization Being part of a network and clustered helps popularization	Generally no, possibly identification
The Specific Space (3)	Mean to an end (priority of providing a place, not possible w/o a suitable space)	Very specific requirement due to the uses	Space should be dedicated to the use to some extent, Proximity to other practices provides cross-pollination	Availability of space is pre-condition for the practices	Identification, possibly participation (in the sense of keeping the place lively by attending)
The Niche Platform (4.1)	Mean to an end (priority of providing a place which people can create themselves out of generic space types)	Centrality and good access are requirements to a certain extent	Unique character of spaces helps with appropriating the spaces for own requirements	Availability of space is pre-condition for the practices, nice and unique places aid in popularization	Participation, leading to Identification
The Greenspace (4.2)	Mean to an end (priority of providing a place which people can create themselves out of generic space types)	Ability to appropriate the space, none other than being outside	Context can make a decisive impact	Availability of space is pre-condition for the practices, nice and unique places aid in popularization	Participation, leading to Identification
The Civic Platform (5)	Mean and end	Ability to appropriate the space, size, spatial configuration suitable for sharing the space	Uniqueness, Progressive/engaged context around the practice	Availability of space is pre-condition for the practices, nice and unique places aid in popularization density of practices (contained) helpful for popularization	Participation, leading to Identification
The Center (6)	Mean and end	Size, location, good access, adjacent outdoor spaces	The practice is the turbo-charger itself, unique spaces support the placemaking	Availability of space is pre-condition for the practices, nice and unique places aid in popularization density of practices (contained) helpful for popularization	Participation, leading to Identification
The Movement (7)	End	Depends on intention of practice as they are heavily space-centric	Availability helps but good conditions supporting the intention of the practices are far more important	(Legal) availability of space, measures supporting the practice support popularization	Participation, leading to Identification

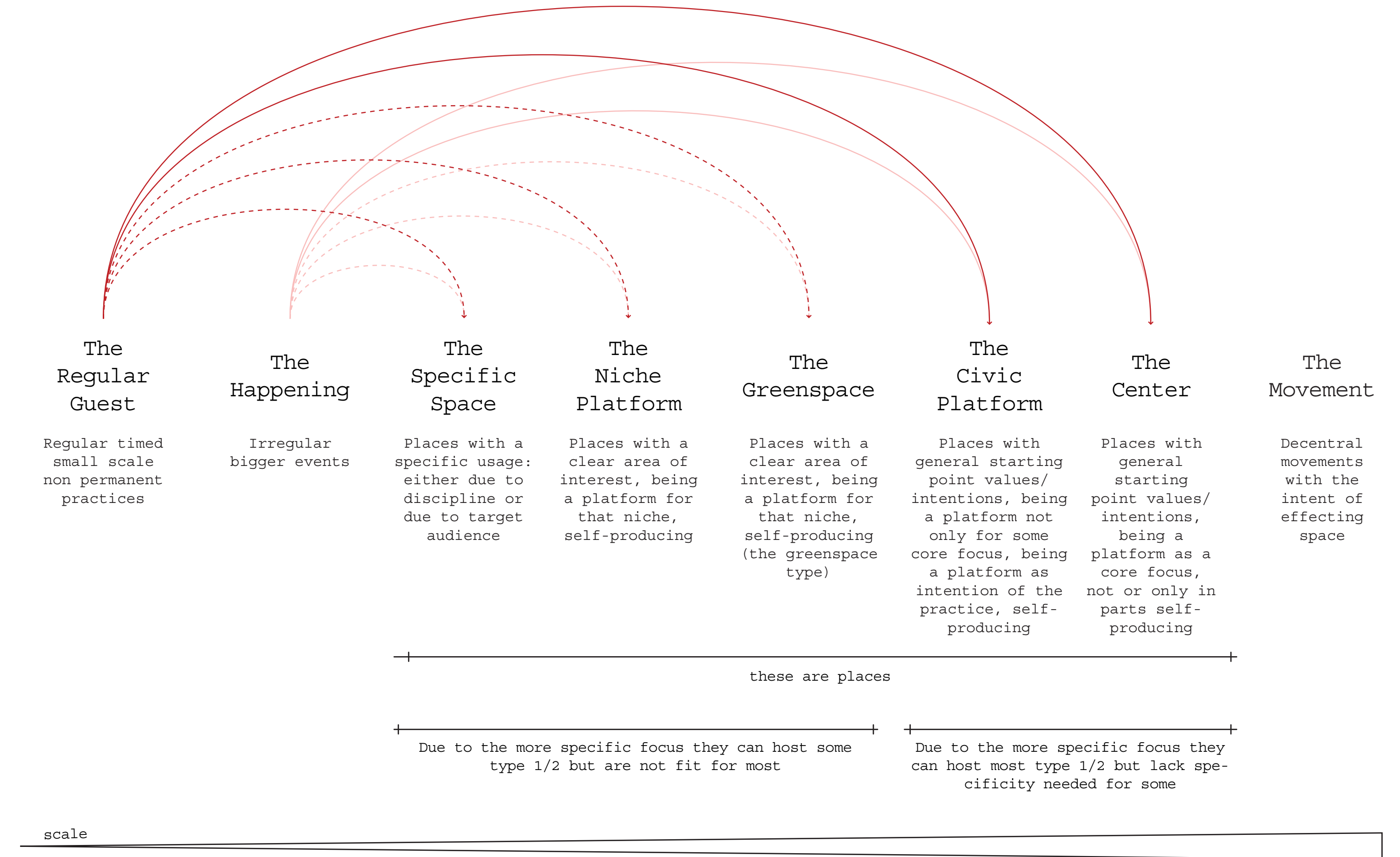


Fig.: 44 Overview spatial types of strategic degrowth prefiguration

**Chapter 04**  

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**Analysis**

# Population dynamics in Dessau

The first step of exploration through design was to choose the area in Dessau where to test implementing these space types and to test how to create well-suited spaces whilst keeping as much ambiguity as possible to enable a wide range of prefiguration. I looked at areas of Dessau which have experienced a significant decline in inhabitants in recent years as the goal is to increase utilization of unused housing capacity. These dynamics occur most remarkably in the inner-city districts (see Fig. 45). When also considering the density and amount of housing stock that is now empty, 'Zoberberg' and 'Innerstädtischer Bereich Süd' stands out (see Fig. 46 and 47).

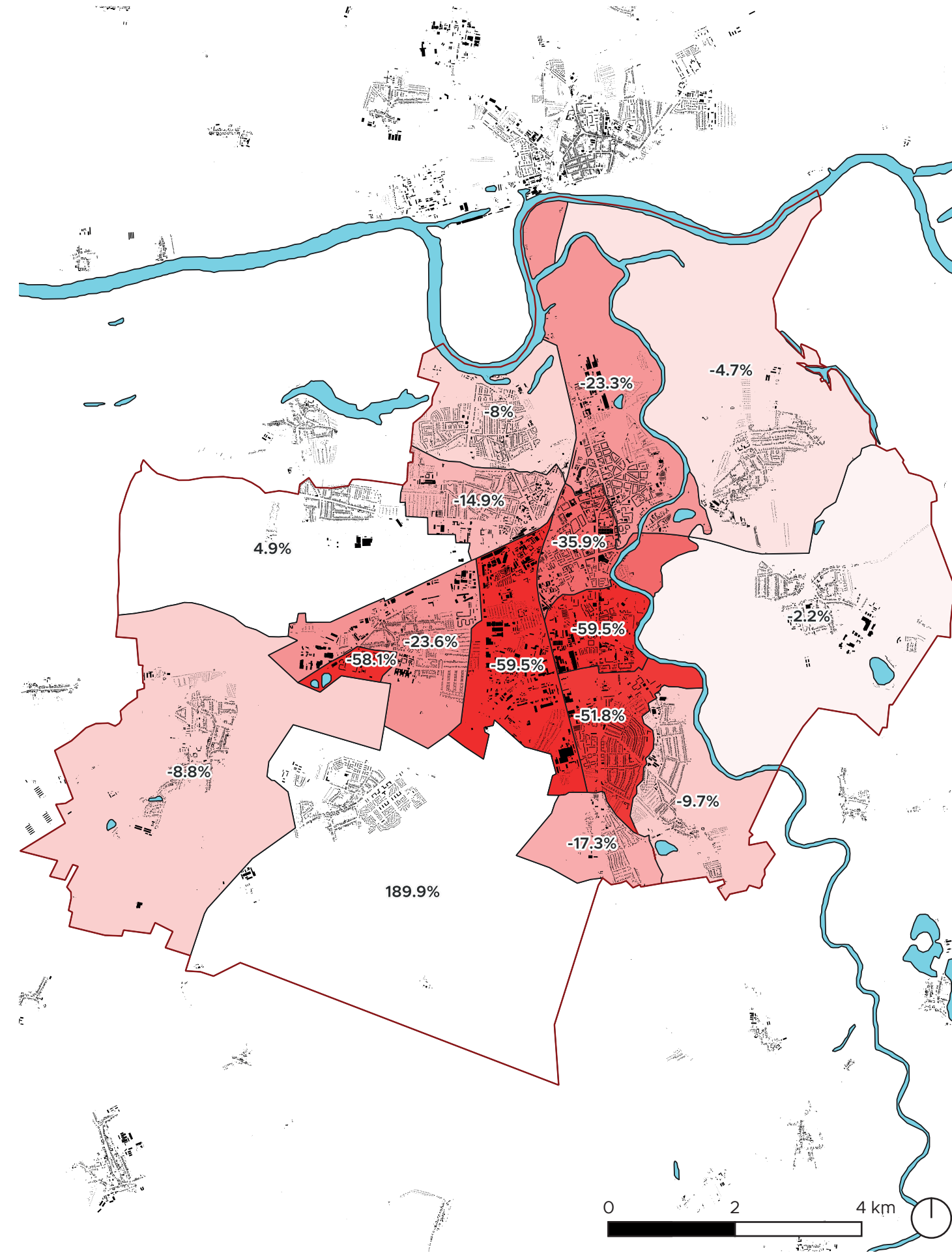


Fig.: 45 Inhabitants moving out of the city districts between 12/1991 and 07/2025 as percentage of total district inhabitants (data from Stadtverwaltung Dessau-Roßlau, 2025)

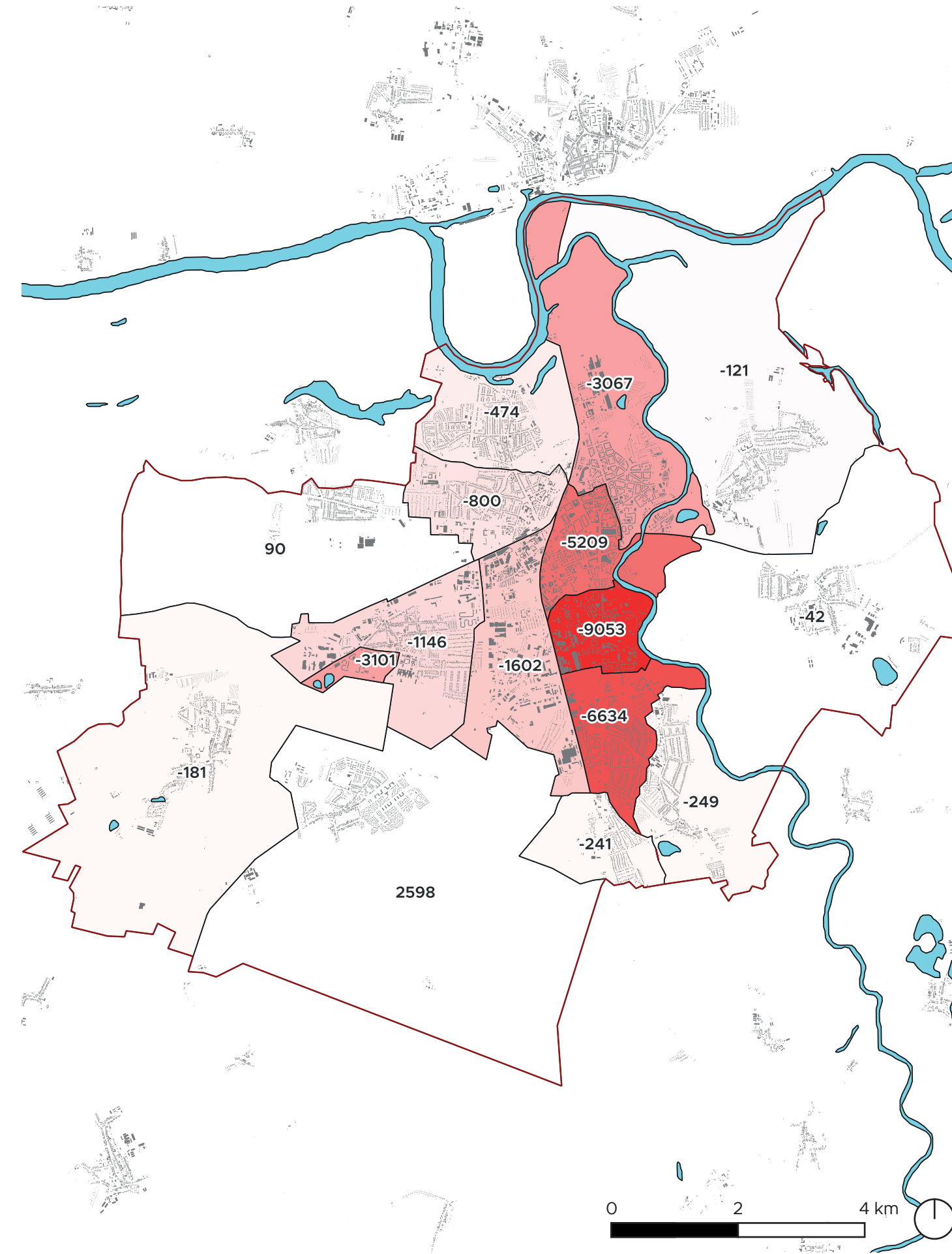


Fig.: 47 Inhabitants moving out of the city districts between 12/1991 and 07/2025 in numbers (data from Stadtverwaltung Dessau-Roßlau, 2025)

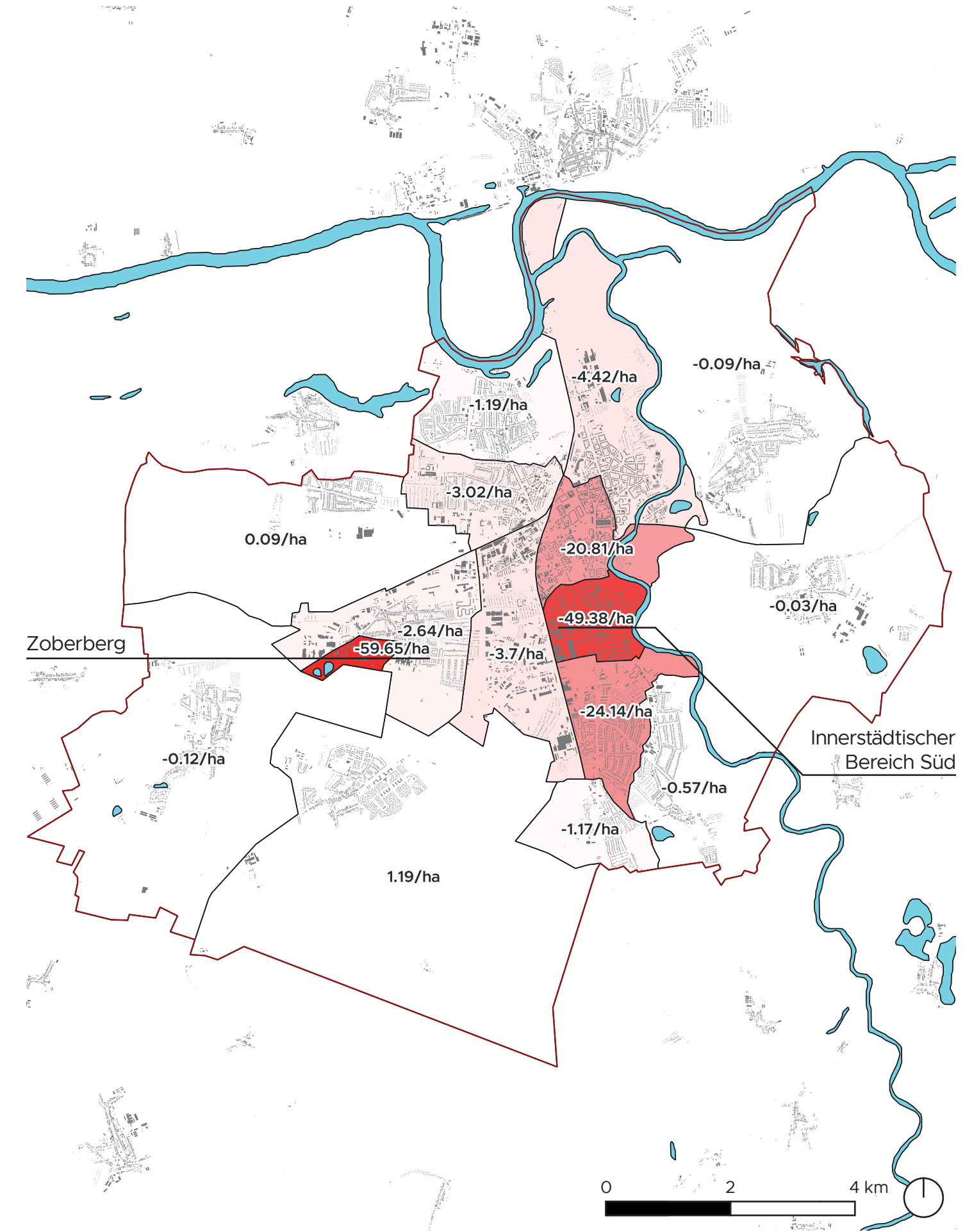


Fig.: 46 Inhabitants moving out of the city districts between 12/1991 and 07/2025 as people per hectare (ha) (data from Stadtverwaltung Dessau-Roßlau, 2025)

Focus area: Innerstädtischer Bereich Süd

Furthermore, I chose to prioritize areas with good access (by one of the two tram lines) and which have district heating or a perspective of getting district heating in the future according to municipal planning. This coincides with the previously identified two potential test districts: 'Zoberberg' and 'Innerstädtischer Bereich Süd' (IBS). I chose IBS as statistically depopulation is more pressing there, as it is located more centrally, as it already has district heating whilst in Zoberberg there is only the perspective to get it and as – maybe most importantly – there is a recent planning document: an integrated development concept published in May 2020 (Stadt Dessau-Roßlau, 2020). This recent planning document is based on analysis of the area as well as a participatory process and its implementation has already started. This is particularly interesting in the context of this thesis as the aim is to gain insights into how to do *strategic* degrowth so specifically how to start from the status quo. I think this provided a good opportunity to check in how much the current planning already goes into a degrowth direction and how to potentially adapt existing plans for strategic degrowth.

- Legend**
- District heating
  - City center
  - Railway
  - Tram line
  - Station
  - Bridge
  - UNESCO world heritage site Gartenreich Dessau-Wörlitz
  - Main waterway
  - Focus area

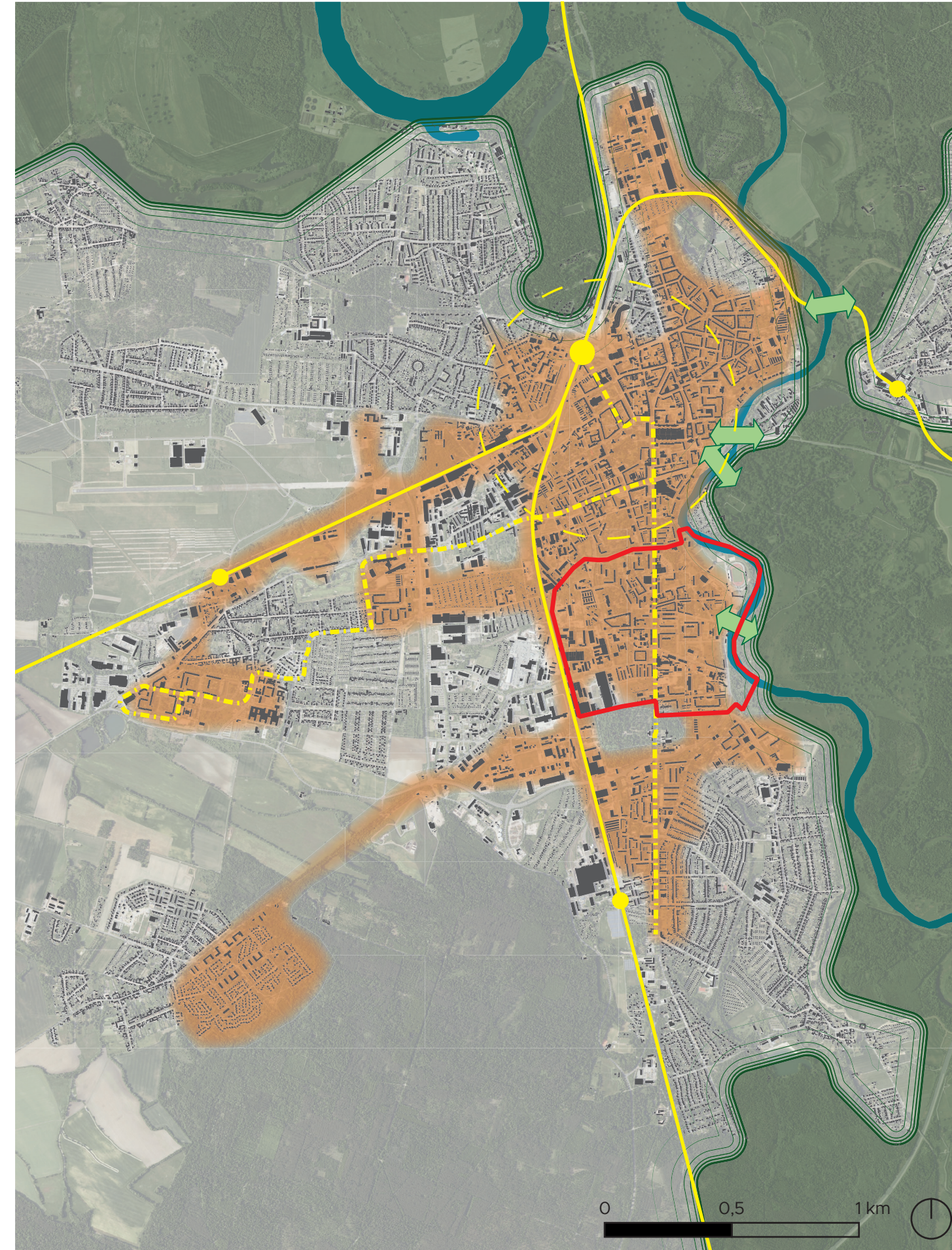


Fig.: 48 Location of the IBS within Dessau (data from DVV Stadwerke Dessau, 2024, satellite image from LVermGeo, n.d.a)

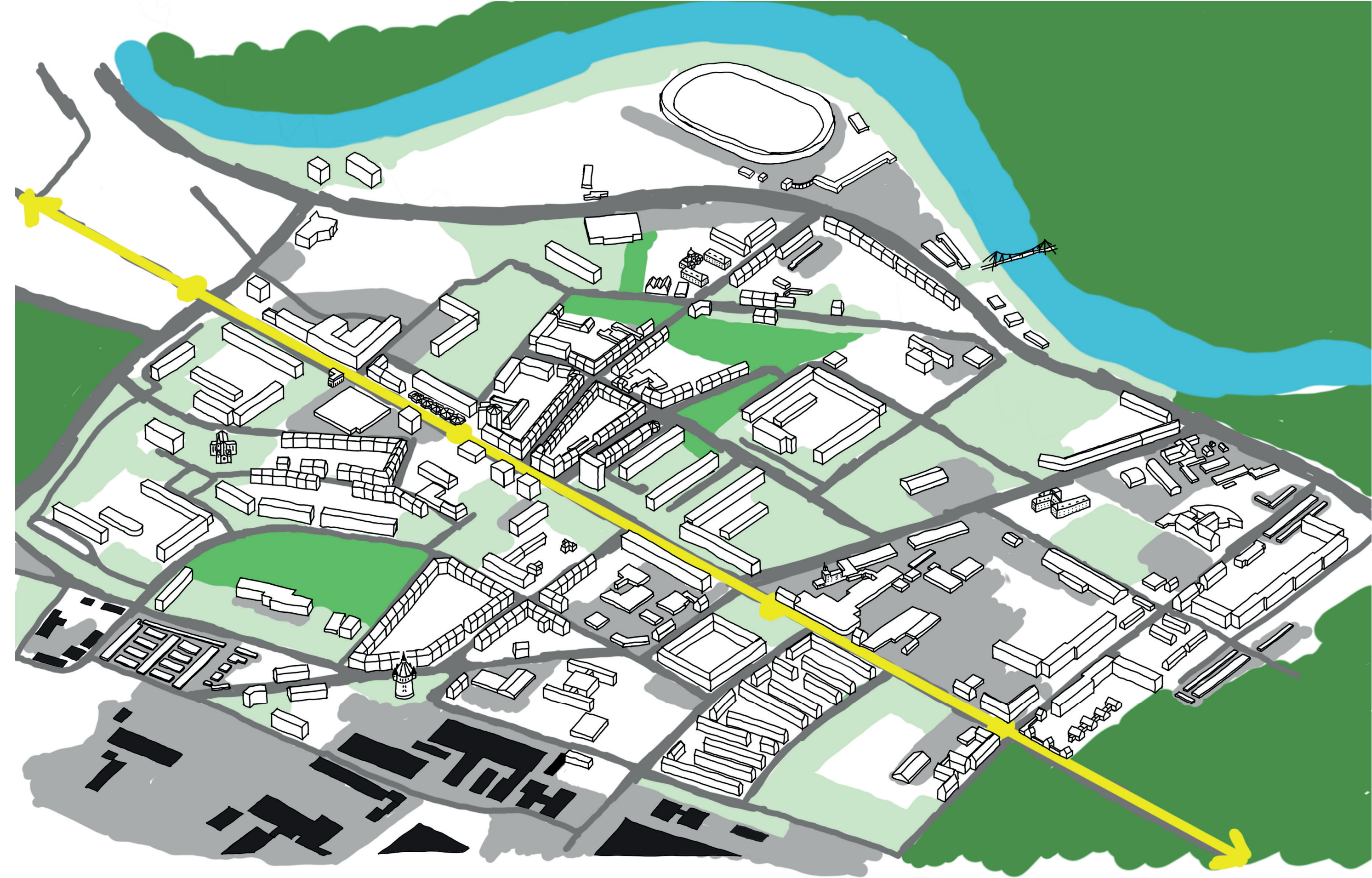


Fig.: 49 Overview Innerstädtischer Bereich Süd

# Housing

The structure of the housing context in the district is peculiar due to the historic development. It is mainly comprised of remaining workers' homes from the "Gründerzeit" era (industrialization period) contrasted by large scale large panel system buildings which have been developed during the time of the GDR. It is thus historically a rather dense and non-luxurious district. The density however was of different natures as the industrialization period buildings are built right to the edge of the street with private gardens in the back, whilst the large panel system buildings had a different conceptualization with higher and denser buildings but surrounded by more open and public spaces. The structure nowadays is very porous though, as a lack of housing demand in the district lead to large scale demolitions of buildings from both periods as well as a lack of maintenance leading sometimes to further demolitions as well as mixed conditions of the remaining stock. There is still a high rate of vacancy in the district which is mostly diffused in the stock with some notable exceptions where bad conditions meet practically full vacancy. So far the city's plans aim to support

private investors closing porous plinths from the industrialization era as well as an entirely new mixed use development next to the main axis (Stadt Dessau-Roßlau, 2020).

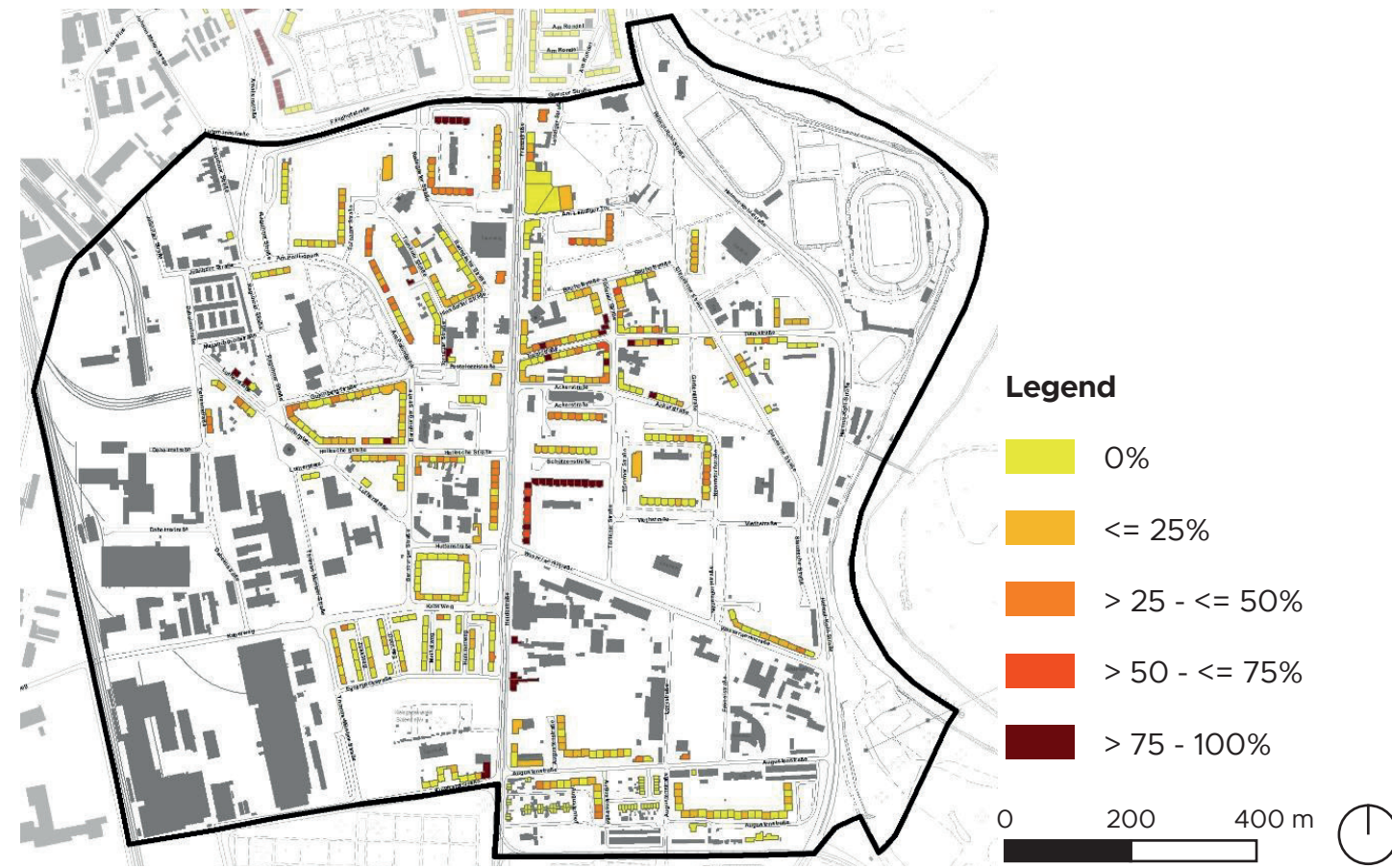


Fig.: 50 Housing vacancy in residential buildings of the district (Stadt Dessau-Roßlau, 2020)  
60

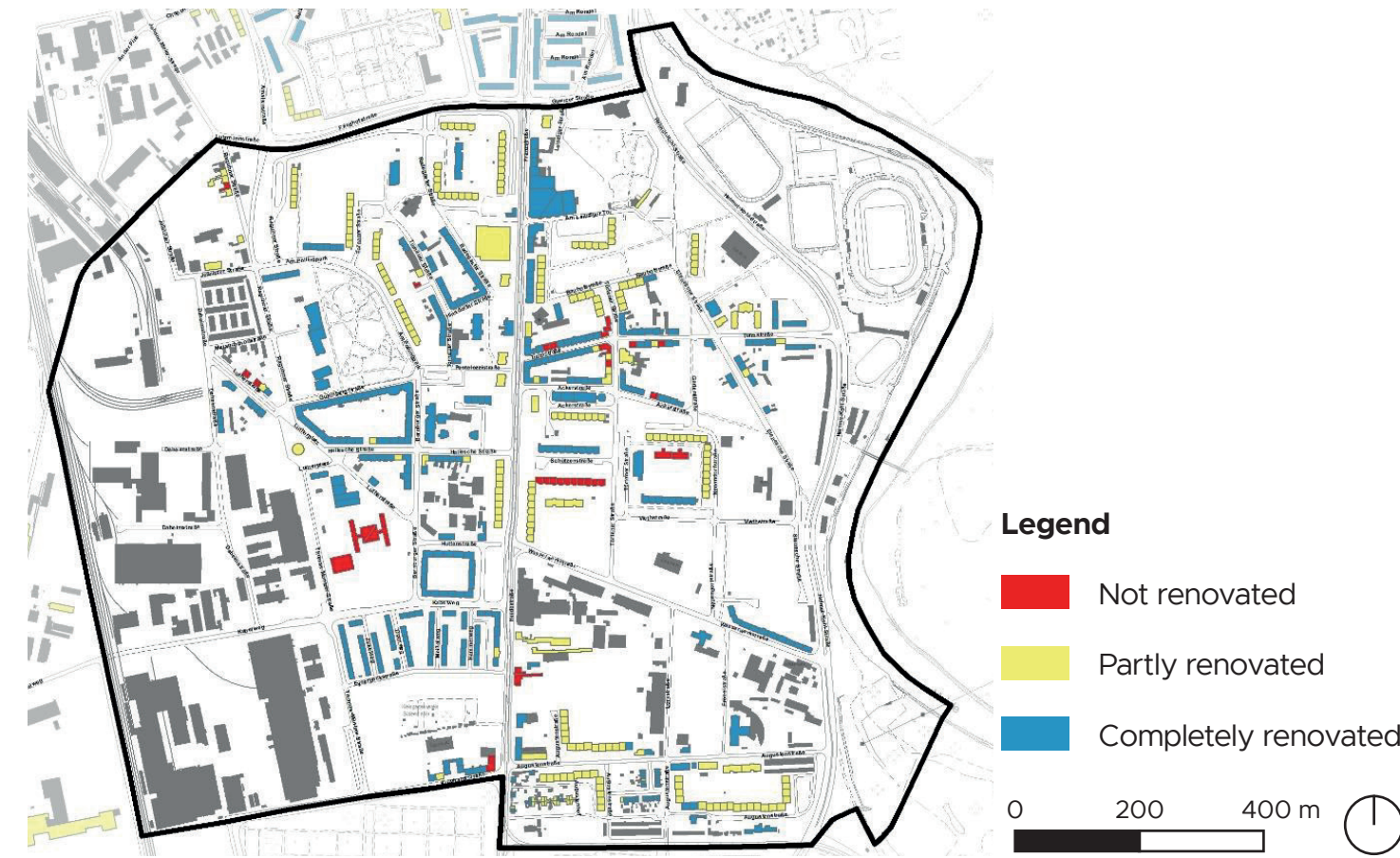


Fig.: 51 Renovation status in residential buildings of the district (Stadt Dessau-Roßlau, 2020)



Fig.: 52 Characteristics of the current housing stock and future plans from the IDC (data from LVerGeo, 2024, Stadt Dessau-Roßlau, 2020, LVerGeo, n.d.b, LVerGeo, n.d.c)

# Housing

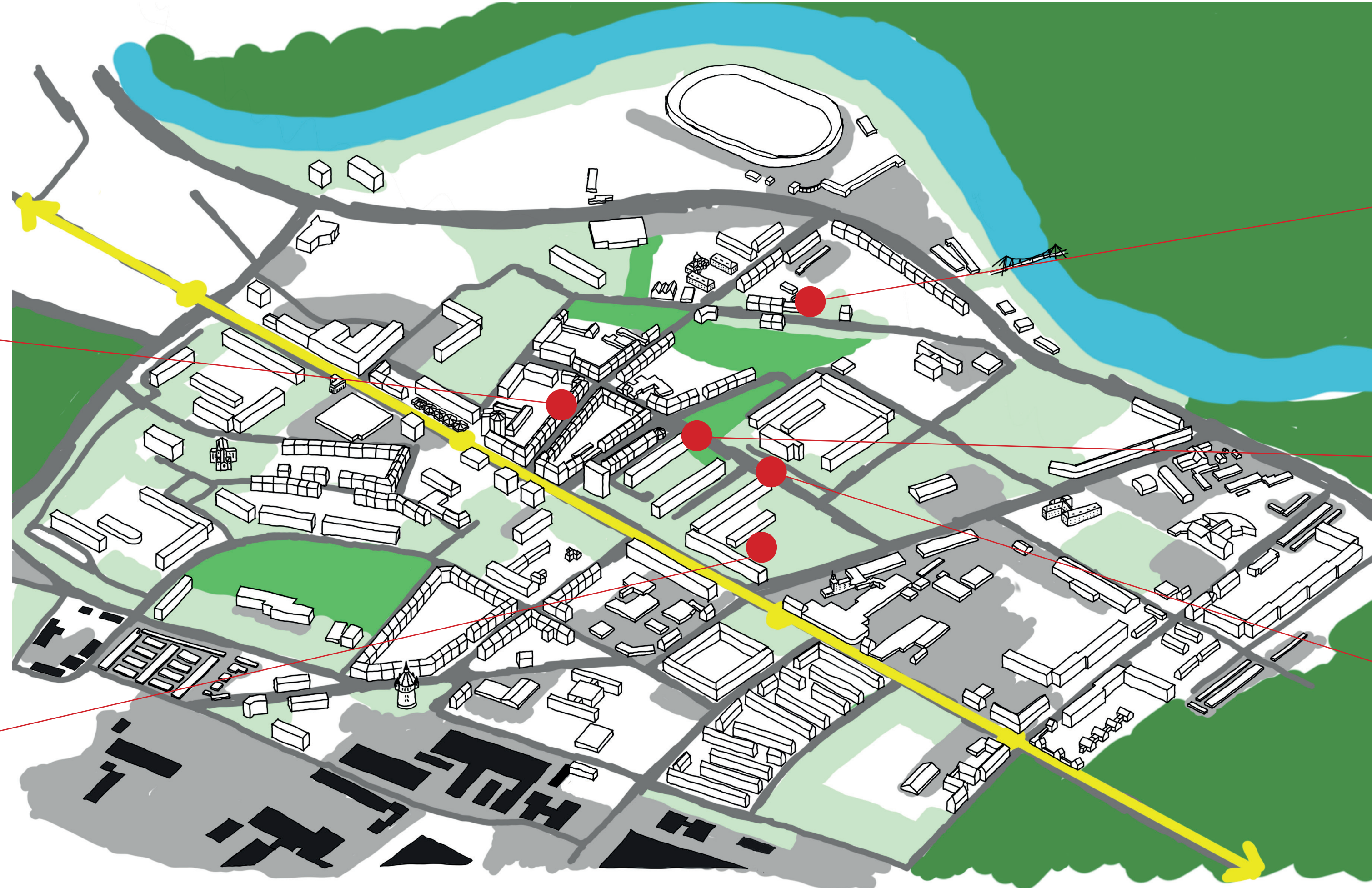
Buildings in Gründerzeit-style, owned by private individuals



Some buildings are being sold off to private companies which have the means to finance thorough renovation and afterwards directly compete with the public housing company



Fig.: 53 Overview of housing typologies in the district  
62



Rows are porous due to demolition



Upkept large-panel-system buildings still house many people, owned by the municipality through a housing corporation which is its own entity



Publicly-owned buildings are often left to deteriorate



## Open space

As a consequence of the large scale demolitions that were conducted in the district, there is now a substantial green network in the area. Many of these greenspaces have been identified to have a high relevance to the urban microclimate either due to their cooling capacity but more importantly because they enable airflow in this historically dense structure. Urban greenspaces have been shown to have a lot of beneficial functions for their surrounding which go further than mere microclimatic relevance. Due to this a careful and conservatory approach towards these greenspaces should be taken overall. Protecting the ones with significant microclimatic relevance is non negotiable, as potential negative effects of their deterioration might counteract the positive effects that the approach of this thesis aims to produce. To produce an overview of this context I synthesized a map based on significant greenspaces of public character and the synthesis of the 'Continuation Landscapeplan Dessau-Roßlau' which is an official document produced as a precondition for the refactoring of the cities general spatial plan. I used this written document in conjunction with two of its maps, which are independent document distributed as an appendix, for my synthesis (LPR Landschaftsplanung Dr. Reichhoff GmbH Dessau, 2020a, 2020b, 2020c).

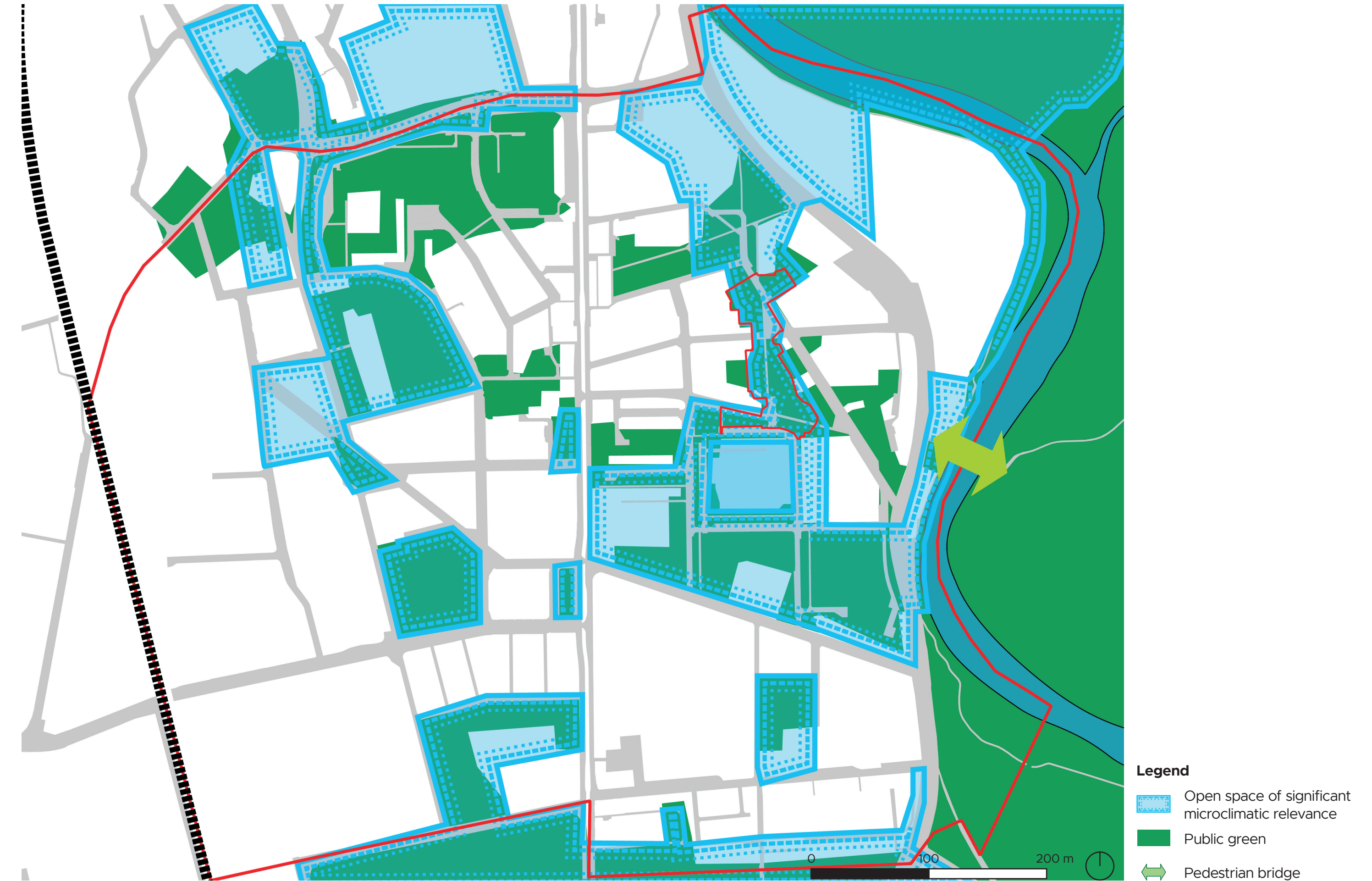
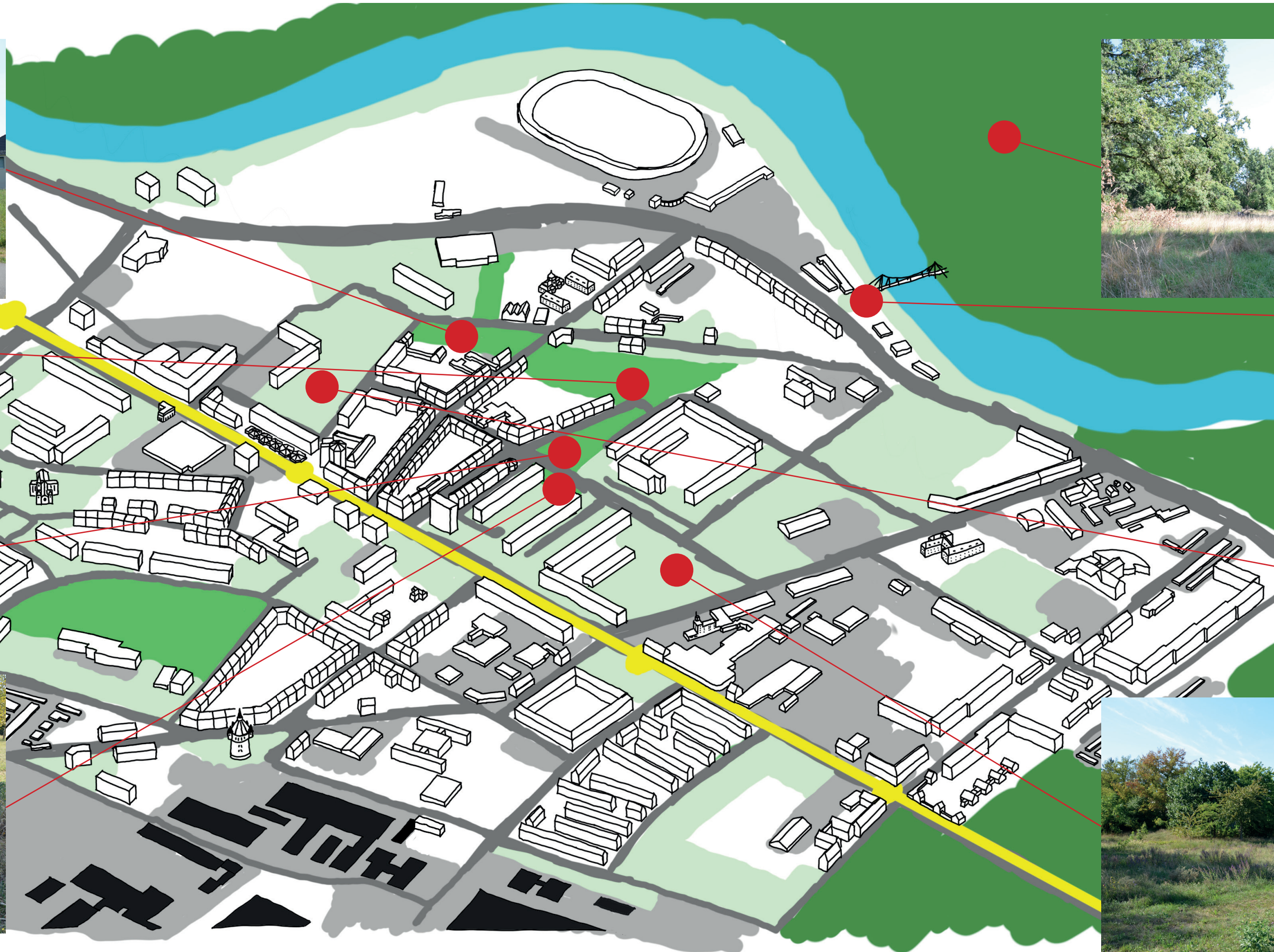


Fig.: 54 Open spaces in the IBS and their relevance for the microclimate (data from LPR Landschaftsplanung Dr. Reichhoff GmbH Dessau, 2020a, 2020b, 2020c)

## Open space

### Public space

As a result of the integrated district development concept, a new neighborhood park has been developed together with the residents. It features sitting areas, outdoor sports facilities and a playground. There is also an urban gardening initiative present in the neighborhood, it was initiated by a member of the university. These spaces are all concentrated in one area.



## Landscape

East of the district lies the 142 sqkm large UNESCO world heritage site „Gartenreich Dessau-Wörlitz“, a landscape park designed according to the philosophical principles of the Enlightenment. It is accessible via a pedestrian bridge across the river Mulde.



Following the depopulation, selected apartment buildings were demolished. They left behind vast spaces which are maintained with “low effort” (Stadt Dessau-Roßlau, 2020, p. 47) and are supposed to be used for biodiversity, ‘expanse’, ‘landscape-leisure’ and ‘free-space-leisure’. Residents have created paths through those spaces for themselves.

### Fallow land

## Cultural amenities

To understand to which extent there are already practices of strategic degrowth prefiguration in the IBS I analyzed the 'District Compass' published in October 2024 by the district management, which was established as a consequence of the integrated concept, as well as the integrated concept itself (Quartiersmanagement Am Leipziger Tor, 2024; Stadt Dessau-Roßlau, 2020). This was supported by cross-referencing of internet research as well as of orthophotos. The results were mapped according to the represented types.

In general, there are many Specific Spaces (3) present which mostly have rather narrow target groups: either very organized sporting or vulnerable groups like elderly people, disabled people or children – sometimes in combination. An exception to this is the youth club 'Thomas Müntzer' which has a wider target group between the age of 10 to 26 years and which also runs a container in a park for lending play and sporting equipment. There are two green areas which were created and are maintained by citizens as well as an urban gardening initiative which farms between the blocks. One of the measures from the integrated concept that was recently realized is a park which is designed to provide different opportunities for young and old capable of 'hosting' very small-scale practices (e.g. outdoor fitness). Additionally, there is a single Civic Centre (5) present which renovates an old water tower but is also capable of hosting events in the tower. There are no Niche Platforms (4.1) or Centers (6) present. The Specific Space (3) and Greenspace (4.2) types would ideally offer a broader range.

In a next step I analyzed all measures from the integrated concept and classified them either as one of the types (or supportive of one) or as an unclear measure either being unclear to which type it belongs or not belonging to a type but having potential to do so. Measures pertaining to neither of those were ignored.

The relevant measures from the integrated concept were mapped. There is one upgrade of a greenspace associated with an existing Specific Space (3), one greenspace upgrade around the existing Civic Center (5) in the water tower. One existing care home should be extended to include a place to meet, also enabling intergenerational cooperations with daycares. Furthermore, an interim use (daycare) is supposed to be placed in an empty building and an existing unique building in a central location is to be renovated and established as an independent cultural center (type 5) for the district. The street in front of this building is to be transformed into a limited traffic zone to enhance access to the building as well as its attractiveness. No Niche Platform (4.1) or Centers (6) are planned according to the integrated concept.

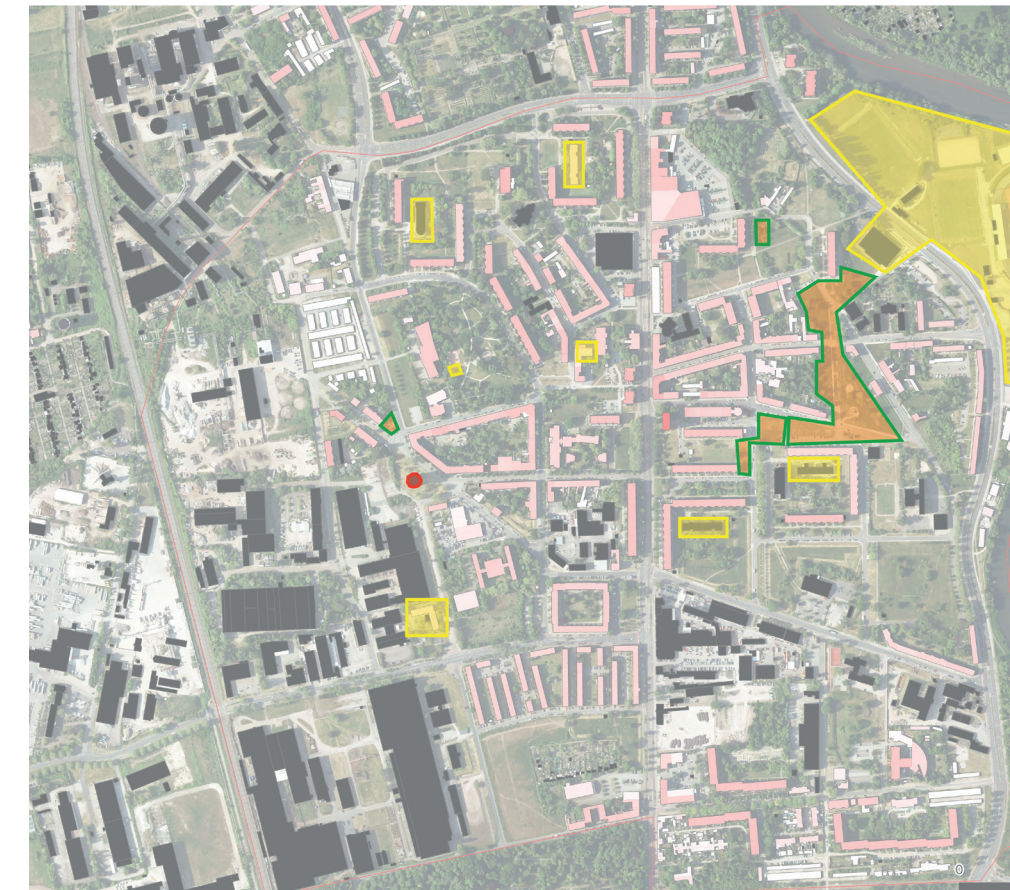
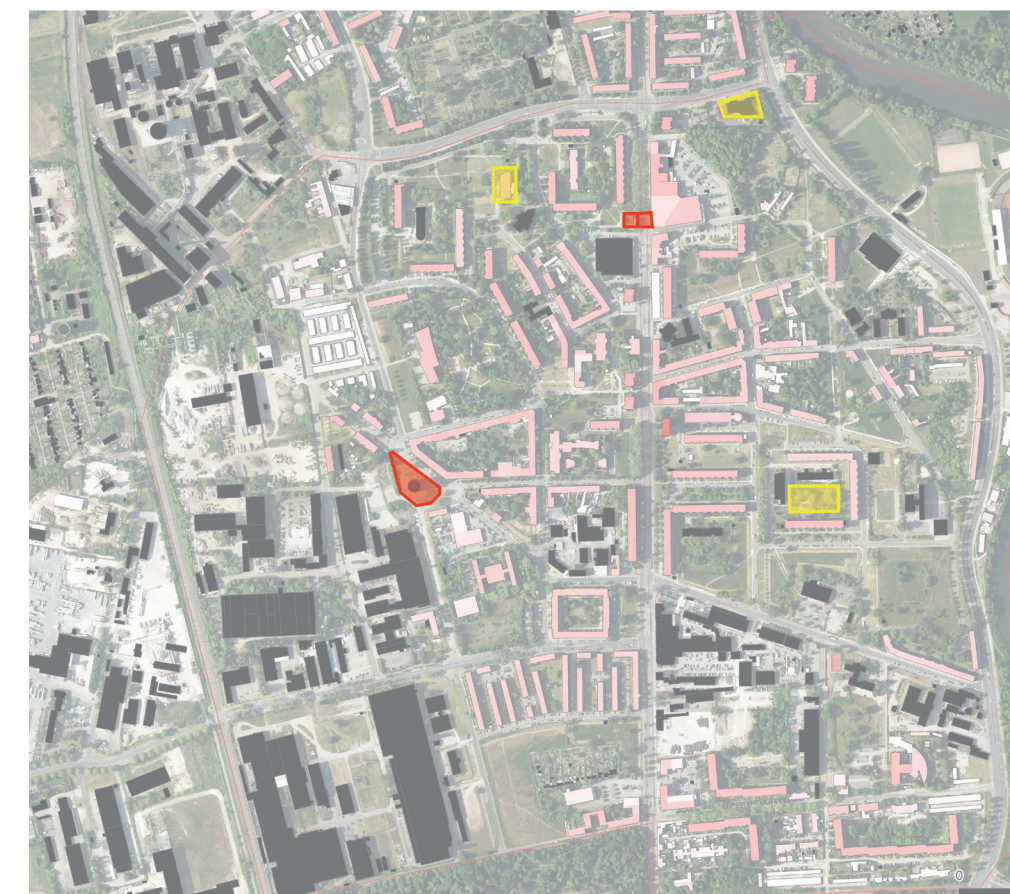


Fig.: 56 Current cultural amenities, classified by the types of strategic degrowth prefiguration (satellite image from LVermGeo, n.d.a)



- Specific Space (3)
- Greenspace (4.2)
- Civic Platform (5)

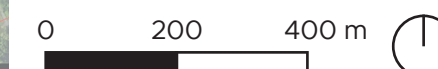


Fig.: 57 Relevant measures from the integrated development concept, classified by the types of strategic degrowth prefiguration (based on Stadt Dessau-Roßlau, 2020, satellite image from LVermGeo, n.d.a)



- Legend**
- Vacant buildings
  - Vacant buildings, to be demolished
  - Pedestrian bridge
- Existing types of strategic degrowth prefiguration
- Specific Space (3)
  - Greenspace (4.2)
  - Civic Platform (5)
- Measures from the IDC
- Potential for housing development
  - Housing plans from IDC
  - Measures with unclear effect

Fig.: 58 Existing cultural infrastructure in the IBS and spatial potential (based on Stadt Dessau-Roßlau, 2020)

# Cultural amenities

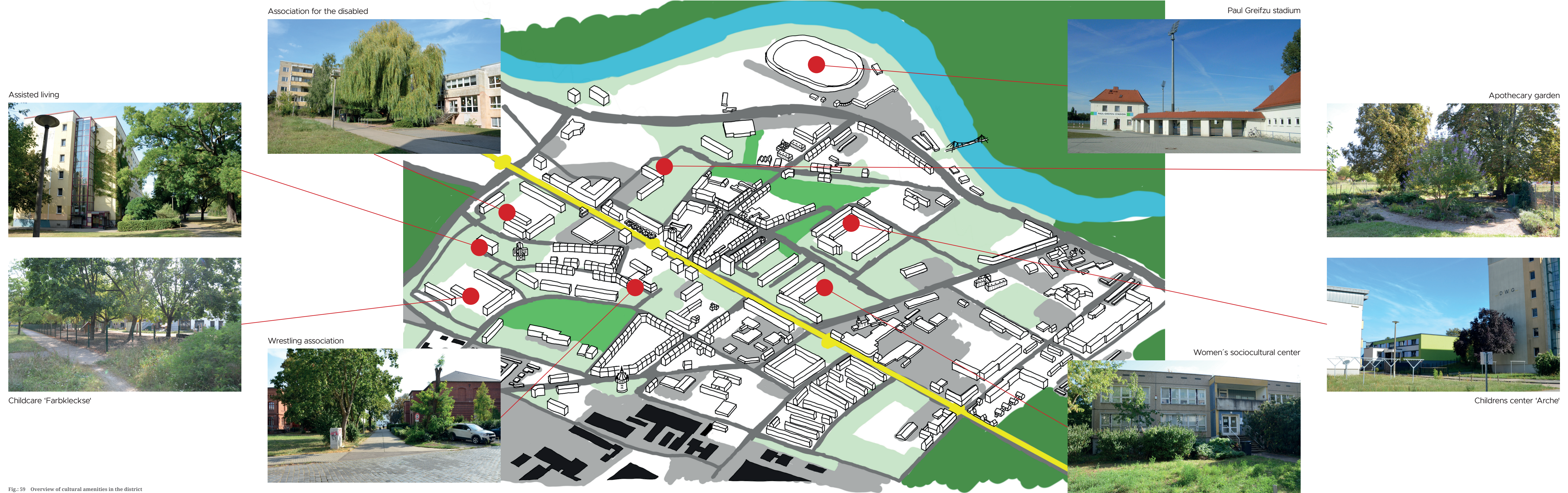


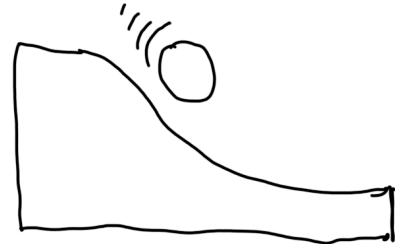
Fig.: 59 Overview of cultural amenities in the district  
70

## Chapter 05

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# Research by Design

## Priority #0: Redirect already rolling balls



Primarily use the ongoing developments and projects in the district to enable prefigurative practices.

As the intention of this thesis is to find out how to actually get to the far goal of a saturation-driven degrowth society, conceptualized as ramp building, and considering the urgency of the situation, finding the path of least resistance and most immediate action has to be considered. With this background and in the vein of the notions from legitimacy building to connect existing practices and motions to the “new” principle of degrowth in order to proliferate it and strengthen the possibility of societal success, it is advisable to coopt ongoing plans and redirect them towards the goal of strategic degrowth prefiguration. Even just looking at the practicalities it becomes obvious that this is the lowest hanging fruit: by qualifying suitable existing plans, sometimes even just slightly, the high barrier of getting change rolling is already climbed to a substantial degree. Another practical benefit is that the question, whether the municipality even has the possibility to change some space e.g. due to questions of ownership or due to other functional requirements, is already answered. The large amount of such spaces is also a characteristic of cities like Dessau: the low demand makes it easier to find uncontested spaces suitable for this.

The integrated development concept (Stadt Dessau-Roßlau, 2020) entails many measures for which it remains unclear if the outcomes can promote strategic degrowth prefiguration. Identifying and redirecting them is the fastest way towards the utilization of free housing capacity.

These measures are:

- 1) There are several green spaces which are planned to be visually upgraded with different concepts ranging from planting trees to mowing edges.
- 2) There is a supermarket which will become empty after the establishment of a consolidated shopping area in the district.
- 3) There is a practically empty large-panel-system residential building which has not been renovated in a considerable way for which the municipality states a possible reuse other than residential but does not make a clear statement.

Some plans directly aim at improving socio-culture:

- 4) It is vaguely stated that an old fire brigade building might be used for cultural purposes.
- 5) The school in the southern part of the district is dilapidated, it has to be demolished, and the new area development will integrate functions in the realm of education, Soziokultur and leisure, hosting open leisure opportunities outdoors in the meantime.

*How does this priority relate to housing?*

*Being quick to action is important as the housing dynamics continue developing in the wrong direction, which makes them ever harder to change. To work with ongoing developments is the fastest possibility to start turning the dynamics around and create a pull-factor for housing in the district.*

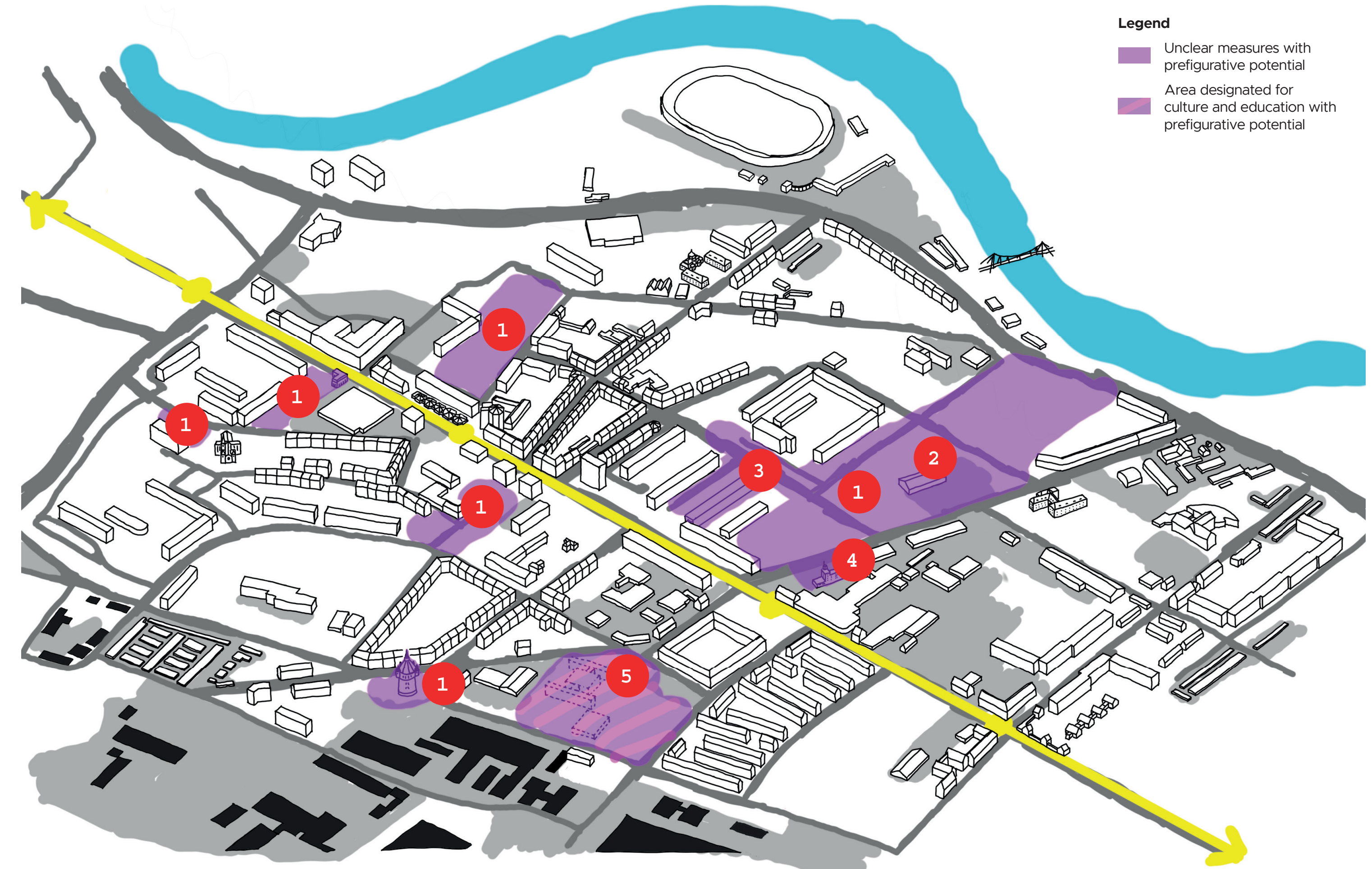


Fig.: 60 View of the neighbourhood, highlighting the areas relevant for priority #0

## Priority #1: Grow seeds



Give existing socio-cultural practices the chance to develop and/or expand by allocating adjacent public spaces to them.



Fig.: 61 Leipziger Torhaus (1a) and adjacent lawn (1b)

This example is the Leipziger Torhaus, the remaining side of a historic entry situation to the city of Dessau. An association has been founded with the aim of transforming it into a cultural center (Civic Platform, Type 5) with some public funds already secured. There is an unused plain piece of lawn directly adjacent on the backside. If allocated to the practice it could be used and the practice could gain additional capacity.

Fig.: 62 Water tower (2a) and adjacent green space (2b)

This old water tower had been deteriorating until it was saved and refurbished by an association, which was founded for this cause, over the course of quite some laborious years. The green space around it was split awkwardly when the tower and the immediate perimeter were privatized whilst the rest of the space remained in public ownership. Allocating this awkward unkept piece of green to the association could give them the ability to fit the now sensibly shaped and sized greenspace to their needs while also matching with the greenspace upgrade of this place that is called for in the IDC.

Fig.: 63 Urban farming (3a) and adjacent green space (3b)

This example concerns an urban farming initiative which has been active at the current location for some years. It is not experiencing explosive growth but considering that there are a lot of suitable green spaces directly adjacent to the area farmed right now, which because of their disperse character would be hard for other practices to use, it is sensible to allocate this space to them securing capacity for future growth. This is also compatible with the greenspace upgrade from the IDC.

How does this priority relate to housing?  
When trying to turn the housing dynamic around it is rational to stabilize and grow the few already existing pull factors. This is the most immediate way to get the turnaround going.

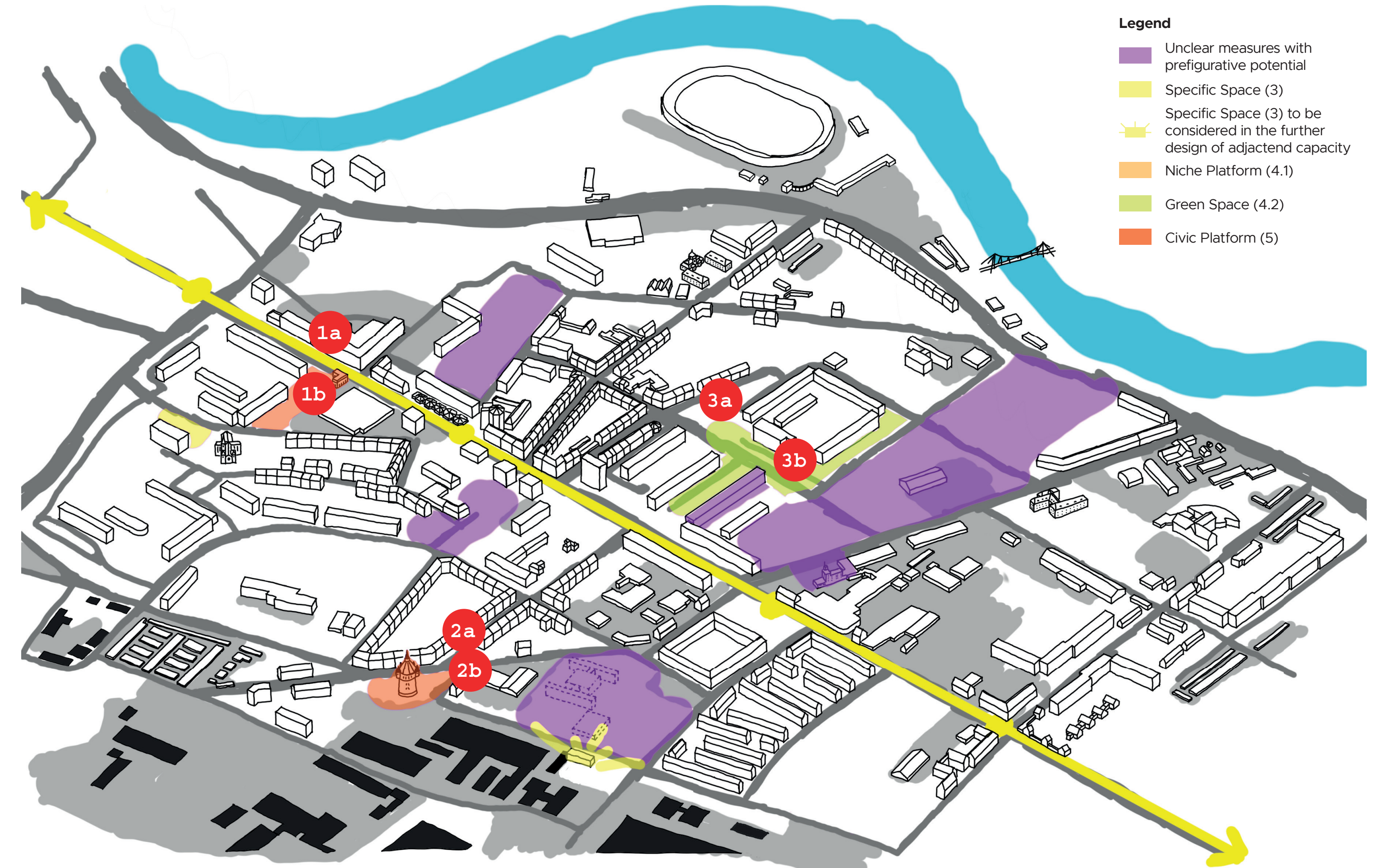
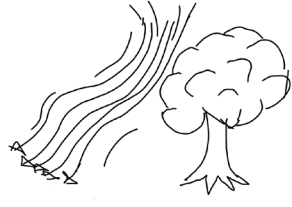


Fig.: 64 View of the neighbourhood, highlighting the areas relevant for priorities #0-#1

## Priority #2: Keep the microclimate in mind



Take urban physics into account and prioritize climate adaptation.

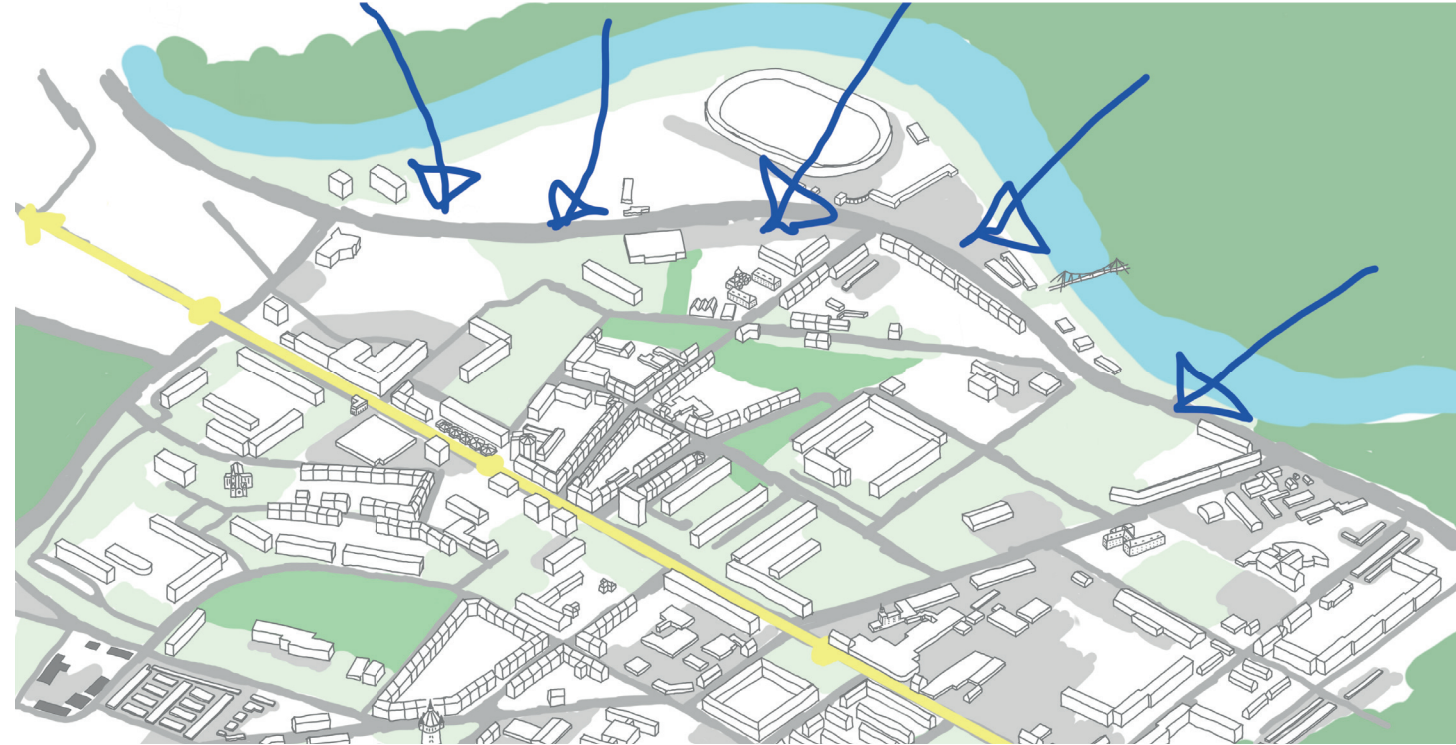


Fig.: 65 Cool wind enters the neighbourhood from the landscape park on its east side (based on LPR Landschaftsplanung Dr. Reichhoff GmbH Dessau, 2020c)

The bioclimatic report and the climate function map of Dessau inform on some principles of taking climate adaptation into account (LPR Landschaftsplanung Dr. Reichhoff GmbH Dessau, 2020b, 2020c, 2020a). Most importantly, the cold air infiltration from the riverside needs to be considered (see Fig. 65). Apart from that, a mix between lawn and tree cover is the most effective for cooling (see Fig. 67). For better air exchange processes, it is important not to block major air paths but build along the direction of flow as well as to reduce the presence of closed blocks (see Fig. 66). As urban green space also has other functions besides climate adaptation these spaces should be preserved as much as possible. This means that capacity on current green areas is allocated to the Greenspace (type 4.2) and possible building plots are implemented carefully and with consideration to the airflow.

*How does this priority relate to housing?*  
 A healthy microclimate is important for human thermal comfort and first and foremost safety. This issue will only become more pressing with the changing climate. Comfort and safety are pull factors in housing and getting on the right path now ensures them working in favor of the turnaround from now on.

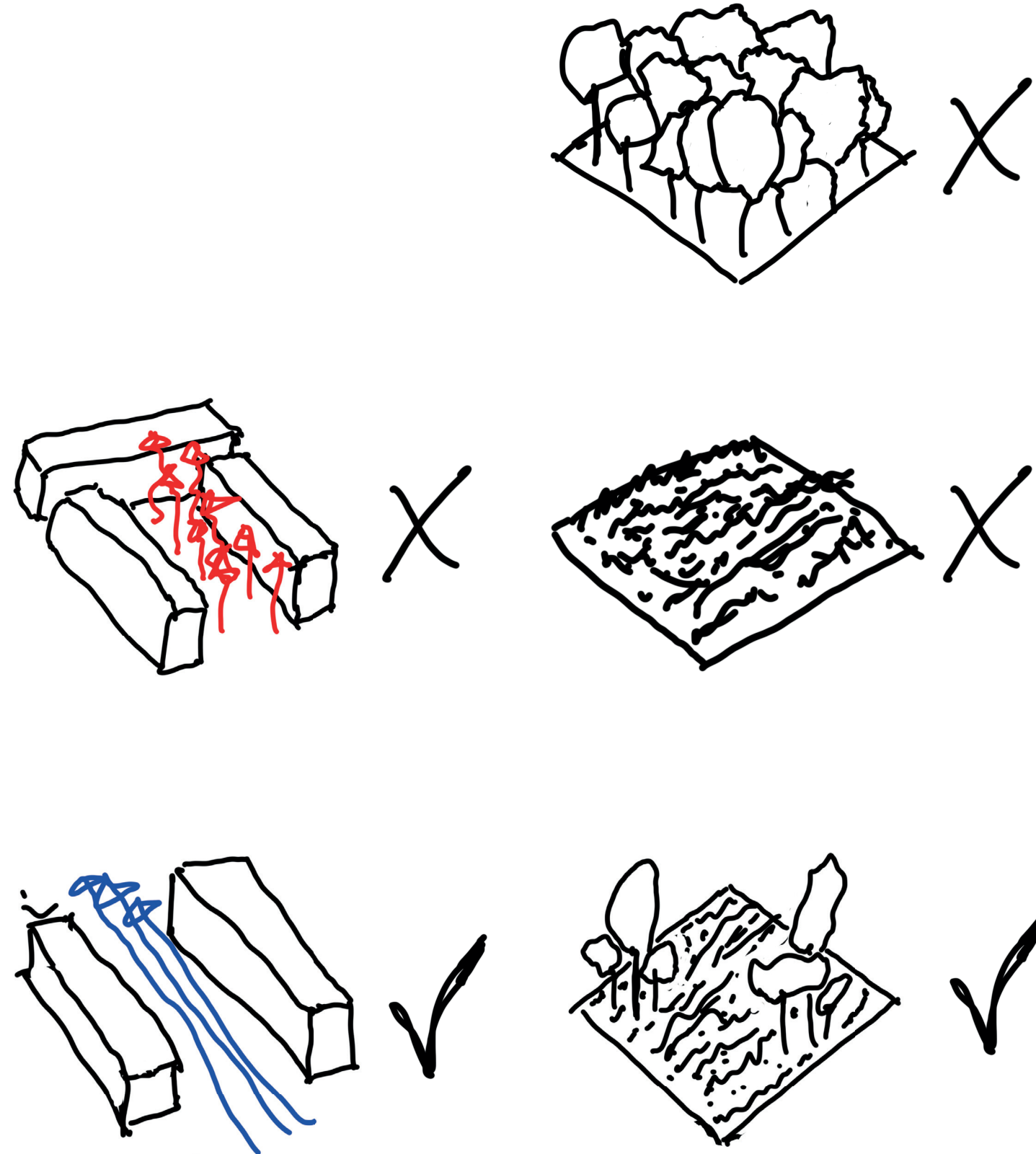


Fig.: 66 Building design principles for climate adaptation (based on LPR Landschaftsplanung Dr. Reichhoff GmbH Dessau, 2020c)

Fig.: 67 Green space design principles for climate adaptation (based on LPR Landschaftsplanung Dr. Reichhoff GmbH Dessau, 2020c)

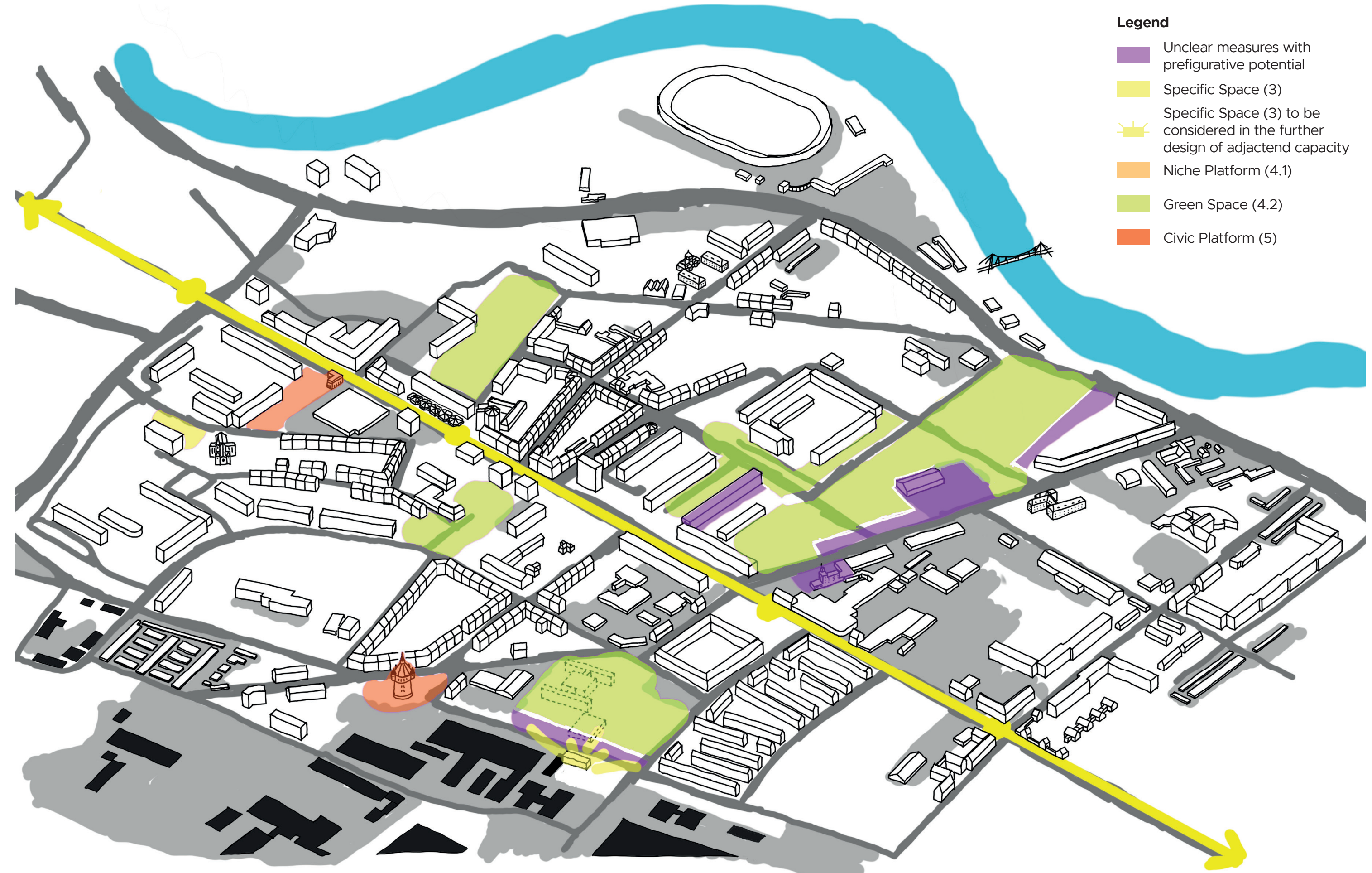
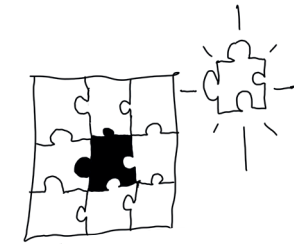


Fig.: 68 view of the neighbourhood, highlighting the areas relevant for priorities #0-#2

Priority #3: Match the types



The capacity has to fit the type, and the type has to fit the puzzle.



Fig.: 69 Existing spatial types for strategic degrowth prefiguration

Spaceuse as the point of practice	Space serving functional requirements	Space turbocharging practices	Space turbocharging transformational potential	Space being already realized in each neighborhood (subset of residents)
mean and end	mean and end	mean and end	mean and end	mean and end
mean and end	mean and end	mean and end	mean and end	mean and end
mean and end	mean and end	mean and end	mean and end	mean and end

Fig.: 71 Prefiguration criteria matrix for the focus types

The existing and planned typologies from the IDC already include many Specific Spaces (3) and two Civic Platforms (5). A lot of the Greenspace type is already included due to microclimatic necessities. This means further space allocation should focus on integrating more Niche Platforms (4.1) as well as Centers (6).

How does this priority relate to housing?  
As explained throughout this thesis cultural capacity and the (emerging) practices can be a key pull factor in housing. Ensuring that the practices have the best chances for success strengthens this pull factor and ensuring that the mix is diverse maximizes the array of people this factor can influence.

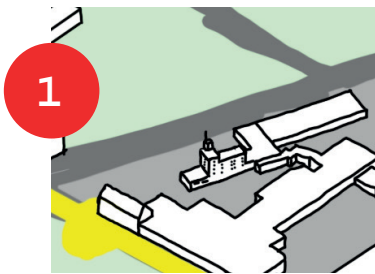


Fig.: 70 Assessment old firehouse

Spaceuse as the point of practice	Space serving functional requirements	Space turbocharging practices	Space turbocharging transformational potential	Space being already realized in each neighborhood (subset of residents)
mean and end	mean and end	mean and end	mean and end	mean and end
mean and end	mean and end	mean and end	mean and end	mean and end
mean and end	mean and end	mean and end	mean and end	mean and end

Suitable for the Niche Platform type. As the focus also lies on this type it is a good fit.

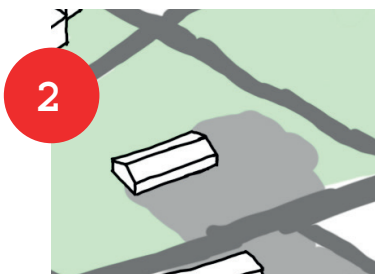


Fig.: 72 Assessment supermarket

Spaceuse as the point of practice	Space serving functional requirements	Space turbocharging practices	Space turbocharging transformational potential	Space being already realized in each neighborhood (subset of residents)
mean and end	mean and end	mean and end	mean and end	mean and end
mean and end	mean and end	mean and end	mean and end	mean and end
mean and end	mean and end	mean and end	mean and end	mean and end

Suitable for the Niche Platform type. As the focus also lies on this type it is a good fit.

- Legend**
- Unclear measures with prefigurative potential
  - Specific Space (3)
  - Specific Space (3) to be considered in the further design of adjacent capacity
  - Niche Platform (4.1)
  - Green Space (4.2)
  - Civic Platform (5)
  - Center (6)

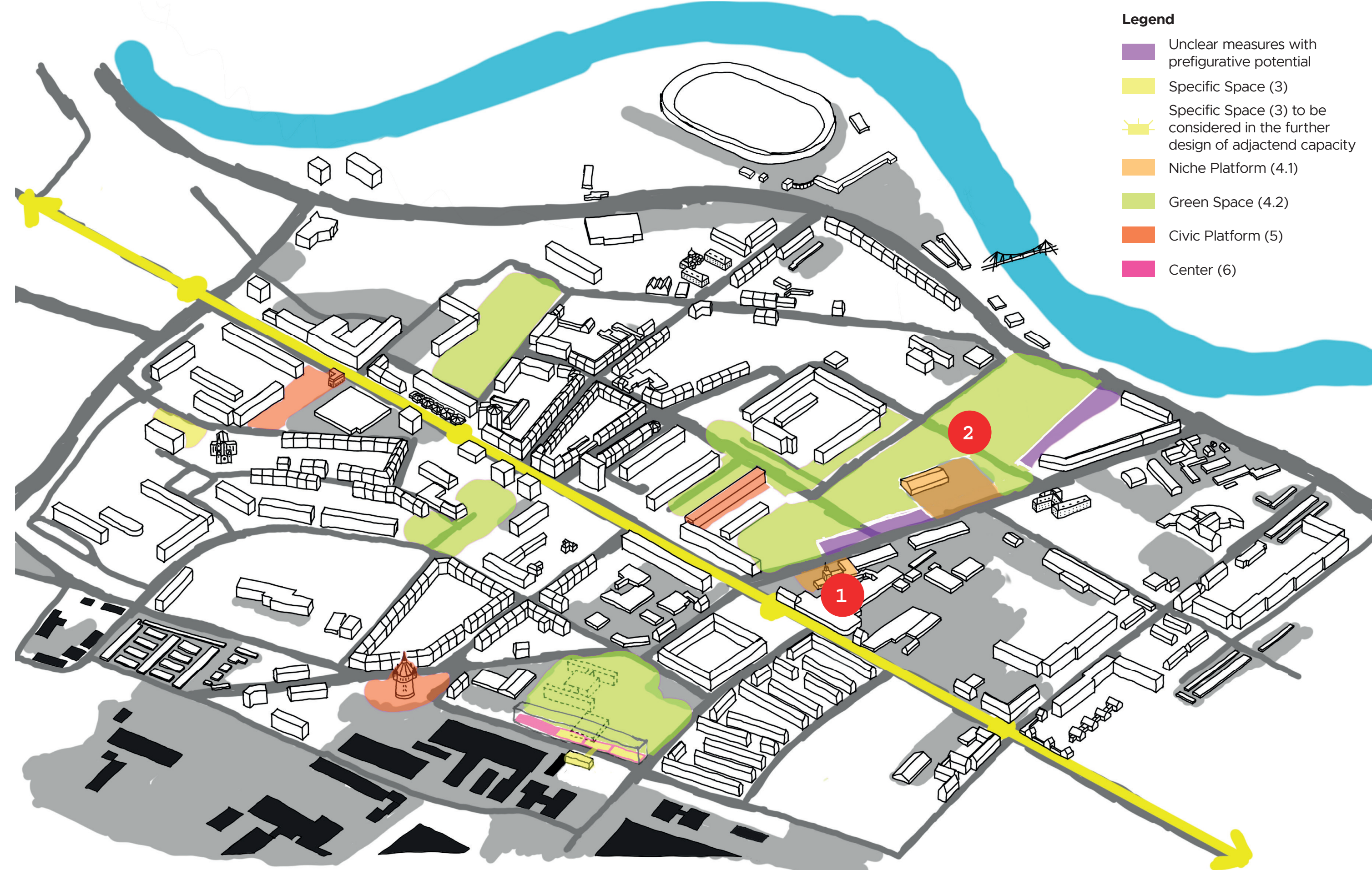
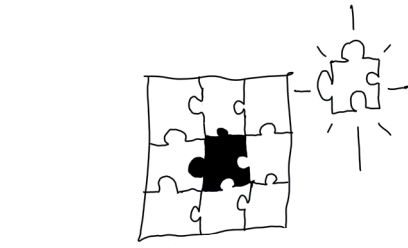


Fig.: 73 View of the neighbourhood, highlighting the areas relevant for priorities #0-#3

### Priority #3: Match the types



The capacity has to fit the type and the type has to fit the puzzle

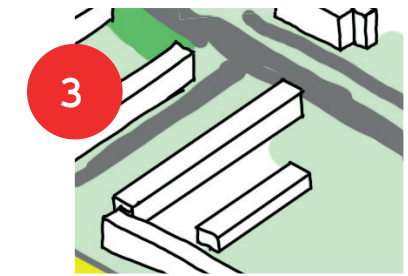


Fig.: 74 Assessment vacant apartment building

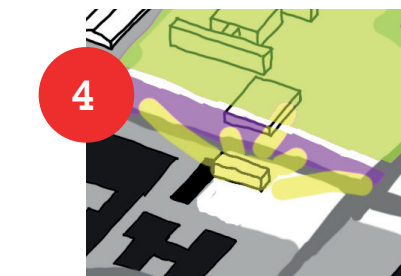
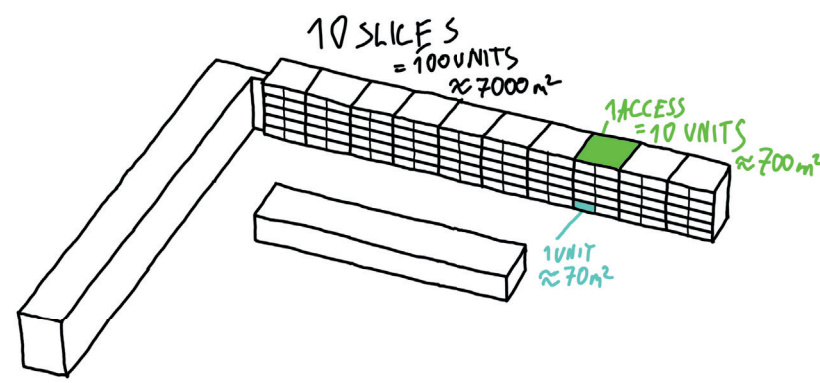


Fig.: 75 Assessment youth club area

	Spaceuse as the point of practice	Space serving functional requirements	Space turbocharging practices	Space turbocharging potential	Space being already occupied in some particular part(s) of the building
The Niche Platform (4.1)	mean and end ✓	ability to appropriate the space, which are not only the space but also the space of the space ✓	the ability to take advantage of the space, which are not only the space but also the space of the space ✓	Availability of space for the purpose of the space, which are not only the space but also the space of the space ✓	Generally: Participation or Identification
The Civic Platform (5)	mean and end ✓	ability to appropriate the space, which are not only the space but also the space of the space ✓	uniqueness, richness of the space, which are not only the space but also the space of the space ✓	Availability of space for the purpose of the space, which are not only the space but also the space of the space ✓	Generally: Participation or Identification
The Centre (6)	mean and end ✓	size, location, good access, adjacent outdoor spaces ✓	the practice is the space, which are not only the space but also the space of the space ✓	Availability of space for the purpose of the space, which are not only the space but also the space of the space ✓	Generally: Participation or Identification

	Spaceuse as the point of practice	Space serving functional requirements	Space turbocharging practices	Space turbocharging potential	Space being already occupied in some particular part(s) of the building
The Niche Platform (Type 4.1)	mean and end ✓	ability to appropriate the space, which are not only the space but also the space of the space ✓	the ability to take advantage of the space, which are not only the space but also the space of the space ✓	Availability of space for the purpose of the space, which are not only the space but also the space of the space ✓	Generally: Participation or Identification
The Civic Platform (Type 5)	mean and end ✓	ability to appropriate the space, which are not only the space but also the space of the space ✓	uniqueness, richness of the space, which are not only the space but also the space of the space ✓	Availability of space for the purpose of the space, which are not only the space but also the space of the space ✓	Generally: Participation or Identification
The Centre (Type 6)	mean and end ✓	size, location, good access, adjacent outdoor spaces ✓	the practice is the space, which are not only the space but also the space of the space ✓	Availability of space for the purpose of the space, which are not only the space but also the space of the space ✓	Generally: Participation or Identification

3) This capacity is far too large to allocate it to a Niche Platform. As the intent is to secure the building for later residential use the possibilities for appropriating the space for own requirements are limited. Furthermore, the highly modular small-scale floor plans pose an opportunity to diversify the Civic Platform types in the area as the existing and planned ones are more monolithic than modular, probably resulting in splitting the capacity timewise. This poses an opportunity to host practices more permanently. The reason for using empty housing stock for prefigurative practices instead of housing is that this building has not been renovated yet. Adding a mid-term interim use inside consolidates housing demand to other, not yet fully utilized buildings in the neighborhood and can in turn stimulate renovation there. Simultaneously, this housing stock is secured for the future.

4) As the existing buildings have to be demolished and as there is already an intention of utilizing the area to accommodate cultural and education purposes, a Center type would fit here. This gives the opportunity to provide for the considerable size requirements of the Center type as well as the otherwise high standard. The location next to the youth club provides possibilities for this seed to grow as well as cross-pollinate. The Center could also house several Specific Spaces.

- Legend**
- Unclear measures with prefigurative potential
  - Specific Space (3)
  - Specific Space (3) to be considered in the further design of adjacent capacity
  - Niche Platform (4.1)
  - Green Space (4.2)
  - Civic Platform (5)
  - Center (6)

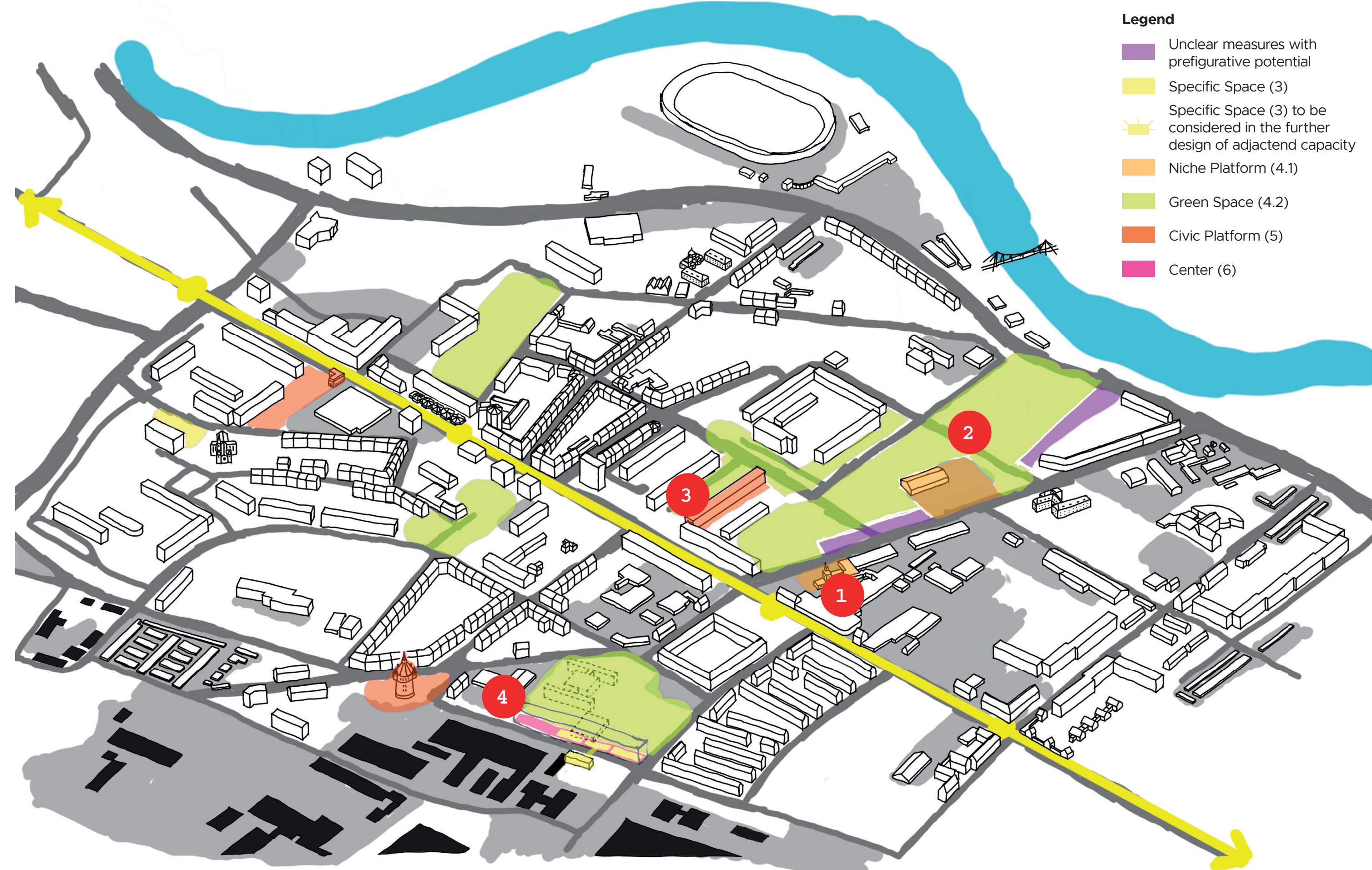


Fig.: 76 View of the neighbourhood, highlighting the areas relevant for priorities #0-#3

## Priority #4: Add housing



Excess capacity in the urban fabric is also underused housing capacity. Services from before demolition are still in place.

2000

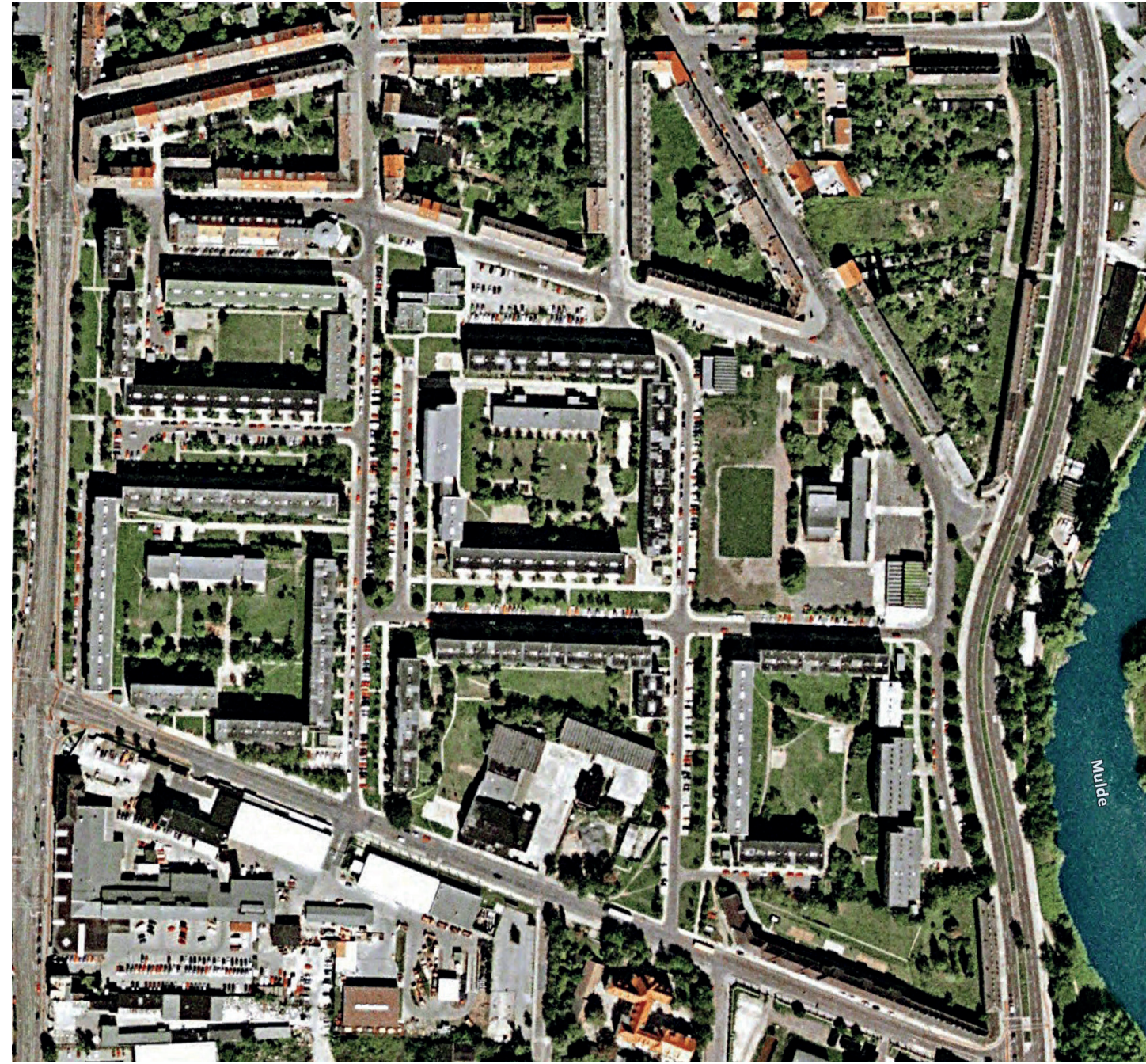


Fig.: 77 Housing stock before the planned demolition of buildings (Google, GeoContent, 2000)

2025



Fig.: 78 Housing stock after the planned demolition of buildings (Google, Airbus, 2025)

*How does this priority relate to housing?  
With regards to sustainability, utilizing already built residential capacity is of primary importance. Furthermore, urban expansion should be avoided for reasons of environmental degradation so substituting urban expansion by redevelopments of existing urban fabric is very beneficial. Since the district used to contain more buildings, the required infrastructure is still there.*

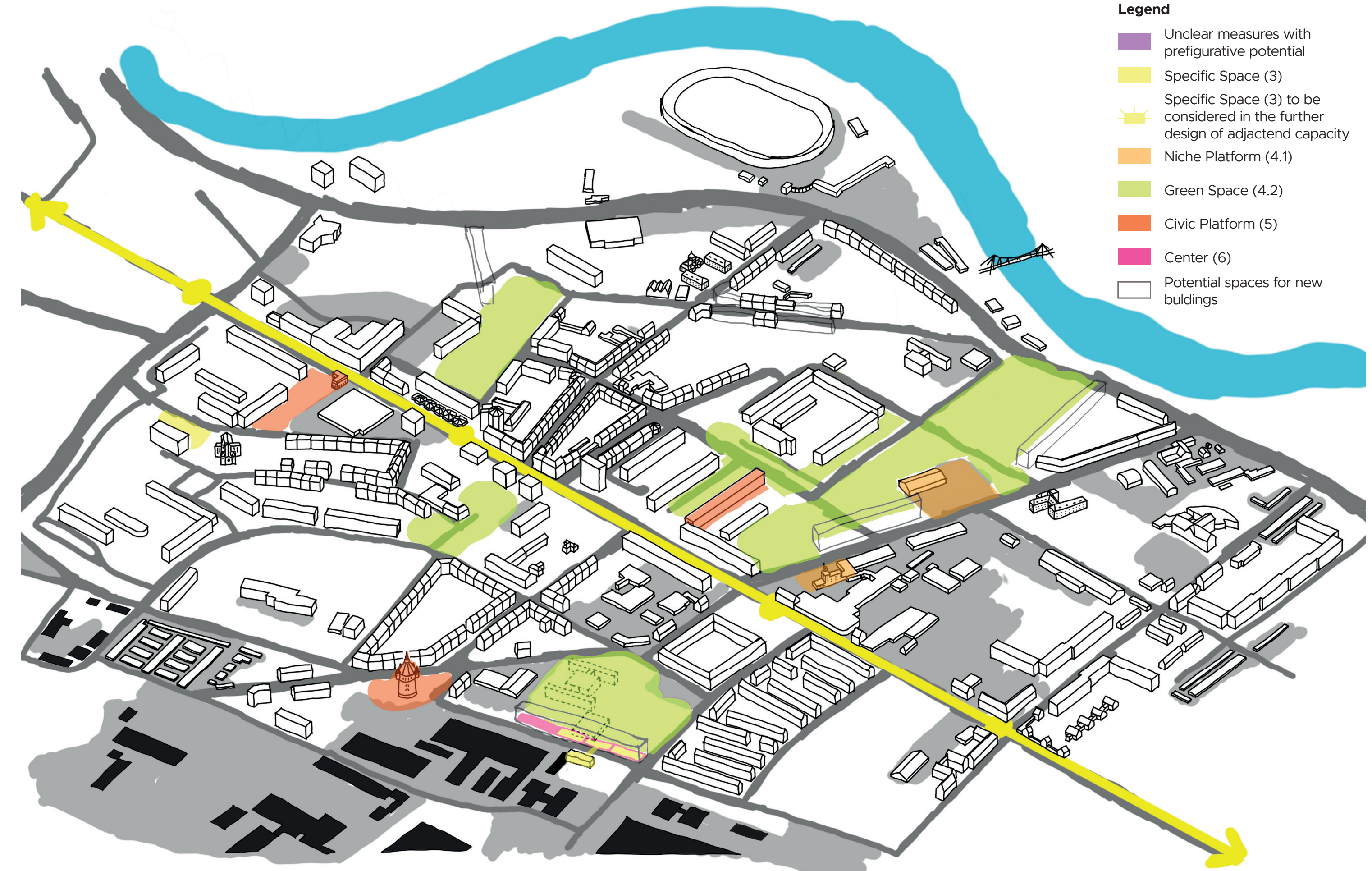
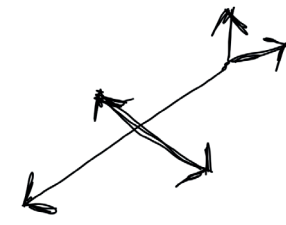


Fig.: 79 View of the neighbourhood, highlighting the areas relevant for priorities #0-#4

**Priority #5: Sensible relations shape space**

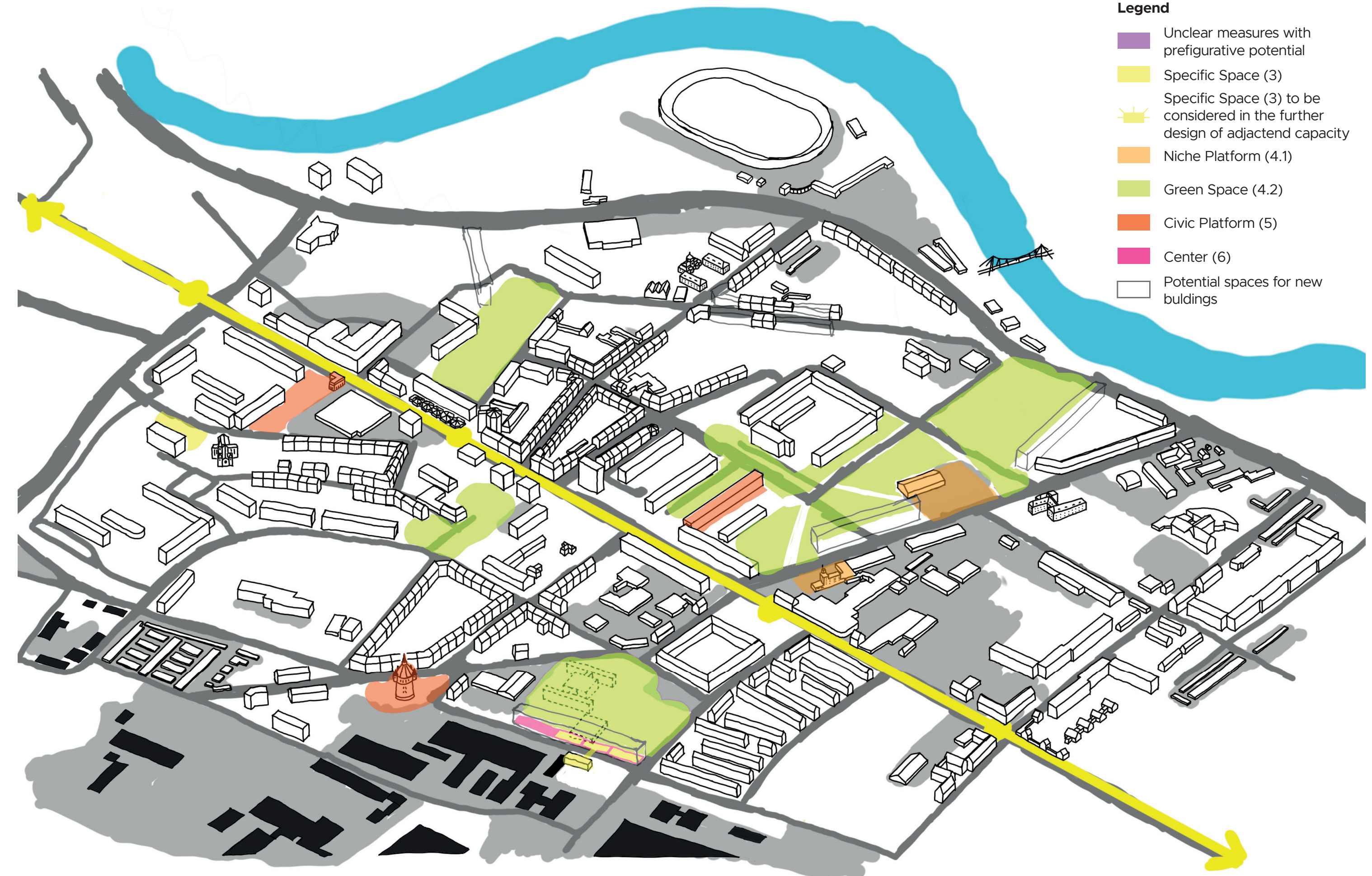


Wayfinding in the neighborhood should orientate by the paths the residents take, they form the prefigurative spaces.

*How does this priority relate to housing?  
A neighborhood that is easy to navigate through is enjoyable to live in. A good design of these relations is therefore another pull factor for housing.*



Fig.: 80 Impressions of the paths the residents created on the fallow land around the supermarket (satellite image from LVerGeo, n.d.a)



- Legend**
- Unclear measures with prefigurative potential
  - Specific Space (3)
  - Specific Space (3) to be considered in the further design of adjacent capacity
  - Niche Platform (4.1)
  - Green Space (4.2)
  - Civic Platform (5)
  - Center (6)
  - Potential spaces for new buildings

Fig.: 81 View of the neighbourhood, highlighting the areas relevant for priorities #0-#5

## Relation of the priorities and the theory

In the following I want to reflect on the relationship between the priorities applied in the design process and the body of theory distilled in the previous chapters.

### Priority #0: Redirect already rolling balls

Priority #0 of focusing on spaces which are already in the process of being changed connects to two notions from theory, the first of which is the process of ramp building which states that we have to find a way from where we are now towards a desirable future. Starting off from where we are now implies working with what is existing now and redirecting already ongoing processes is the most immediate possibility of starting change. The second notion to which this priority connects is the notion of coopting existing practices and connecting them to the articulating political principle of degrowth. One specific example from this step is to take the planned upgrade of green spaces and reinterpret it in a degrowth way.

### Priority #1: Grow seeds

Priority #1 also connects to the theoretical notion of connecting existing practices to the articulating political principle degrowth. Similarly to #0 this also connects to the ramp building as existing practices give a head start in developing the cultural prefigurative capacity.

### Priority #2: Keep the microclimate in mind

Priority #2 about planning for climate adaptation is a prerequisite for degrowth in the sense that Max-Neef states that all needs have to be satisfied to a pre-systemic threshold. While they are right now with regards to climate adaptation, they might not be in the future. If we plan for satiation inside the Max-Neef framework it is a necessity to ensure that the pre-systemic threshold will continue to be met with regards to climate adaptation. More importantly, as we are aiming for synergistic satisfiers, we should take care not to accidentally create one of the possible detrimental satisfiers which negatively effect the satisfaction of other needs. The way this could be a problem would

in this case mainly be to have building activity benefiting culture but create issues with i.e. heat or percolation.

### Priority #3: Match the types

Priority #3 is about taking care that the cultural types to be implemented are fitting the available spaces and about taking care that the resulting mix of cultural types is diverse and balanced. This priority is the manifestation of the differentiated perspective on what bottom-up means in the context of strategic degrowth prefiguration.

As bottom-up in this context means that the specific programmatic contents of a practice should be created endogenously leaving open the possibility for the initiation of a practice to be top-down, this means that it is a possibility to have some administrative steering in the setup. The goal here is to strengthen the potential for societal innovation, which is dependent on the practices being successful and diverse as core points of the theory state that the potential for societal innovation of prefigurative practices lies in their diversity and the resulting capability to explore many options at once. The line to be found is how much planning is needed to ensure these two factors and how far it is possible to reduce planning in order to not limit the range of prefiguration. The first part of this priority is just common sense to increase the chances for success of these practices according to the performances of space for the cultural types deduced from the best practice analysis.

The second part means translating the requirement of diversity into strengthening it by means of ensuring that practices of all types find capacity in the research area. These two cannot really be separated as the spatial specifics of the research area and the existing cultural types already dictate some allocation of types leaving the necessity to counter steer by purposefully allocating ambiguous spaces in order to balance the resulting mix out. Furthermore it can be useful to look at the specific spaces allocated to the types as diversity of practices can also be strengthened by purposefully varying the spaces made available to single cultural space types as seen for example on the allocation of the large panel system building to

## Scenario design

The Civic Platform (5) due to it being a completely different space than the existing Civic Platforms (5) in the research area. There exists a further need for more specific planning on The Specific Spaces (3) and The Centers (6) as these are not inherently self-producing (as described in the best practice analysis) and thus being dependent on more direct top-down setting up.

### Priority #4: Add housing

Priority #4 is about reserving space in the research area to redevelop into residential capacity. This is a fundamental consequence of the theory as the intention is to curb growth in the housing sector by creating pull factors for underutilized housing capacity through better and more efficient needs satisfaction. The first step would be to fully utilize already built residential capacity but when this type of capacity will be (nearly) fully utilized the logical next step would be to substitute urban expansion through residential redevelopment within existing urban fabric. The same cities which experience significant residential vacancy also have significant capacity in their existing urban fabric as the missing demand for housing in these cities has left these on the table. Often times these capacities even originate from the demolition of existing stock in the past.

### Priority #5: Sensible relations shape space

Priority #5 is about sensible urban design and strengthens the possibility for success of the practices but more importantly of the overall endeavor to create a more attractive package enabling people to decide to utilize existing surplus residential capacity.

In order to test whether and how this plan could land in space and furthermore to test which practical considerations have to be made two scenarios were drawn up. These two scenarios aim to take two very different foci for shining lights on the design from these different angles. None of these scenarios is intended as an actual plan and they are purposefully pointed to aid in exploration and testing.

## Scenario #1 - Enjoying

The first scenario is all about "enjoying". The topics touched upon in this scenario revolve around less material pleasures and culture. It combines the performative arts and music with culinary topics as well as the art of filling free time with doing enjoyable things.

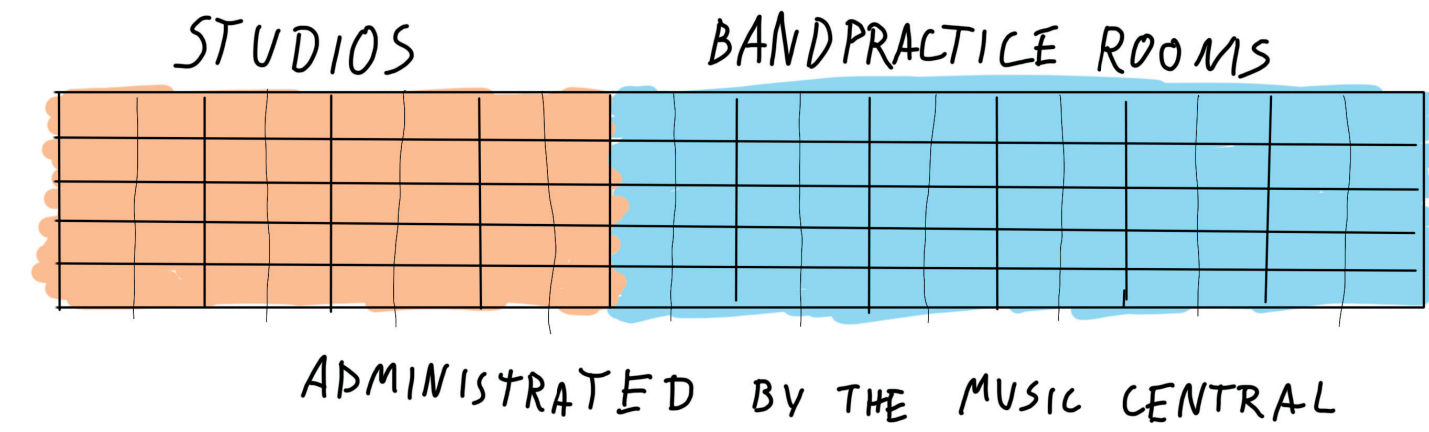


Fig.: 82 Section of Civic Platform Type for scenario #1 - Enjoying

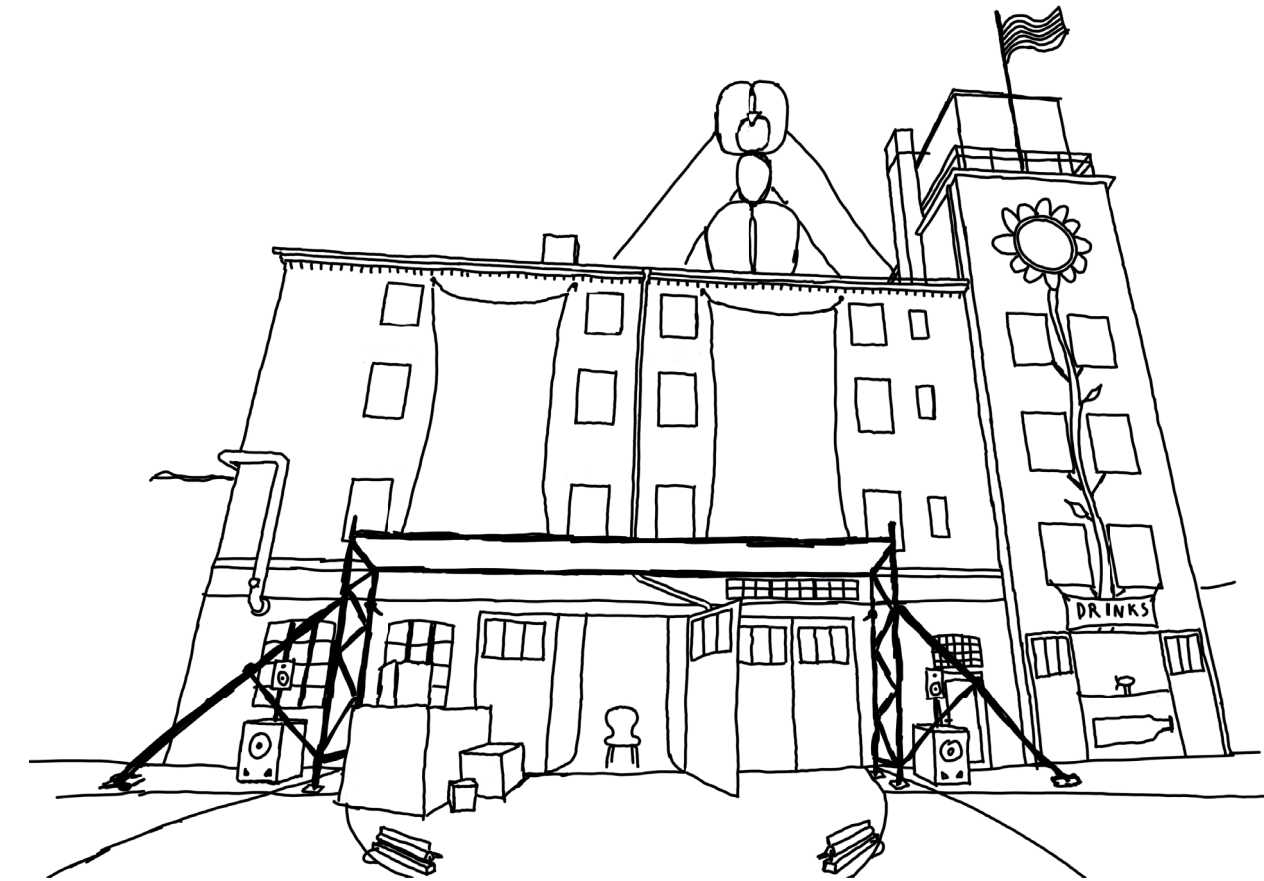


Fig.: 83 View of old fire brigade building in scenario #1 - Enjoying

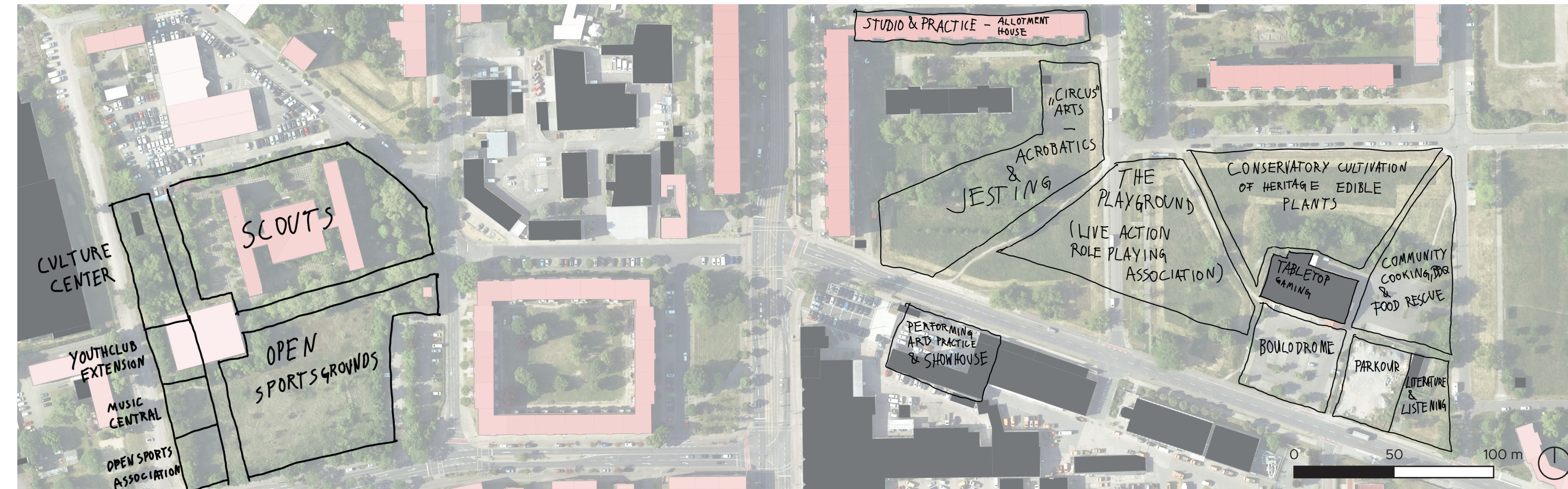


Fig.: 84 Distribution of practices in scenario #1 - Enjoying (satellite image from LVermGeo, n.d.a)

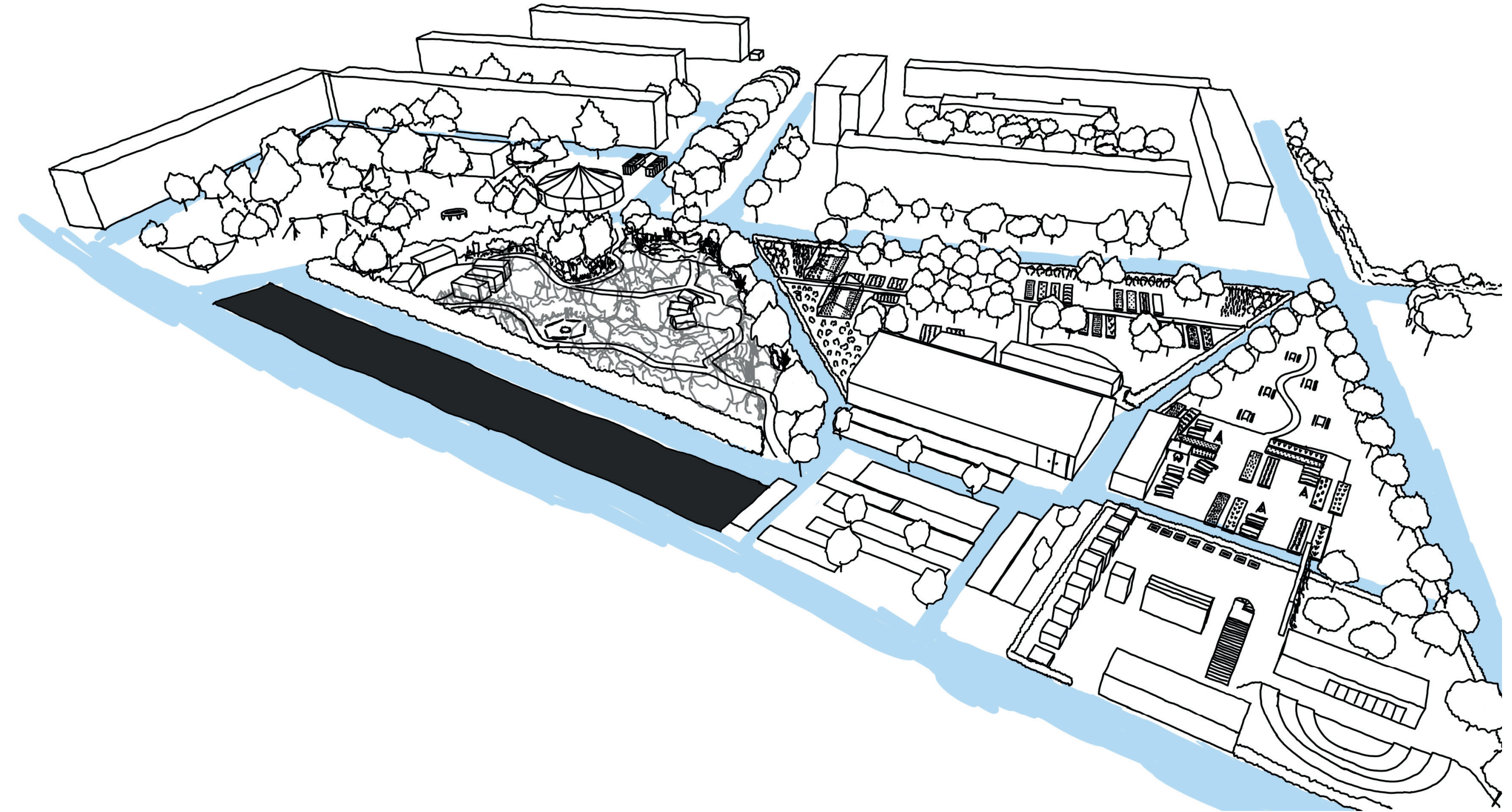


Fig.: 85 Birdseye view of scenario #1 - Enjoying

# Scenario #1 - Enjoying - Reference examples

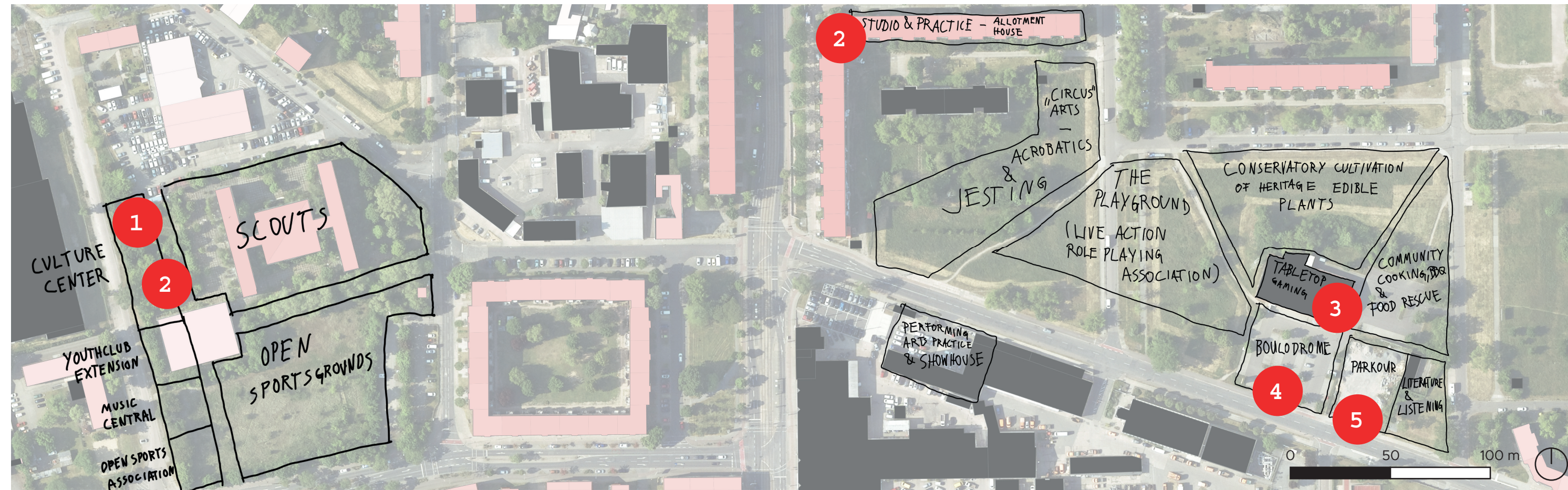


Fig.: 86 Overview of scenario elements that are explained on this spread (satellite image from LVermGeo, n.d.a)

Reference culture centre: Kulturwerkstatt auf AEG, Nuremberg



Fig.: 87 Kulturwerkstatt auf AEG (Michaela Braun, n.d.)

Example studio and practice: Music centre Nuremberg (MUZ)

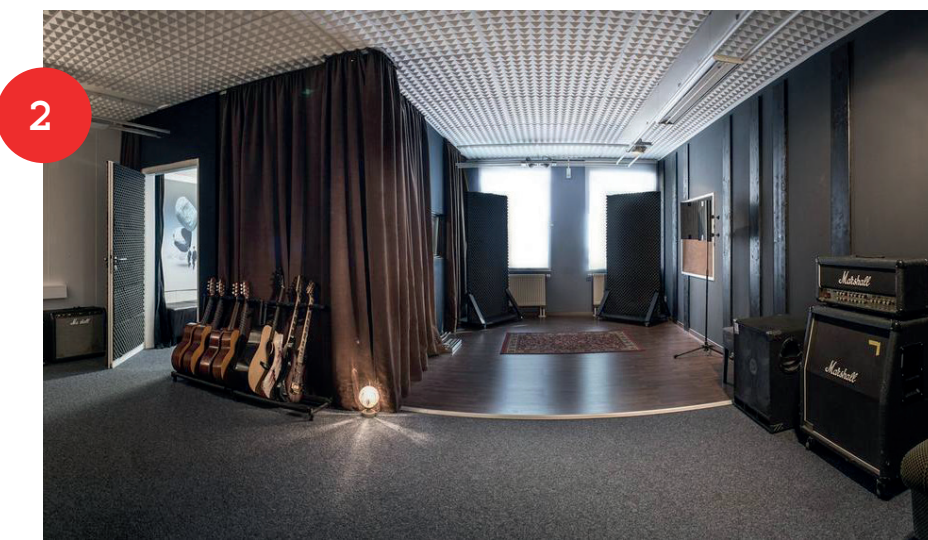


Fig.: 89 A practice room in the MUZ (MUZ, n.d.)

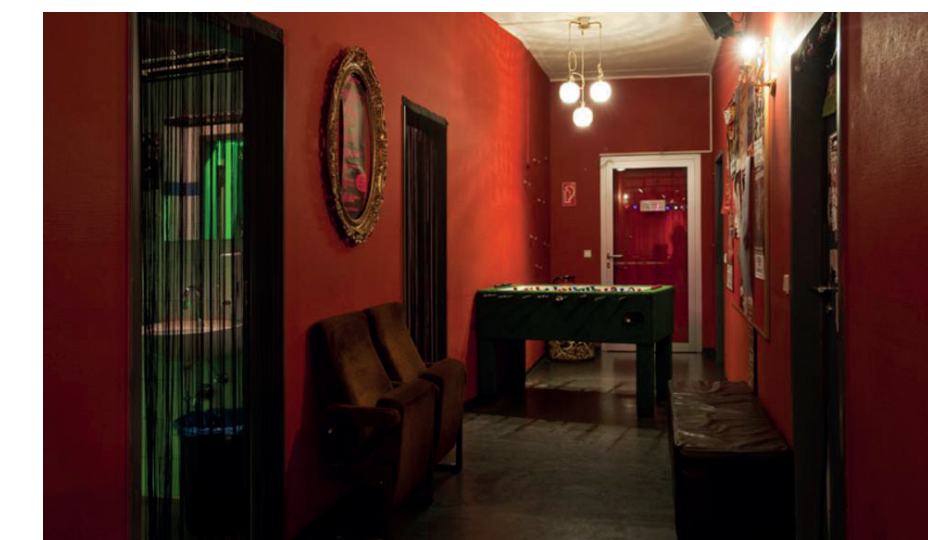


Fig.: 91 Common spaces in the MUZ (MUZ, n.d.)

Example tabletop gaming: House of Games Nuremberg (Museen der Stadt Nürnberg, Haus des Spiels; Photo: Uwe Niklas)



Fig.: 88 Boardgame session in the House of Games (Museen der Stadt Nürnberg, Uwe Niklas, n.d.)

Example boulodrome: Boulodrome Ingolstadt



Fig.: 90 Boulodrome (-wuppertaler, 2021)

Example parkour space: Skatepark Mr. Wilson in Kassel

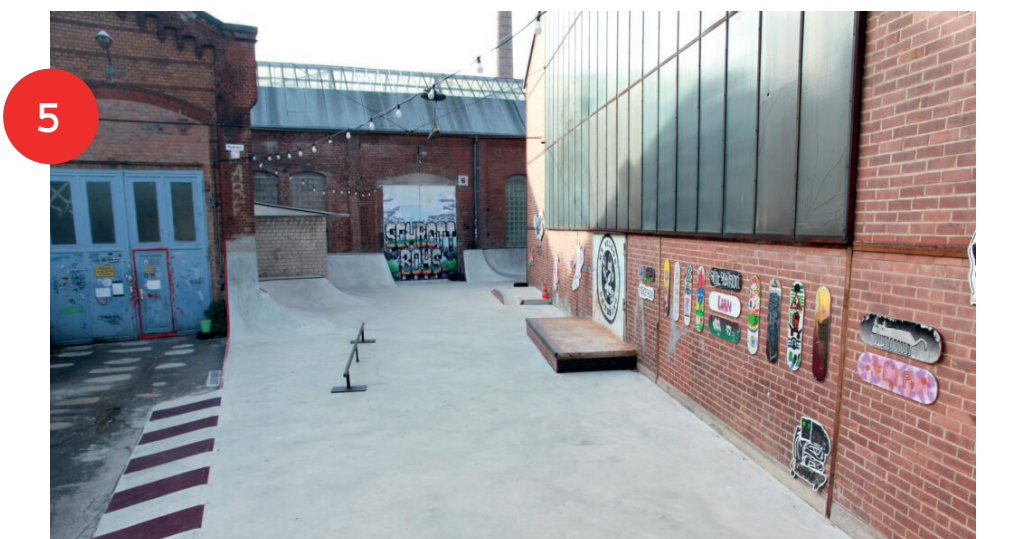


Fig.: 92 Outdoor skating space (Christian Kreuter, n.d.)

## Scenario #2 - Making

The second scenario is the one of "making". This scenario is all about creating tangible benefits through building skills and mastering crafts. Here physical arts meet with the desire to explore and work all kinds of different materials and components as well as exploring the tools needed to do so.

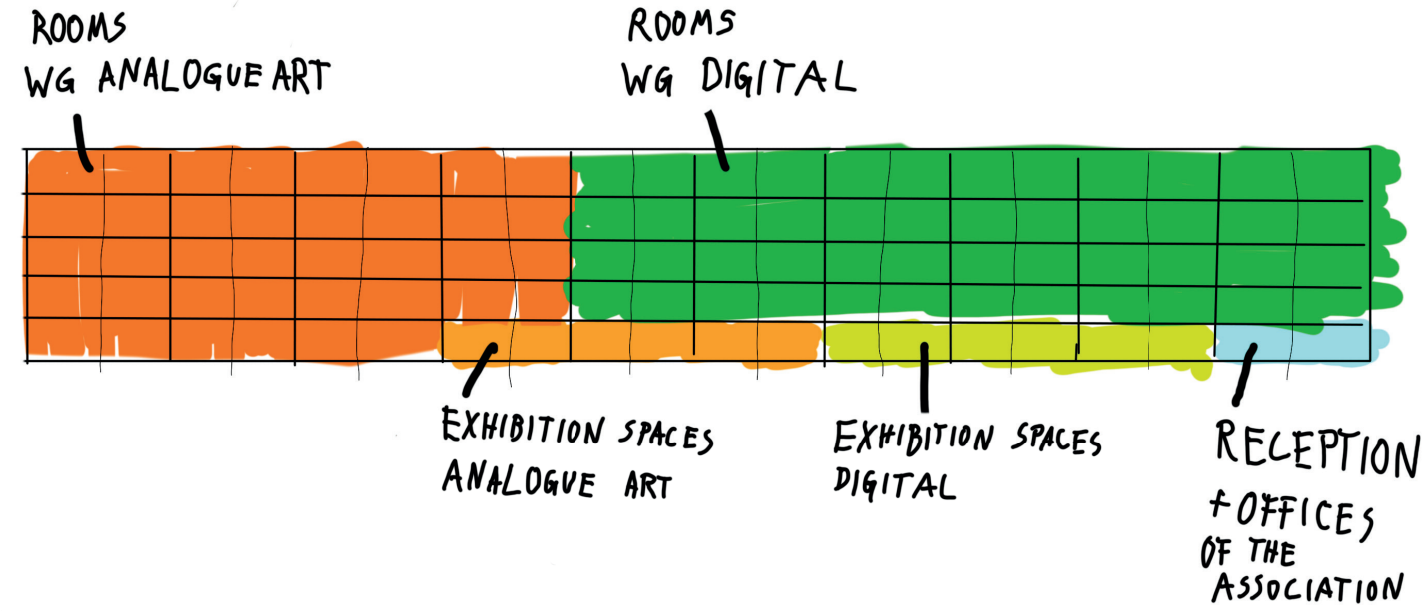


Fig.: 93 View of old fire brigade building in scenario #2 - Making

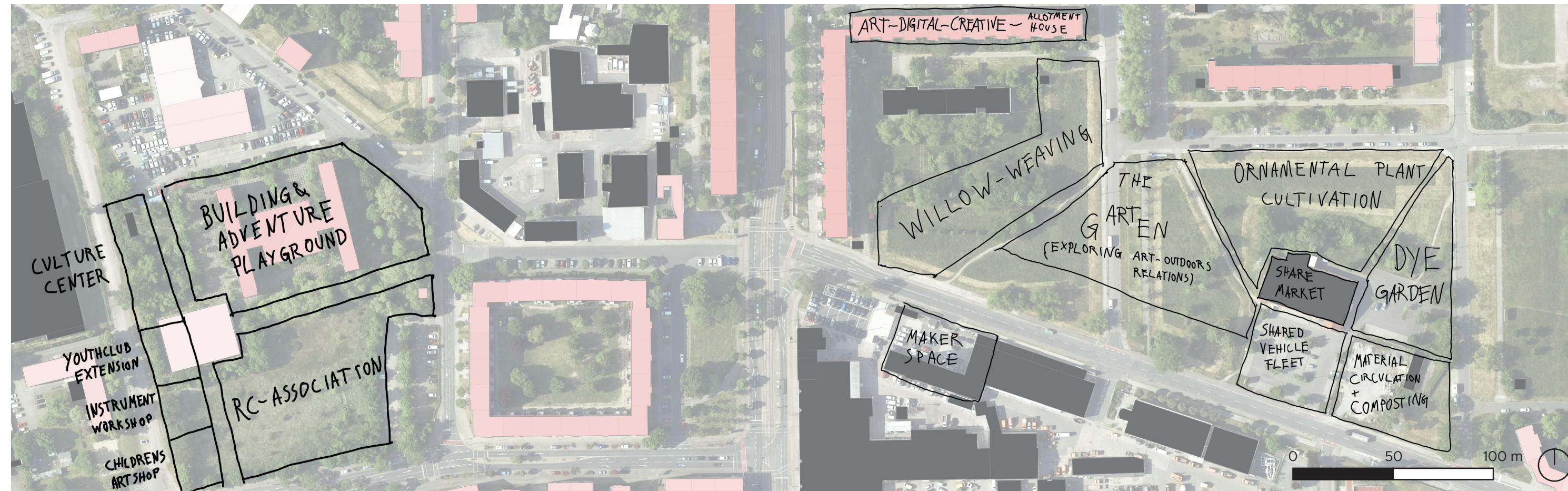


Fig.: 94 Distribution of practices in scenario #2 - Making (satellite image from LVerGeo, n.d.a)

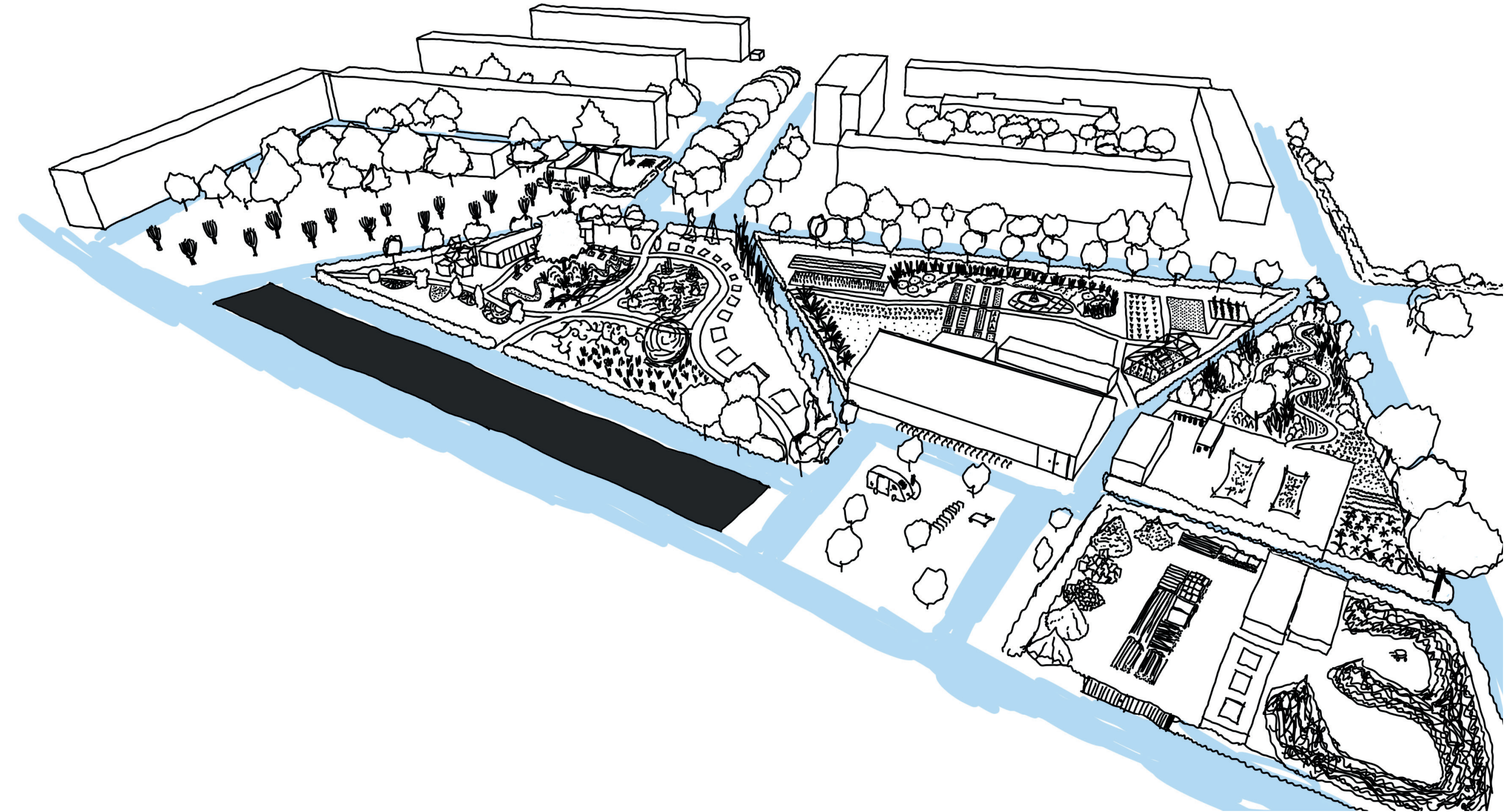


Fig.: 96 Birdseye view of scenario #2 - Making

Scenario #2 - Making - Reference examples

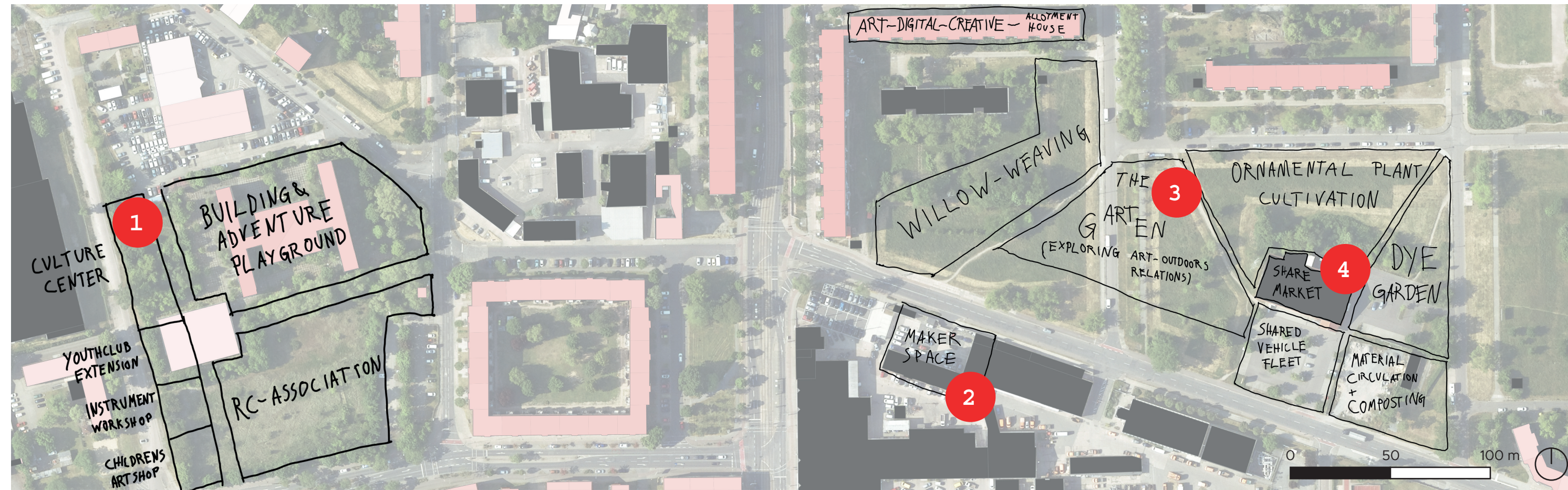


Fig.: 97 Distribution of practices in scenario #2 - Making (satellite image from LVerGeo, n.d.a)  
96

Reference culture centre: Kulturwerkstatt auf AEG, Nuremberg



Fig.: 98 Kulturwerkstatt auf AEG (Michaela Braun, n.d.)

Example maker space: Fablab in Nuremberg



Fig.: 100 Workplaces in the Fablab (Nina Pröll, n.d.)

Example GARTen: Land Art Foundation Delft



Fig.: 99 Artwork in the landscape (Stichting Land Art Delft, 2013)

Example share market: Library of Things



Fig.: 101 Library of things (Huck, 2020)

## Design conclusions

### Design scenarios

#### Scenario 1: The Greenhouse

In the two scenarios, I tested the spatial implications of different socio-cultural functions. From these tests I can make observations on the relationship between available spatial capacities and possible emerging practices.

#### Degree of publicness

Different uses have different sensitivities towards the public. Some uses require a more private atmosphere but should still happen outdoors and are therefore suitable for The Greenspace type (4.2). The live action role playing association is a fitting example for this case as not everyone would feel comfortable watching unfamiliar people doing it or being watched doing it by unfamiliar people. This feeling of safety can also relate to the objects of the practice e.g., an association that grows rare plants might want to make sure they are not publicly accessible. Therefore, the more public spaces should house uses that are less affected by vandalism or theft. More suitable are uses that are rather mobile to be stored away when not in use like the gear of circus artists or very static, such as the boule (and similar) pitches in the bouldrome.

When designing for a degree of privateness, one can use hedgerows, rows of trees or fences

### Scenario 2: The Greenhouse

#### Scenario 1: The Greenhouse

to separate the spaces from the surroundings. However, this risks making the spaces feel more like an assortment of private gardens than of common spaces used by the public. When spaces have to be shielded off, it is important to consider keeping the height of the elements below eyelevel to maintain the width of the space and invite people to explore the area. This ‘looking over the fence’ also presents itself as a core function of (also literally) publicity for the associations and is not to be underestimated as one mode of public discourse.

Conflicts around safety might arise with the paths that lead through a space. In the Making scenario, a path conveniently connects the newly constructed residential building with the other side of the park while leading through the art garden, a space that would likely regulate access because of the sensitivity and value of the objects in it. One could consider opening the path in accordance with the opening times of the garden during the day, closing it at night due to an increased risk of vandalism and giving residents permanent access to the art garden.

When designing for a degree of privateness, one can use hedgerows, rows of trees or fences

### Scenario 2: The Greenhouse

#### Scenario 1: The Greenhouse

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#### Shelter

Almost all the Greenspaces (4.2) practices require some sort of shelter not only for their core function but also as there is always a social element to the practices. Examples may be to store equipment, to exhibit artifacts, to seek shelter from bad weather, to cook coffee or food, to access water, sanitary facilities and electricity. From a microclimatic perspective, it is important that wind can flow well through the area and that surface sealing is kept to a minimum, therefore the shelters should be reasonably small and have a lightweight, shallow construction. Since the area used to be filled with residential buildings, the water, sewer and electricity infrastructure is already there and can be used for shelters. It is worth investigating whether multiple practices may want to share equipment or

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Furthermore, all practices have a social space, e.g. a patio, a bonfire pit or some other form of gathering spot. This is an important element from Soziokultur as these practices are not only providing technical-functional spaces but also socio-functional spaces.

#### Surface

As I emphasize working from the existing in all steps taken in the design process, the existing ground cover also impacted which practices I imagined emerging in which locations. I also designed the functions inside the practices according to the ground cover they need. The sharable vehicle fleet and the parkour group can do well with the existing paved surfaces while the gardening-related functions occupy the meadows. However, I also reduced the paved surface to create more

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#### Seasonality

The outdoor spaces will be used more in the warmer months of the year, especially the gardens have a strong seasonal aspect. Fruit and vegetables practically only grow from spring to fall and in the cold, wet and windy seasons, less people are inclined to be active outside. Then, the cultural types indoors become more important. A considerable number of Greenspaces (4.2) from a seasonality perspective needs to be balanced out by a considerable number of indoor types to provide enough capacity year-round. Fortunately creating a well-balanced mix as described in priority #3 also tackles this issue.

#### Adjusting to the housing demand

There is a large panel system building in the design area that is completely vacant right now. As the goal is to utilize empty housing capacity and as currently there is not the demand to utilize

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#### Citizen participation

It is important to take into account input from citizen participation where available as this might lead to unexpected outcomes. For example, in the ‘enjoying’ scenario I propose to make one of the Specific Spaces (3) in the Center (6) building as well as one of the adjacent Greenspaces (4.2) available to a sporting initiative. This might seem erratic given the number of Specific Spaces (3) sporting facilities in the north, but those are highly organized and the integrated concept reveals: “The sports areas however, especially those for free use, obviously do not meet the demand.”

### Scenario 2: The Greenhouse

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(Stadt Dessau-Roßlau, 2020, p. 28)

Another point where citizen input was addressed is the transformation of the fallow land, large green spaces for which the current goal is to maintain them with “low effort”(Stadt Dessau-Roßlau, 2020, p. 47) their intended purpose is a vague mix between biodiversity, ‘expansion’, ‘landscape-leisure’ and ‘free-space-leisure’ while at the same time a result from the participation process was: “There is a lack of spaces, squares, recreational opportunities and qualities for social activities, exchange and encounter in the neighborhood. There are areas that are neglected or appear neglected. Nevertheless, citizens are willing to help maintain the open spaces and take on sponsorships.” (Stadt Dessau-Roßlau, 2020, p. 28). Barely any of the flats in the perimeter have access to a garden and as the large new park was developed with the intention of answering the quoted demand with a fully public solution, a more private solution seems to compliment this well. As private gardens are not in line with the criteria for strategic degrowth prefiguration and as the benefit of private gardens for social activities, exchange and encounter are debatable, the proposal to use some of the large green areas in question to make them available for The Greenspaces (4.2), which

includes the opportunity for neighbors to adopt them in a less public way than a park, presents itself as a way that might aid with this need. As mentioned above this necessitates making large fractions of the fallow land more private but also preventing from the beginning that these spaces become quasi private. Next to the spatial measures that can be taken this is fundamentally taken care of through the precondition for all practices to adhere to the five criteria for strategic degrowth prefiguration in particular number 4 “integrative mode of operation”.

These two examples of meeting citizen needs expressed through a participation process highlight two things. The first is that prefigurative practices can fulfil functions that might otherwise be fulfilled through the materialistic accumulative framework. The second is that with regards to the non self-producing types citizen participation remains a key to planning that adequately meets the needs of citizens.

### Scenario 2: The Greenhouse

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## Reality check

In order to reflect on the feasibility of my approach and to empirically ground it I did a six-day field trip to Dessau in order to do site-visits as well as interviewing the district management of the research area, Sylvia Watzek. In the following I will use information gathered from the interview and relate it to my approach.

According to Sylvia the age structure in the district is a bit unusual as there are many people below the age of 21 as well as a whole lot of old people also due to a concentration of geriatric facilities. This does not work in favor of my approach as it is to be expected that these age groups typically have less capacity to actively engage in the practices in mind. There is also a high turnaround of citizens in the district as many people find their first flat in the in the area due to the low prices as well as refugees being accommodated decentralized in the district. This too is not ideal as people tend to be more willing to invest time in building social practices when they expect to be able to participate in the future as well. The amount of people without work is high in the district, as according to Sylvia those who had the means left. This is not detrimental to the approach as people who are not able to participate in the market as much might be benefitting a lot of alternative ways of needs satiation. Sylvia characterized these demographics to have high neighbourhood solidarity although the nature of which seems to be more inwards directed to the immediate living context which leaves unclear in how far this could benefit my approach.

Sylvia told that the first district management in the area was introduced in 2000 with the task to prepare the locals for the large scale demolition that was about to happen following the sharp decline in inhabitants. Sylvias task is more or less to mitigate some of the fallout of the structural change of the district. She told that the locals are still hurt by the demolitions and that the acceptance of the resulting fallow lands is practically non-existing. These lands are perceived as weedy and unmaintained. This could play in favour of my approach as it would put these areas to new use and ultimately also change their appearance towards a more maintained look in the process.

Sylvia organizes network meetings of the cultural (in a wide sense) players in the area and makes sure to keep them at a reasonably low frequency as according to her it is very important not to wear out the energy of engaged people for such meetings. She also initiated and organizes a network around school-unrelated educational offerings. Both of these initiatives have yielded success in the form of cooperations amongst local players. The educational network even was so successful that it has developed its own dynamic which is not relying on Sylvia as much. This shows that there is potential in the area for endogenous practices and that it is likely that synergies could arise from my approach.

However, Sylvia also pointed out some characteristics of the existing practices which could pose serious problems for my approach. According to her the older initiatives commonly have a problem with a steadily rising age of the people engaged with the most engaged people getting quite old right now which of course implies questions about the future. Furthermore the existing newer practices are generally not originating from the locals and have a hard time activating locals. This is concerning regarding my approach as it obviously relies quite a bit on the locals actually wanting to engage and use the capacities that are to be created.

The difficulty of activating the locals also showed in the amount of energy that had to be put into getting some people to take part in the participation process for the newly built park as well as on the underwhelming usage of a citizen action fund of 5000€ per year that anyone in the district could tap in order to finance things that benefit the district. Another indicator is that in 2015 there was the idea to work with claims on the fallow land which only worked in a very limited way and of which there is only one claim left now.

Reflecting on this it is questionable how quick the capacities that are to be created in my approach could be appropriated by citizens. This opens up questions about possible phasing arrangements. Nevertheless there have been some events which proved to be very successful in activating a broader local public. One of them was a project

centered around sewing a pennant chain long enough to circle once around the entire district, which was a success and over which locals aks when such a thing is returning. Sylvias observation in this regard is that it is easier to activate people with specific (and attractive) ideas than for vague general engagement. This shows again that activating the locals is not impossible. For my approach I wonder if such specific events could be an entry for people to become more engaged in regular practices. The observation that Sylvia made in her district about people being hard to activate is one that according to Sylvia is shared as she reports from networking meetings with other district managers from Saxony-Anhalt.

Another big field of issues stems from the municipality having a severe lack of funds. This results in a lack of urban design upgrades, a lack of maintenance for the greenspaces as well as lack of continuity of programs intended to mitigate negative development dynamics as exemplified in this case by the cutting of the citizen action fund by 40% due to the municipality going into their third budget freeze in a row as well as the past intermittency of the presence of a district management in the research area. This intermittency is due to a high reliance on funding through federal subsidies and might affect Sylvia in the future.

The current district management is active since 2022 and has just this year been renewed until 2029 after which the continuation is uncertain. This missing continuity is a significant threat to my approach as it will require continuous supervision and might fail to produce a favourable outcome or even produce unfavourable effects if abandoned in the process due to the strong reliance on the adherence of practices to the five criteria for strategic degrowth prefiguration.

The funding schemes are designed from the expectation that district managements would start social processes that develop an endogenous dynamic not requiring a district management anymore after a few years. Sylvia thinks that this expectation cannot be fulfilled in this case. This approach also differs from the practice that has been established for example in Nuremberg

where district-based supporting of bottom up culture (Soziokultur) through entities very similar to district-managements have been continuously active for decades, being an overall success-story.

Potentially also due to municipal funding issues in the administration, some processes take a very long time to finish, one example that Sylvia described is the transformation of a landmark building into a small scale citizen run cultural center. This is also a potential pitfall of my approach as dealing with very long administrative processes might quench the motivation of engaged citizens to keep spending time trying to set up a practice. According to Sylvia the building in question is to be made available to a citizen association on a leasehold, a model that has been successfully implemented at a different location in Dessau. This touches on another topic regarding the financial situation in relation to making spaces available for citizen action: The municipality does not have the money to directly enable citizen action on spaces they own. The citizens do not have the means to buy such properties from the municipality. The municipality cannot gift away spaces as even if they would not pay money anywhere the value of the property would be deducted from their wealth effectively presenting a cost. This is why a leasehold is a fitting arrangement as it keeps the ultimate ownership with the municipality but allows it to be used under quasi-ownership for a set amount of time and potentially under further conditions. Leasehold agreements are thus a concept that enable my approach under the tight financial conditions of Dessau and are generally a sensible mode of operation for my approach.

Another bit of context that Sylvia told me concerns the municipal housing company ‘Dessauer Wohnungsbaugesellschaft (DWG)’ which owns the majority of housing units and plots in the area and also has very limited means. The lack of money in the municipal housing company ‘DWG’ also leads to issues as it practically does not have the funds to renovate the blocks in the district and also wants to sell everything they own in the district or alternatively tear it down in order to not have to deal with it anymore. Often the blocks that are sold get renovated by the buyers thus producing strong competition for the

DWG putting further load on it. Another issue about the DWG which is hindering the success of the district is, that while being owned by the municipality it is a separate entity which is not directly controlled by the administration leading to sometimes incoherent actions of the municipality and the municipally owned DWG. These circumstances are also a threat to my approach as it relies on utilizing properties owned by the DWG to make available for strategic degrowth prefiguration but it is furthermore a threat to the goal of using strategic degrowth prefiguration to utilize empty housing capacity as tearing down existing capacities is not in line with the aims of my approach. Furthermore there are risks to the spatial justice due to gentrification dynamics which will be further explained in the discussion but the mitigation of which relies on the rents of a large amount of the housing stock in the area to be able to be controlled by the municipality in order to counter undesired market dynamics.

In favour of my approach	Not in favour of my approach
High solidarity amongst neighbors	Strong solidarity only with the immediate neighbors
Low acceptance of the fallow lands as unused spaces	Demographics: many inhabitants not at the age/point in life where they would start and be part of an initiative
Previous networking efforts in the neighborhood are successful	Not many new members in existing initiatives
Previous events were received well by the residents	Newer practices in the area are not from the neighborhood
Municipality already works with leasehold agreements	Financial situation of municipality does not assure (continuity of) support
	Reliance on property of the DWG which has little financial means

Fig.: 102 Overview of aspects reflected on in the reality check

## Conclusions to be fed back into the theory

The third takeaway is on the matter of feasibility. The notion of starting of from the existing is already present in the initial Savini-Rydin discourse where it concerns existing prefigurative practices. The necessity to relink existing cultural elements to degrowth is a key moment of the cultural politics for degrowth proposed by Meissner. Starting off from the existing is also a key feature in the ramp conceptualization to substantial sustainability transitions such as introducing satiation. In the design process redirecting already rolling balls is priority #0 as this significantly increases the chances of success in implementation. Even in the specific scenario designs, taking the existing spatial features such as the ground cover into account is identified to increase the chances of success. The overarching presence of this notion through scales and different grades of abstraction brings me to the conclusion that in order that maximise feasibility for this substantial transition, a radical perspective from the currently existing has to be taken and prioritised at all stages when planning for strategic degrowth.

The first takeaway is an apparent mismatch between the size of the capacity that is to be made available and the current capacity in the population to actually appropriate these spaces. It is a lot of space and from the interview with the district manager I found out that whilst there is potential for activating citizens from the area, it is limited. This makes some sort of phasing in the handing out of the spaces necessary. It is a non trivial question how this should look like as limiting the amount of capacity might be beneficial for consolidating the efforts of the civil society in order to improve efficiency and capability in appropriating the available capacity whilst the limiting to just a few spaces might also limit the width of prefiguration and might turn away people interested in starting a practice but not interested in the programmatic foci chosen in the other newly founded practices.

The second takeaway is concerning criterium #4 ‘integrative mode of operation’. This criterium was initially a consideration targeting the programmatic direction of practices as well as their internal structure. In the design however it became apparent that this criterium also has to be implemented spatially. This may take the form of making the area of a practice publicly accessible during regular times but far more importantly it means that practices (especially the Greenspaces (4.2)) should reduce their visual separation from the public to a reasonable minimum. This enables a kind of public discourse as the practice visually communicates its core matters to the general public giving it the chance to simply see what’s going on. This can prompt the general public to reflect on the prefigurative practice and for example become interested or decide that the practice is not for them. This is fundamentally what prefiguration is about and thus a very significant takeaway on how to bring the process of prefiguration to space.

## Conclusions on the conceptual framework

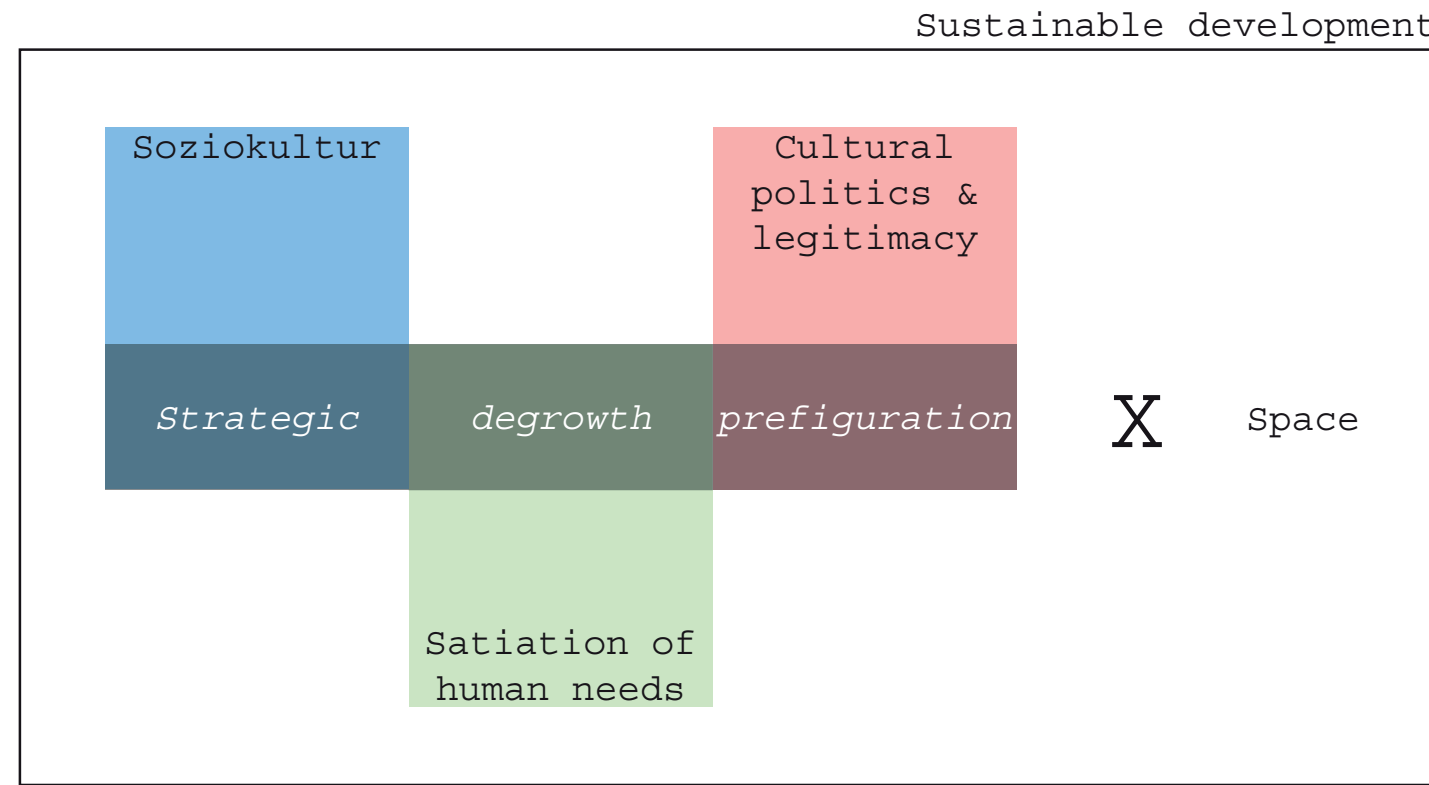


Fig.: 103 Conceptual framework

As can be understood from my conceptual framework this thesis explored how to make a start on translating strategic degrowth into space. In this part I want to relate the conclusions of the design phase to the core concepts I started off from. For this I will start with the last theoretical consequence and work my way up through the theory stack.

### Soziokultur

The strategic role that Soziokultur plays in the approach of this thesis relies on its capability to enable the bottom-up construction of synergistic satisfiers through prefiguration and to do so whilst exploring many options at the same time. In order to fulfil the bottom-up part it is a necessity to give the emerging practices the most freedom possible in all dimensions, which is also important to not limit the range of possibilities to explore. This concerns the choice of the programmatic direction, how to organize their practice as well as how they use and change their space. Fundamentally, the design shows that the available underutilized capacities in

the district can be used to host a wide and diverse range of practices. The successful operation of Soziokultur practices necessitates some different spatial considerations, which have been listed above such as varying degrees of publicness or requirement for shelter. Essentially, there are also different types of cultural places as characterized in the best practice exploration. It is possible to integrate all of these types in an existing context even starting off from a radical perspective of working with the status quo. However this necessitates a high degree of control over large parts of the site as well as a readiness to take these parts out of the market. This may present significant costs in a situation where the ownership of these spaces does not lie with the municipality and significant opportunity costs where it does. For the test case in Dessau the situation is in an in-between one: On one hand the market pressure is low, reducing these costs, and large parts of the district are owned by the municipal housing corporation. On the other hand the housing corporation is its own proper entity lowering

the degree of control that the municipality can practically exert and as the municipality as well as its housing corporation are in a tight monetary situation which severely limits their agency.

### Prefiguration

The role of Soziokultur as explained above also includes to perform prefiguration through the simultaneous exploration of many possibilities. This implies a necessity for the emerging practices to be of diverse nature. One spatial requirement that became clear in the design is variation in the available sizes of spaces due to the different nature of practices. This means that size is one dimension in which the freedom of the individual practices has to be limited from a holistic perspective in order to enable diversity. The question of how to size spaces for practices in relation to time in addition to this perspective makes this even more complicated. In the design tests the size of the fully developed practices was considered. The size of a practice however is inherently dynamic. This poses three distinct problems:

1. Starting size: A practice will be small in the beginning which poses a risk to overwhelm the members with too much space to cater to in extreme cases.
2. End size: A practice might be so successful that it risks growing larger than its space can accommodate for or it might never grow to a size that completely utilizes the space (whilst being successful otherwise).
3. Diversity: Undersizing of space allocations limits the prefigurative capacity of the individual practice but overly large allocations regardless whether oversized or not limit the prefigurative capacity of the fabric as it prevents either the allocation of that space to new practices or the growth of other adjacent practices.

One factor which limits the severity of these problems is the circumstance that the amount of people participating in a practice and its size requirements are never directly proportional. Nonetheless, these problems require some sort of dynamic allocation of space to individual practices, including a minimum to ensure the prefigurative capacity of the individual practice and a maximum to ensure the prefigurative capacity of the fabric.

This is in line with the need for phasing due to the limited potential to activate citizens as explained above in the first main takeaway.

On the issue of diversity to ensure prefigurative potential it is also sensible to limit the freedom of the practices by pre-allocating capacities to the fundamental types of cultural places. This is always necessary due to practical concerns as shown in the priorities but is also key to ensure diversity of the resulting fabric. Another result from the design for prefiguration is to ensure low-bar public discourse in the form of visual relations between public space and practices as described in the second main takeaway.

### Degrowth

The goal of constructing synergistic satisfiers is to introduce satiation and thus tackle excess. The capacities in the district are suitable and sufficient for this. Even significant amounts of subsistence could take place in these. As the goal is to tackle excess however, a presumption is that all needs are satisfied to reach the pre-systemic level that Max-Neef describes. This implies that some need satisfaction happens outside of the district. As Sylvia described, whoever had the means left the district and currently the amount of people without work is high. It is thus to be questioned whether the presumption about all needs being met to overcome the pre-systemic level holds true for all citizens in the district. This is always true when planning for any considerable number of people and does not invalidate the approach nor the design. Considering the in parts precarious situation in the district this still highlights the need for well-functioning social security systems and underlines that the approach to satiation taken in this thesis regards tackling excess and is not a replacement for efforts to ensure that everyone is able to hit a reasonable existence minimum (the inner ring of the doughnut conceptualization by Raworth (2018)).

## Outlook

Of course this thesis does not present a 'plug and play' solution that is capable to establish satiation, push Germany to adopt degrowth and solve all associated problems. However it does inform on the way to get there and on possible first steps. Supporting strategic degrowth prefiguration can result in more effective and efficient need satisfaction and may replace some materialism. Far more importantly it may strengthen civil society to have stronger notions on what it does and does not deem important. To have an involved and engaged civil society is a precondition for further steps. The approach taken in this thesis is capable of strengthening the capability for prefiguration but - as described before - this is only the first step in the sequence of prefiguration, popularization and pressure. Furthermore, the legitimacy for introducing satiation that may be produced from the approach in this thesis is rooted in participation, the issue of introducing satiation in society however inevitably necessitates legitimacy to be drawn from representation. Drawing on the theories of Savini (2024a, 2024b) and Meissner (2021) I have drafted one outlook on how this could work on the basis of what have introduced in this thesis (see FIG X). In this outlook I depicted the possibility of the plethora of practices to form a council of culture in which representatives from the individual practices could find common issues and demands (popularization) which - after they are bundled - make it far more easy to either call for change or to be included in processes of participation/co-production (pressure). In this way, many people engaged in the bottom-up processes could find representation in a quite tangible way. The possibly resulting change of institutions might thus be backed by solid legitimacy.

When thinking about the national scale, it might be possible to do a chain of representation (e.g. local culture councils send representatives to a regional council which in turn send representatives to a country council etc. up to the national scale) but I have serious doubts how long such representation chains can be until they lose their legitimacy. I think it is more likely that the pressure is exerted mostly on municipalities which then transport the pressure further up in the administrative structure. Another perspective on this is that the process of prefiguration, popularization and pressure might be reproduced on higher scales. From this perspective some cities' administrations might start orientating themselves on notions introduced in this thesis, be successful, incentivize other cities to try similar things, find common ground amongst each other and subsequently start pressuring higher levels of the administrative structure. Yet another different perspective opens up when considering that the same citizens vote for multiple scales of representative democracy. When considering this it becomes likely that a citizen which is in favour of measures introducing satiation in their city might also vote for representatives at higher scales that are in favor of measures introducing satiation. Regardless through which path change proliferates, it becomes clear that the legitimacy for it has to start from the very bottom-up, making the notions from this thesis relevant either way.

## Control representative democracy

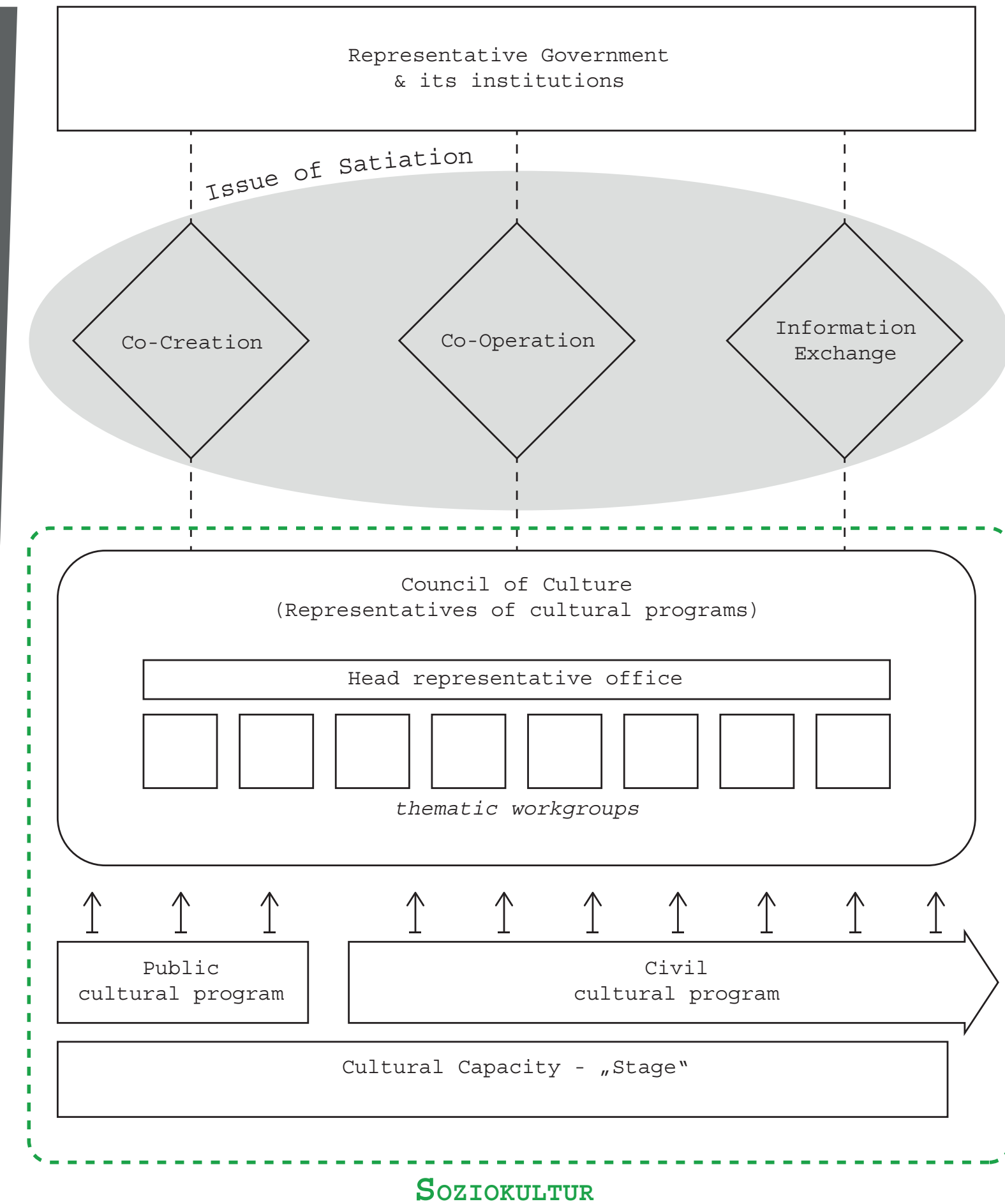


Fig.: 104 Outlook representative legitimacy

## Chapter 06

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# Discussion and Conclusion

## Discussion

### Spatial justice

This approach of this thesis relates theoretically to spatial justice in the three dimensions of the TU Delft way of conceptualizing it (Rocco, 2023).

- **Distributive justice:** The neighbors which have to deal with the burdens which result from the downward spiral the neighborhood is experiencing as well as from the resulting demolition activities (brownfields, having to move inside of the neighborhood in order to consolidate vacancy to enable demolition) are able to reap the benefits of the free capacity in the form of it being made available to them.
- **Recognition Justice:** Through the participative and diverse nature of the resulting cultural landscape, the peculiarities of the local participants can be accounted for.
- **Procedural Justice:** As the nature of the emerging practices is to be democratic and as the decision which practices emerge is based on bottom-up initiative, the locals can influence the decisions related to the cultural landscape to be fair to their needs.

### Gentrification

The approach of this thesis also has a theoretical connection to gentrification (Janssen et al., 2023, p. 301 f) as it is a risk with my approach: The intents and purposes of the design are not so far off from some conceptualizations of gentrification. In the case of this design one of the primary goals is to increase attractiveness in order to drive up demand as there is surplus capacity, the rationale being that driving up demand where there is capacity takes away demand from locations where there is no capacity thus substituting building activity and urban expansion. The risk of gentrification, to drive out the locals due to urban upgrading, is a real but unwanted consequence. In light of spatial justice, it would furthermore be an unintended consequence if e.g. private companies would capitalize on the non-profit work that is put in by people engaged in prefigurative practices. There are two circumstances which enable the municipality to by and large prevent this. The existing housing stock is mostly (by proxy) owned municipally giving the opportunity to simply not adhere to market dynamics and not drive out the locals. Secondly most of the free plots in the area

are also (by proxy) owned municipally enabling the public hand to steer how much the volunteer created value is capitalized on and ensuring that the profits may benefit the volunteers. Maybe the municipality may not have the means to develop housing. A potential instrument to specify a framework for prefigurative practices as well as for housing development (preventing the capturing of value created by society) might be forms of Emphyteusis (sometimes called a leasehold) as practiced in the Netherlands (*Erfpacht*) or in Germany (*Erbbaurecht*) enabling to give away ground for a minimum set amount of time, leaving all properties on the ground in the ownership of the leaseholder but retaining the right of the owner of the ground to re-possess it by buying out the leaseholder after the set amount of time. This also enables to give out land on very good conditions coupled to other agreements (e.g. non-

profitability, use, upkeep, potential payments etc.). This could also mean in some cases requiring prefigurative actors to set up association structures after a set amount of time (e.g. 5 years). This is a learning from the best practice analysis as many examples are associations. It makes sense as this makes a practice less dependent on individuals and can be a step in formalizing and thus stabilizing practices, engraining core principles such as democratic decision making or fundamental values.

### Circularity

In the following I use a typologisation of circular economy discourses developed in Calisto Friant et al. (2020) in order to show how the theory developed in this work connects to this field of discourse.

In the wider discourse around sustainability transitions, the circular economy (CE) is a term and supposed concept that is quite ubiquitous. What exactly the CE is remains contested however as there is a plethora of meanings, definitions and discourses that are labeled as circular economy. In order to achieve the aforementioned typologisation the authors first construct five major challenges of the CE. The first one concerns the relationship of CE discourses to the consequences of growth and capitalism. The second one concerns the relationship of CE discourses to planetary boundaries. The third is about the relationship of these discourses to assessment and rebound effects. The fourth which according to the authors is often under-addressed concerns the social dimension. This challenge includes issues of governance, social justice as well as the required cultural change required for

reaching a CE. The fifth challenge concerns the relationship of CE to other potentially synergistic concepts from other parts of the academic spectrum, from contexts other than western-industrialized ones or from both at the same time. The article follows the value-retention hierarchy (R0 refuse, R1 reduce, R2 reuse/resell, R3 repair, R4 refurbish, R5 remanufacture, R6 re-purpose, R7 recycle materials, R8 recover energy, R9 remine.) introduced by Reike et al. (2018) and the authors state that a lot of the potential synergies from these other concepts could lie in gaining valuable insights for the first four of these.

The theoretical background of the theory formed in this thesis also concerns the first two challenges presented in this context. The theory formed in this thesis strongly relates to the fourth challenge and presents potential solutions to these. In conjunction of its theoretical background and the formed theory this thesis is to be categorized degrowth and precisely tackles reduction in society relating to the first and the second priority of the value-retention hierarchy. Thus, it can be considered one of the potentially synergistic approaches from challenge five.

The authors construct a timeline (see Fig. 105) in which he lists concepts that fall under the CE discourse understood as an umbrella term. He broadly structures the history of CE discourse into a 'preamble period' where initial discourses around ecological aspects of human activity as well as resource limits were popularized (ca. 1945-1980) after which an 'excitement period' followed during which the term 'Circular Economy' was first coined and in which a lot of innovative ideas centred around feeding outputs of the economy back into the economy (hence 'circular') emerged (ca. 1980-2010). The approaches developed during this period where generally only targeting the second challenge introduced above. From around 2010 started the 'validity challenge' "where many inconsistencies and conceptual challenges of the CE must be resolved. From this point, the concept can either cohere, by resolving its theoretical challenges, collapse, as inconsistencies become insurmountable, or persist as a contention, as different positions end up "agreeing to disagree"" (Calisto Friant et al., 2020, p. 8). The authors state

that basically all approaches stemming from this period tackle at least challenges two, three and four but differ with respect to their stance on growth (challenge one) as well as pluralism (challenge five). They can broadly be divided into Circularity 3.1, reformist discourses operating within the capitalist system, and Circularity 3.2, which are transformist discourses doubting the possibility to stay inside planetary boundaries with a capitalist system and thus envisioning an entire transformation of the socio-economic order.

The theoretical background of this thesis as well as the theory formed does not take an absolutist stance in favor or against capitalism. This thesis challenges relying solely on market dynamics for need satisfaction and challenges the ubiquity of the materialistic accumulative framework associated due to its conflict with planetary boundaries.

In the synthesis that follows the authors state that there is a fundamental difference on the spectrum of discourses up to this point attributed to the CE regarding if they tackle challenge four, the social dimension. They state that for the sake of clarity CE should not be used as an umbrella term and propose to use 'circularity' instead. The discourses which do not really deal with the social dimension and focus on issues around resources are then put under the term 'Circular Economy'. The circularity discourses which do include a social dimension are collected under the term 'Circular Society' (CS). The typology of circularity discourses that is ultimately created [FIG] contains four types structured on two dimensions. One is whether the discourse is holistic or segmented (holistic meaning the category circular society, fragmented meaning the category circular economy) the other is whether the discourse is optimistic on the possibility to stay inside the planetary boundaries in a capitalist system or not.

Following this typology, as my thesis does not take a clear stance on the capitalism issue, the approach taken in this thesis can connect in a relevant way to either discourses from reformist or transformational circular society. This means it can connect to the field of circularity but in detail is only applicable to parts of it. As practically all recently introduced discourse of the validity

challenge period are of these two types, this thesis is subsequently relevant to practically all 'modern' academic discourse on the topic. Nonetheless there is reason to be careful as the authors characterize a peculiar mismatch in their research: 70% of the reviewed circularity concepts fall into the CS category whilst of the reviewed definitions (n=120) of the umbrella term 'Circular Economy' from academia, governments and practitioners 86.5% fall into the CE category. Unfortunately, in the broader public the term 'Circular Economy' is more widespread as an umbrella term than 'Circularity' making the question how this thesis relates to CE dependent on who asks.

Precursors to circularity	Circularity 1.0 and 2.0: Techno-fixes to waste		Circularity 3.0: Integrated socio-economic approaches to resources, consumption and waste			
	Circularity 1.0: Dealing with Waste	Circularity 2.0: Connecting Input and Output in Strategies for Eco-Efficiency	Circularity 3.1 Reformist views on the Circularity		Circularity 3.2 Transformational views of Circularity and visions of the Global South	
Preamble Period		Excitement Period		Validity Challenge Period		
1945-1980		1980-2010		2010-present		
Gandhian economics (Kumarappa, 1945)	Waste-Water Treatment (Holcomb, 1970)	Industrial Ecology (Frosch and Gallopoulos, 1989)	<b>First holistic Circularity frameworks</b>	<b>New holistic Circularity views</b>	<b>Transformational views of Circularity</b>	<b>Non-western visions of Circularity</b>
The Economics of the Coming Spaceship Earth (Boulding, 1966)	Solid Waste Management and Recycling (Levick and Davies, 1975)	Circular Economy (Pearce and Turner, 1989)	Rio Declaration on Environment and Development (UN, 1992)	Blue Economy (Pauli, 2010)	Transition Movement (Hopkins, 2008)	Buen Vivir/ Sumark Kawsay (Government of Ecuador, 2008)
The tragedy of the Commons (Hardin, 1968)	Bio-Digestion (Hughes, 1975)	Eco-design /Design for environment (Ryan et al., 1992)	Regenerative design (Lyle, 1994)	Material Efficiency (Allwood et al., 2011)	Degrowth (Latouche, 2009)	Ubuntu (Shumba, 2011)
The Population Bomb (Ehrlich, 1968)	Energy Recovery (Boyle, 1977)	Cyclic Economy (Tibbs, 1993)	Natural Capitalism (Hawken et al., 1999)	Third Industrial Revolution (Rifkin, 2013)	Eco-socialism (Lowy, 2011)	Ecological Civilization (Zhang et al., 2011)
The entropy law and the economic process (Georgescu-Roegen, 1971)		Industrial Metabolism (Ayres and Simonis, 1994)	Sound Material-Cycle Society (Government of Japan, 2000)	Eco-system Economy (Scharmer and Kaufner, 2013)	Laudato Si' (Pope Francis, 2015)	Ecological Swaraj (Kothari et al., 2014)
The Closing Circle (Commoner, 1971)		Cleaner Production (Baas, 1995)	Cyclical Economy (Young et al., 2001)	Regenerative Capitalism (Fullerton, 2015)	Transition design (Irwin, 2015)	Suma Qamaña / Vivir Bien (Artaraz and Calestani, 2015)
Social Ecology (Bookchin, 1971)		Reverse Logistics (Rogers and Tibben-Lembke, 1998)	Materials Matter (Geiser, 2001)	Sharing Economy (Frenken, 2017)	Economy for the Common Good (Felber, 2015)	Buddhist, Confucian and Taoist ecology (Arler, 2018)
Limits to Growth (Meadows et al., 1972)		Eco-industrial parks and networks (Côté and Cohen-Rosenthal, 1998)	Product Service System (Goedkoop et al., 1999)	Doughnut Economics (Raworth, 2017)	Post-growth (Jackson, 2016)	Radical Pluralism / Pluriverse (Kothari et al., 2019)
Ecological Design (Papañek, 1972)		Biominicry (Benyus, 1998)	Extended Producer Responsibility (Lindhqvist, 2000)	Symbiotic Economy (Delannoy, 2017)	Permacircular Economy (Bourg, 2018)	
Small is Beautiful (Schumacher, 1973)		Product Service System (Goedkoop et al., 1999)	The Natural Step (Robert, 2002)	Social Circular Economy (Social Circular Economy, 2017)	Voluntary Simplicity (Trainer and Alexander, 2019)	
Conviviality (Illich, 1973)		Industrial Symbiosis (Chertow, 2000)	Performance Economy (Stahel, 2010)	Spiral Economy (Ashby et al., 2019)	Convivialism (Caillé, 2019)	
Steady-state economics (Daly, 1977)		Closed-loop Supply Chain (Guide et al., 2003)		Coviability (Barrière et al., 2019)		
Permaculture (Mollison and Holmgren, 1978)		Biobased Economy / Bioeconomy (OECD, 2004)				
Décroissance (Gorz, 1980, first published in French in 1975)		The Biosphere Rules (Unruh, 2008)				
Deep Ecology (Naess and Rothernberg, 1989, based on 1976 book in Norwegian)						
Overshoot (Catton 1980)						

Fig.: 105 Timeline of circularity concepts and ideas (Calisto Friant et al., 2020)

		Approach to social, economic, environmental and political considerations	
		Holistic	Segmented
Technological innovation and ecological collapse	Optimist	<b>Reformist Circular Society</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Assumptions:</i> reformed form of capitalism is compatible with sustainability and socio-technical innovations can enable eco-economic decoupling to prevent ecological collapse.</li> <li>• <i>Goal:</i> economic prosperity and human well-being within the biophysical boundaries of the earth.</li> <li>• <i>Means:</i> technological breakthroughs, social innovations and new business models that improve ecological health, resource security, and material prosperity for all.</li> </ul>	<b>Techncentric Circular Economy</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Assumptions:</i> capitalism is compatible with sustainability and technological innovation can enable eco-economic decoupling to prevent ecological collapse.</li> <li>• <i>Goal:</i> sustainable human progress and prosperity without negative environmental externalities.</li> <li>• <i>Means:</i> economic innovations, new business models and unprecedented breakthroughs in CE technologies for the closing of resource loops with optimum economic value creation.</li> </ul>
	Sceptical	<b>Transformational Circular Society</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Assumptions:</i> capitalism is incompatible with sustainability and socio-technical innovation cannot bring absolute eco-economic decoupling to prevent ecological collapse.</li> <li>• <i>Goal:</i> a world of conviviality and frugal abundance for all, while fairly distributing the biophysical resources of the earth.</li> <li>• <i>Means:</i> complete reconfiguration of the current socio-political system and a shift away from productivist and anthropocentric worldviews to drastically reduce humanity's ecological footprint and ensure that everyone can live meaningfully, and in harmony with the earth.</li> </ul>	<b>Fortress Circular Economy</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Assumptions:</i> there is no alternative to capitalism and socio-technical innovation cannot bring absolute eco-economic decoupling to prevent ecological collapse.</li> <li>• <i>Goal:</i> maintain geostrategic resource security and earth system stability in global conditions where widespread resource scarcity and human overpopulation cannot provide for all.</li> <li>• <i>Means:</i> innovative technologies and business models combined with rationalized resource use, imposed frugality and strict migration and population controls.</li> </ul>

Fig.: 106 Circularity discourse typologies (Calisto Friant et al., 2020)

## Conclusion

Summarizing the answers to the research questions:

### 1.1 What is satiation and why should it be the core driver of sustainability transitions?

Satiation refers to the fact that needs can be satisfied, which is in fundamental opposition to the current mode of operation of the German society. That is built on productivity as an end and not a means to need satisfaction, inevitably producing indefinite (material) growth, which is not in line with the goal of sustainability which necessitates to stay within planetary boundaries. Accepting satiation as a leading principle implies aiming for prosperity above societal minimums while staying under the planetary boundaries. In the acceptance that this is possible it can tackle excess as the goal becomes reachable. As there are no predefined societal minimums satiation entails that society defines needs to satisfy as its goal.

### 1.2 What is feasibility in the context of satiation and substantial societal transitions?

Feasibility in this context means to understand that in democratic societies top-down action can only ever be as effective as it is legitimate. In the specific context of satiation, it means that reductionist approaches need to build legitimacy to be effective. This legitimacy building for satiation entails the bottom-up construction of synergistic satisfiers to have some common position on the goal to reach. Only if society has a common position on the goal(s) to reach can excess be defined in a legitimate way, enabling the reduction of excess to be effective. Building legitimacy for substantial societal transitions can be conceptualized as a struggle for hegemony in ideology (as understood by Stuart Hall and subsequently Miriam Meissner). This means that cultural politics of innovating societally (prefiguration), building alliances for common causes amongst diverse initiatives (popularization) as well as organizing pressure with the aim of changing norms and institutions should play a role. The process of popularization entails connecting existing cultural elements to a new articulating political principle, which is degrowth.

### 1.3 How can satiation be feasibly introduced?

As the notions on efficient and effective needs satisfaction in the form of bottom-up construction

of synergistic satisfiers and the notions on the issue of legitimacy building coincide substantially, an integrated approach utilizing a sequence of the cultural politics of prefiguration, popularization and pressure to construct and adopt synergistic satisfiers can be used to feasibly introduce satiation.

### 2.1 What is the German case of sustainability transition and satiation?

The state of Germany has adopted sustainability as a key policy principle aiming for sustainable development and has already translated some notions as well as some planetary boundaries into hard law. Nonetheless German development right now does not fall in line with the standards set by itself for sustainable development as well as some thresholds implemented by the government. Furthermore, legitimacy is limited as the political landscape is quite divided on the issue of sustainability transformations as apparent by the high approval of the AfD party. This is especially apparent in the parts of Germany that have a lower level of societal accessibility which coincide with the areas in which there is a high level of vacancy of housing stock. This increasing lack of legitimacy for sustainability transitions is threatening the nation in moving towards sustainability.

### 2.2 What can be a spatial approach to tackle the issues around introducing satiation as a core driver of the German sustainability transition?

An approach can be to support Soziokultur in the form of creating more spatial capacity available for strategic degrowth prefiguration in order to construct and adopt legitimate synergistic satisfiers enabling society to reach a satisfactory level of need satisfaction as efficiently as possible laying the groundwork to legitimately tackle excess and circumvent the ecological pitfall that is focusing on productivity as an end instead of a mean for need satisfaction which in turn is the cause for indefinite growth. Making this spatial capacity available should be informed by the five criteria for strategic degrowth prefiguration practices:

- Synergistic satisfying behaviour
- Outside of traditional market logics
- Bottom-up in nature

- Integrative mode of operation
- Networking

The spatial typologies suitable for these types of practices have been characterized in this thesis.

### 2.3 What changes of urban spatial elements in Dessau can support the feasible introduction of satiation?

The case study has revealed that repurposing empty spatial capacities like fallow lands (left behind by the demolition of housing stock) or vacant buildings for the creation of the space types for strategic degrowth prefiguration can provide ample capacity. As many of the types are self-producing, not many inputs are needed for the transformation of most of the spaces although it does require careful planning. When planning for repurposing the chances for success are increased when starting off from spaces for which existing plans can be redirected. A well-functioning urban fabric has to be the end result to make the introduction successful. For this setting priorities is key as it enables creating an effective as well as functionally coherent end result. The priorities developed in the case study are:

- Give existing socio-cultural practices the chance to develop and/or expand by allocating ad-jacent public spaces to them.
- Take physical limitations as well as climate adaptation into account.
- The planning should aim to create a well-balanced mix of space types for strategic degrowth prefiguration
- Reserve some development potentials for housing
- Sensible relations should shape the space

When handing out the capacities to engaged actors from civil society there are some considerations to be made. Phasing is required to consolidate the efforts of the civil society to improve efficiency and capability in appropriating the available capacity. This phasing has to be flexible enough as to not significantly limit the width of prefiguration. Practices should be required to reduce their visual separation from the public to a reasonable minimum as this enables visual communication that can prompt the general public to reflect on the prefigurative practices which is a fundamental feature of the process of prefiguration.

### Why is satiation a good driver for sustainability transitions and what changes of urban spatial elements are associated to feasibly introducing it in Germany?

Satiation is a good driver for sustainability transitions as it can be a counter model to the implicit insatiability in our current societal mode of operation which leads to indefinite material growth that is irreconcilable with the planetary boundaries. This thesis explores how interlinking notions from the theory on human needs satisfaction with cultural politics can help to build legitimacy which is a precondition for substantive societal transformations such as introducing satiation for sustainability purposes. Achieving this legitimacy makes sustainability transitions feasible. This interlinking can be used to create criteria for practices that are capable of putting this interlinking into action. These criteria are:

- Synergistic satisfying behaviour
- Outside of traditional market logics
- Bottom-up in nature
- Integrative mode of operation
- Networking

These practices have associated spatial typologies that are: The Specific Space, The Niche Platform, The Greenspace, The Civic Platform and The Center. Implementing these can support society to move towards introducing satiation as a core principle. The implementation of the spatial types can happen inside of the existing urban fabric and has the potential to utilize spaces that are under-utilized right now like fallow areas or vacant buildings. Starting off from the existing elements in space, physically and programmatically, greatly increases the feasibility of such approaches.

## Reflection

### 1. How do you see the relation between your graduation project topic, the studio topic, your master's track (Urbanism), and your master's program (MSc Architecture, Urbanism and Building Sciences)?

My thesis investigates the relationship between space and a critical societal question, namely, how to stimulate the broad masses to lead society into sustainable development. This is also an issue that lies at the core of the Planning Complex Cities graduation studio which sees space as an agent in societal processes. My research on spaces that enable bottom-up processes of societal prefiguration fits into the studio perspective that emphasizes shared decision-making, spatial justice and the rethinking of institutions. The combination of theory formation and design that I use to explore strategic degrowth prefiguration reflects the integrative mode of spatial research that the urbanism track and the master track AUBS emphasize – design solutions grounded in sound scientific research.

### 2. How do you see the relation between research and design in your graduation project?

Research and design are strongly intertwined in my project as I explore new fields of (spatial) theory. I started off from a theoretical discourse that provided little ideas on how to spatialize the ideas of satiation and legitimacy. Design was an integral part of testing my theory and yielded new conclusions that I could feed back into my theory again.

### 3. What do you see as the value (and limitations) of your way of working: your approach, your used methods?

In this thesis, I tried to create a theory for a case where no theory exists yet. Insofar, I see great value in my project for advancing the scientific debate. My research process relied heavily on explorative methods which I chose in a way that provided me with different possibilities to reflect and further develop my formed theory – an analysis of best practice examples, a site visit to Dessau, conversations with local actors and research by design. These steps have already helped me greatly to get from two theoretical notions, that in my eyes should be combined, to a new approach for bringing the abstract theory of degrowth into

space in a more strategic way as well as providing an answer on how planning can aid in the societal process of legitimacy building. Logically, there is still great potential to further refine, test and establish the notions I conclude this thesis on. I have mentioned some theoretical concepts in the discussion that are worth incorporating but which are not properly integrated into the theory yet. It is also worth considering if a wider array of best practice examples that are distributed more across the country could yield more refined criteria for fit practices.

### 4. What are the academic and societal value, scope and implications of your graduation project, including ethical aspects?

The type of practices I propose to support do not only have the capacity to support degrowth, but they present a low barrier entry to participate in society. Furthermore, they start to decouple the prosperity of our society from market dynamics, this is sensible for all the reasons I presented in this thesis but lately it has gained even more meaning: The market dynamics right now have pushed our societies to be globalized which might be nice from an transcultural perspective but leaves us with a lot of dependencies on other countries and the global trade network. In recent years we have seen on the example of the Covid pandemic as well as the Russian war on Ukraine that these dependencies can easily put us in peril and cause many people to suffer negative consequences on their prosperity; decoupling prosperity from market dynamics also means becoming more resilient against geopolitical shifts and global crisis.

I believe that the types of practices envisioned could help unify German society a bit more as they provide opportunity for everybody to participate in society regardless of economic status. The strengthening of civil society is also paramount for the strengthening of democracy. This is the case as in a democracy the civil society is supposed to be the sovereign, if civil society is not strong it opens the door for the interests of particulars to take foot. If such a dynamic continues trust in democracy can be eroded as people might feel that the state is not acting in their interest, further demotivating putting energy into forming an engaged civil society. Currently, we can see this

happening all over Europe with right-wing parties gaining increasing support.

### 5. How do you assess the transferability of your project results?

The core question of how to create legitimacy for the sustainability transition is one that extends into the world. The approach in this thesis strongly focuses on the German context as I draw on the German concept of Soziokultur, as I used best practice examples from Germany to further develop the theory and as I also used a German city for design testing. I conclude that there is great value in Soziokultur as a lens for more legitimacy for sustainability transitions. However, the project results cannot directly be transferred to other cultural contexts but can be adapted to that specific context through a review of the local cultural practices. Taking the criteria for fit practices as a starting point, they can be refined into types for degrowth prefiguration that suit the specific cultural context.

### 6. How has this project influenced your perspective on sustainability transitions and legitimacy?

Writing this thesis was an unprecedentedly long endeavor for me as working on something for a full academic year did not happen up to this point. I gained some insights that relate parts of my worldview that were previously unrelated. Ever since I first volunteered in a center for Soziokultur, I have had trouble understanding the societal obsession with productivity as I experienced the joy that grassroots culture can bring to people with little input. I often wondered why it is that society has such a hard time accepting the sustainability transition. In my second year of studies, I got introduced to degrowth thought and since then I could not help but notice the inconsistencies between the pursuit of growth and the somewhat failing pursuit of happiness for many people in the system as well as the inconsistency that basically everybody can see how we are 'crashing this earth' and that we somehow still cannot manage to effectively change course. The insight that having helpful solutions and approaches is worth nothing if we do not stand behind these as society as a whole and the insights into what is necessary to find common ground again on these issues

has shifted my perspective substantially. It has pushed me to become ironically more moderate as I can now see more clearly the importance of arriving at conclusions together. Even as Germany has moved into a direction arguably away from substantial systemic progress towards sustainability compared to around 2018/2019 at the height of popularity of Fridays for Future, when the green party briefly overtook the conservatives in the national polls, I can now see a pathway which might lead to a more constructive mode of operation of society that I can follow in my career as an urbanist as well.

### 7. What would you want to have explored further?

There are some things I wanted to get a deeper insight into that did not fit the timeframe of this thesis: I would have liked to go more into depth of the meaning of sustainability as well as into the research on justice. The sustainability part would not necessarily have added much to this work as the case for degrowth has been made a lot of times in comprehensive form already. Going more into depth on justice could have helped with tying this work in with larger societal discussions more. Furthermore, it would be very interesting to examine how a society can effectively integrate market logics and provide spaces outside of market logics. This would probably mean retooling a lot of the instrumentation municipalities use right now for planning.

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Fig. 51:  
Stadt Dessau-Roßlau. (2020, May). Integriertes Konzept Quartier Am Leipziger Tor.

Fig. 52:  
Landesamt für Vermessung und Geoinformation Sachsen-Anhalt. (2024). Amtliche Hausumringe [Dataset].  
Landesamt für Vermessung und Geoinformation Sachsen-Anhalt. (n.d.b). Kostenfreies bildbasiertes Digitales Oberflächenmodell mit einer Rasterweite von 20 cm (bDOM20) [Dataset].  
Landesamt für Vermessung und Geoinformation Sachsen-Anhalt. (n.d.c). Kostenfreies Digitales Geländemodell mit einer Rasterweite von 1 m (DGM1) [Dataset].  
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Fig. 58:  
Stadt Dessau-Roßlau. (2020, May). Integriertes Konzept Quartier Am Leipziger Tor.

Fig. 65-67:  
LPR Landschaftsplanung Dr. Reichhoff GmbH Dessau. (2020a, October). Karte Bioklimatische Bewertung | Anlage 4e der BV/190/2021/III-61. [https://sessionnet.dessau.de/bi/vo0050.asp?\\_\\_kvonr=16503](https://sessionnet.dessau.de/bi/vo0050.asp?__kvonr=16503)  
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Fig. 87, 98:  
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## **Appendices**

Definition and aim of „Soziokultur“

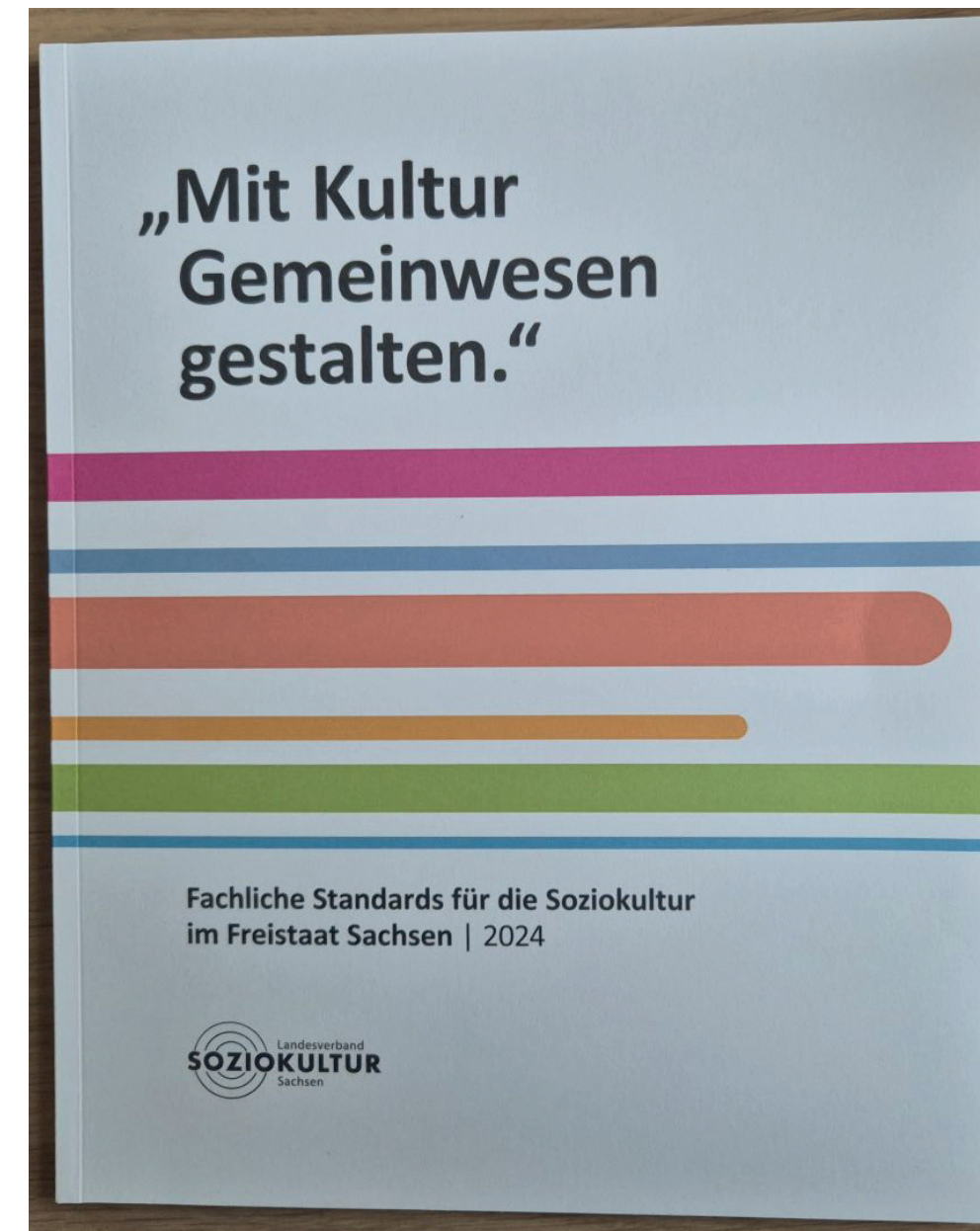
„Socioculture is community-orientated cultural work aimed at broad social activation and artistic participation of the population. The participatory approach emphasises the aspiration to shape society. With a diversity-oriented and democratic basic understanding of society, socioculture enables dialogue, acceptance and solidarity between people of different generations, origins and world views. Sociocultural work strengthens social cohesion.“

„The aim of socio-cultural work is to enable self-determined design and development processes for individuals, groups and society through cultural education and participation. Using the means of art and culture, it offers creative scope for dealing with current social issues and values. Socio-cultural work promotes transformation skills and strengthens the addressees in dealing with personal and social challenges.“

(„Mit Kultur Gemeinwesen gestalten. - Fachliche Standards für die Soziokultur im Freistaat Sachsen | 2024“ - Landesverband Soziokultur Sachsen 11/2024)

Soziokultur is an umbrella term describing an approach towards society and culture including understandings of each, deduced aspirations, practices, organizations, structures, concepts etc. Shared characteristics of things falling under the umbrella are:

- Orientation on shared interests not particular ones [Gemeinweseensorientierung]
- Interrelating society and cultural expression
- Being flexible in the understanding of what cultural expression is
- Wanting the opportunity for everybody to partake in creating as well as for everybody to partake in consuming cultural expression
- Encourages societal participation of everyone by means of providing opportunities as well as building skills with people to participate
- Being diversity-oriented: aims to bring together people “as different as possible”
- Providing an open stage but also filling it to a degree
- Opening spaces of discourse
- Putting forward an intention to partake in designing society as a whole, not only the cultural expression aspect of it, wanting to find answer on the question “how do we want to live?”
- Building networks



Cover of the publication „Mit Kultur Gemeinwesen gestalten“ (<https://soziokultur-sachsen.de/standards>)

Health kiosks Seltenrain

- intermunicipal network (4 villages) for ensuring minimum standards of quality of life

- community effort pioneering alternative structures for amenities

- by citizens for citizens

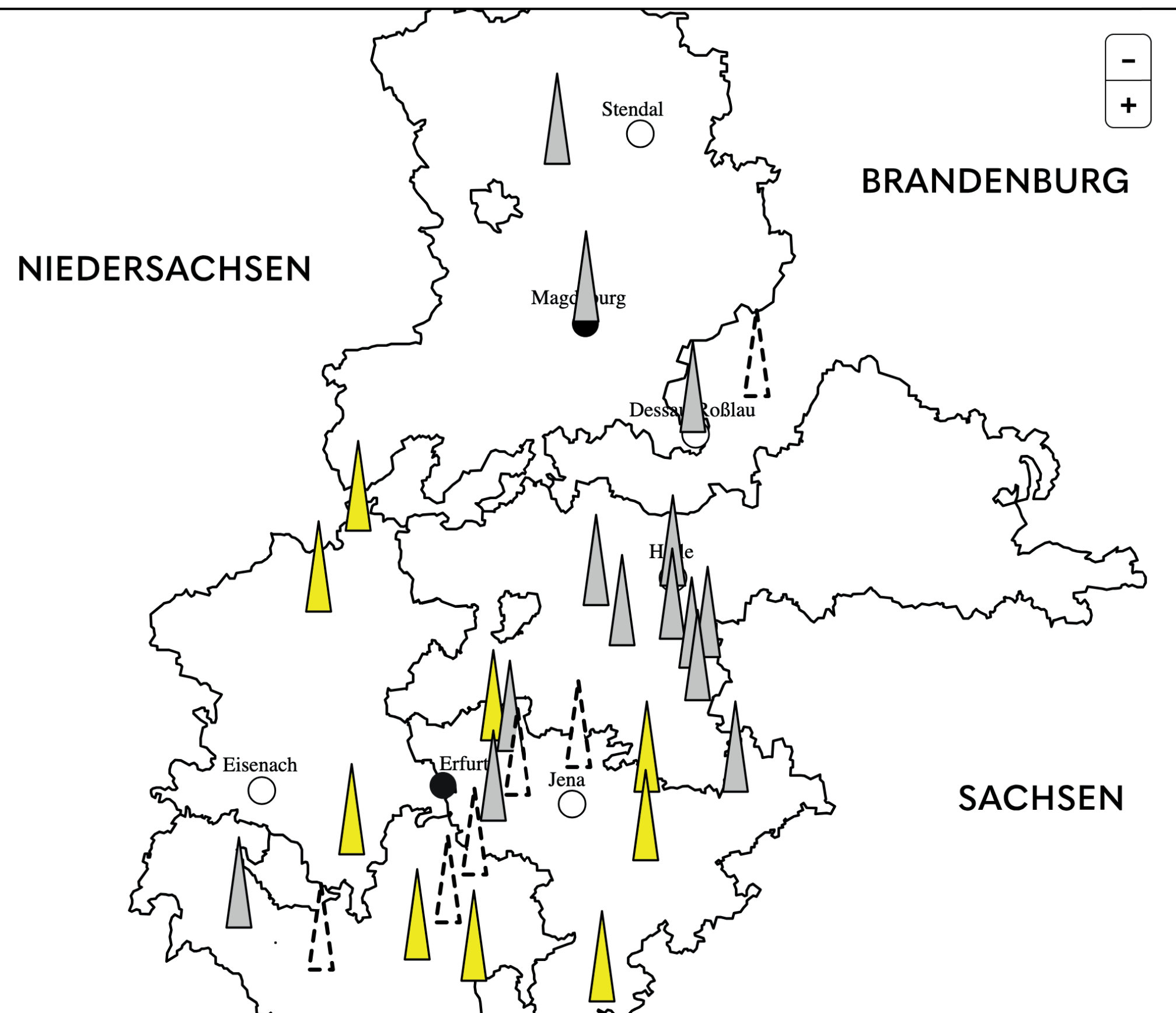
[IBA Thuringia]



Health kiosk Seltenrain (<https://iba-thueringen.de/projekte/region-seltenrain-gesundheitskioske>)

# AUFGESCHLOSSEN

EIN NEUER TYPUS KIRCHE



Map of the „Aufgeschlossen“ project (<https://www.kirchen-aufgeschlossen.de/projekte>)

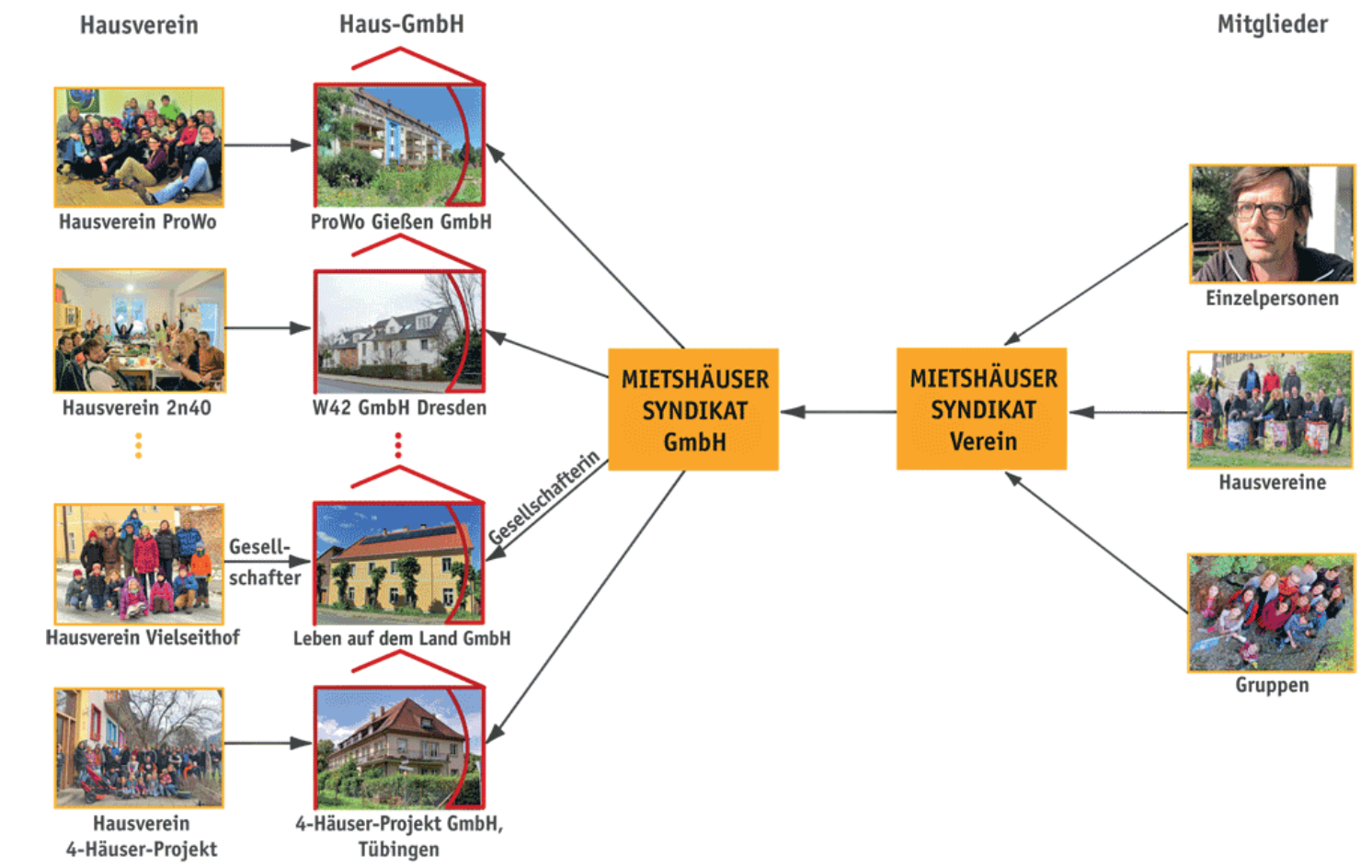
## Church reuse

- initiated by the protestant church of east germany as many of their churches are unused
- locals finding new uses and sharing their experiences in a network
- pioneering new understanding of what a church is and can be, breaking old reservations

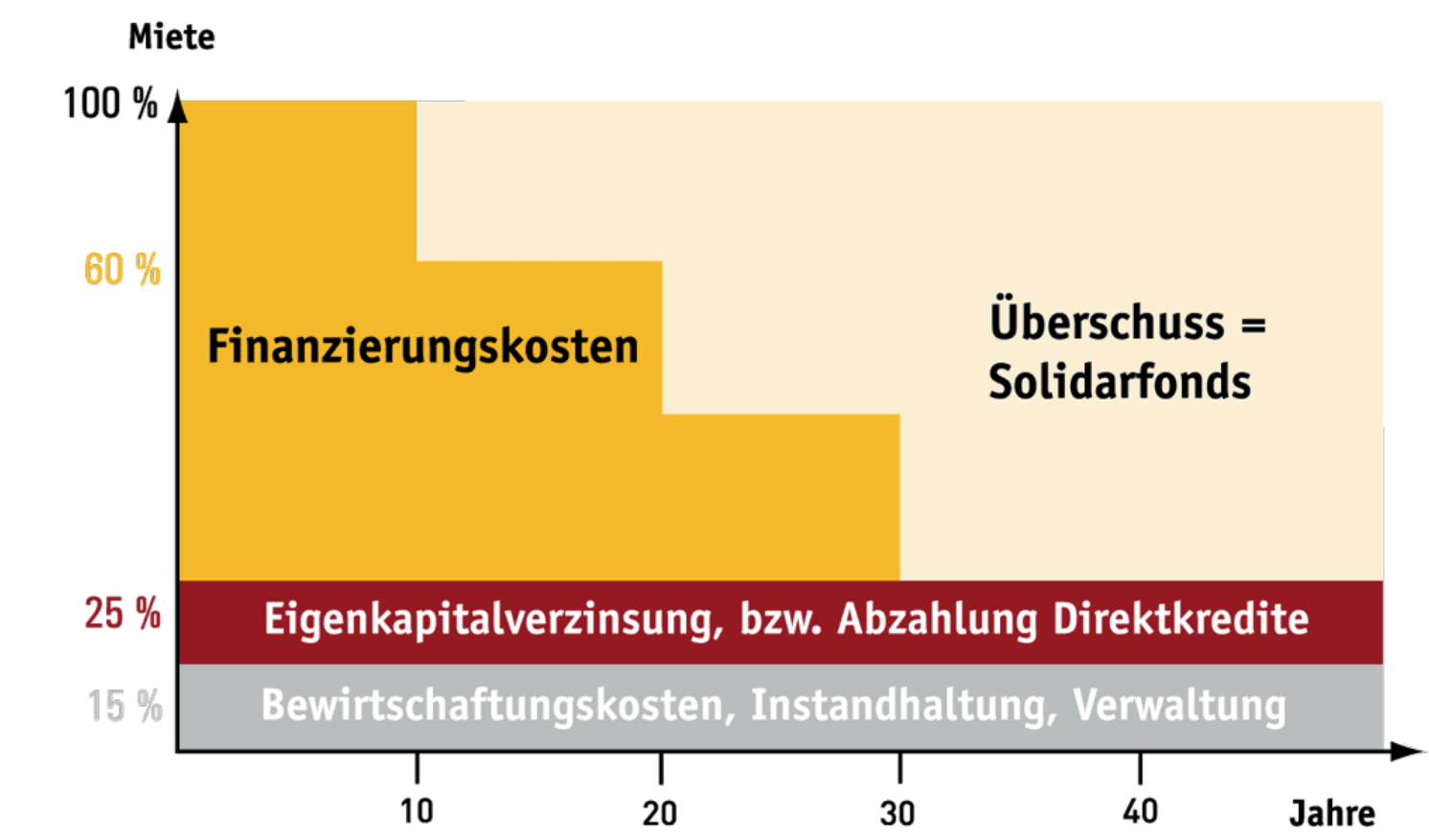
[IBA Thuringia]

## Rental Dwelling Syndicate

- crowdfunding approach for ensuring housing as a efficiently (-> not for profit) managed basic need
- institutionalization of non-profit (and thus to a degree postgrowth) economic activity
- pioneering collectivism



Structure Mietshäusersyndikat (<https://www.syndikat.org/syndikat/>)



Finance scheme Mietshäusersyndikat (<https://www.syndikat.org/solidartransfer/>)

## Appendix B - Initial best practice research

### Fablab (e.G. Fablab-Nürnberg e.V.)

- grasroot communities centered around learning and experimentation as well as fabrication in general

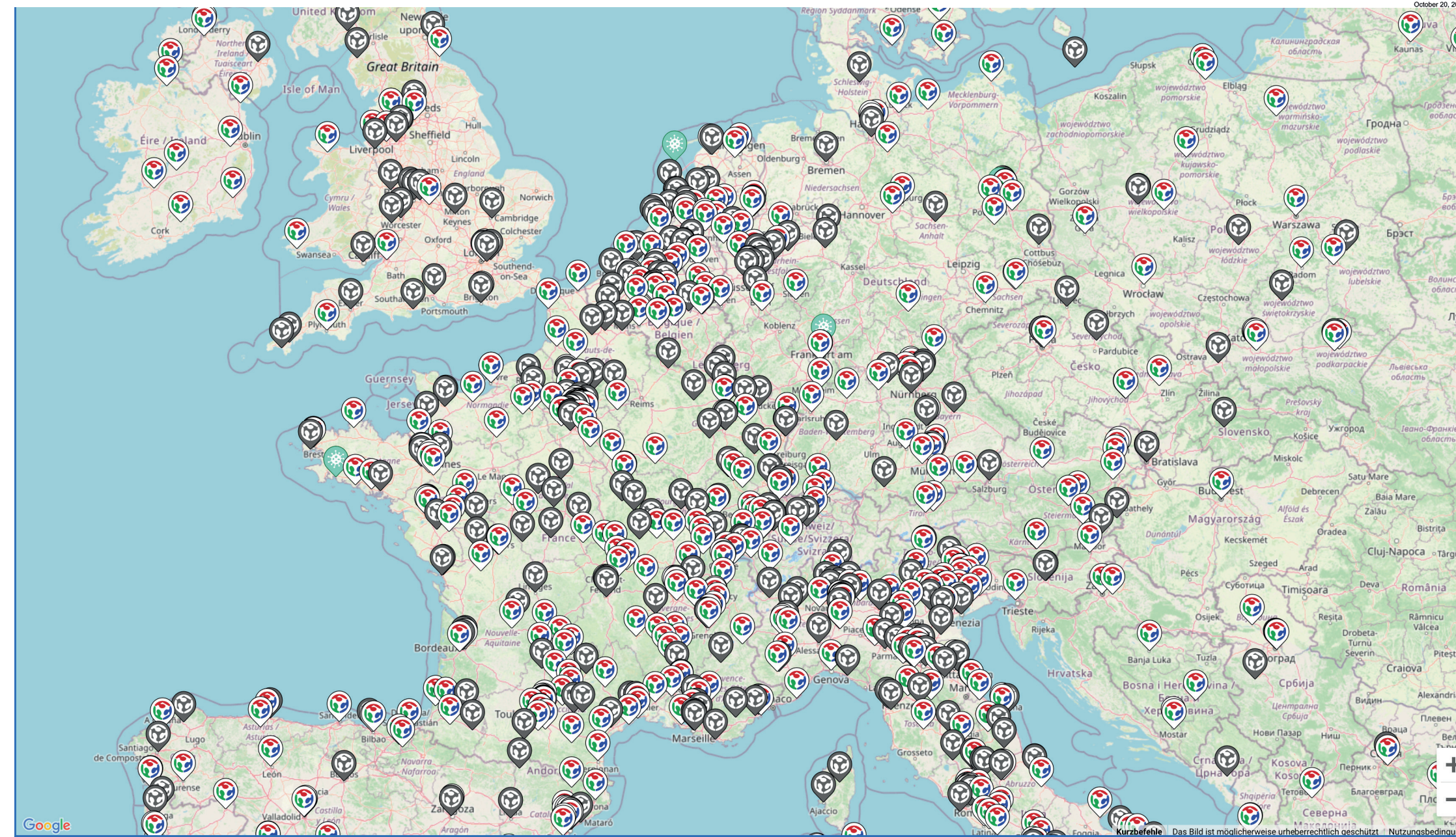
- democratic structure

- enabling access to top tech as well as top knowledge through sharing niche expertise

- enabling crosspollination

-substrate for innovation

-pioneering innovation (social, technological, structurally) as well as sharing-models



Fablabs across europe (<https://fablabs.io/labs/map>) & Fab Charter (<http://fab.cba.mit.edu/about/charter/>)



### The Fab Charter

- What is a fab lab?**  
Fab labs are a global network of local labs, enabling invention by providing access to tools for digital fabrication
- What's in a fab lab?**  
Fab labs share an evolving inventory of core capabilities to make (almost) anything, allowing people and projects to be shared
- What does the fab lab network provide?**  
Operational, educational, technical, financial, and logistical assistance beyond what's available within one lab
- Who can use a fab lab?**  
Fab labs are available as a community resource, offering open access for individuals as well as scheduled access for programs
- What are your responsibilities?**  
safety: not hurting people or machines  
operations: assisting with cleaning, maintaining, and improving the lab  
knowledge: contributing to documentation and instruction
- Who owns fab lab inventions?**  
Designs and processes developed in fab labs can be protected and sold however an inventor chooses, but should remain available for individuals to use and learn from
- How can businesses use a fab lab?**  
Commercial activities can be prototyped and incubated in a fab lab, but they must not conflict with other uses, they should grow beyond rather than within the lab, and they are expected to benefit the inventors, labs, and networks that contribute to their success

## Appendix B - Initial best practice research

### Library of things (Allerleih Kassel e.V.)

-library run by volunteers

-grassroots project

-Sharing things one does not need on a daily for a small contribution to the operating costs

-pioneering sharing economy



Locker full of shared things (Huck, W. (2020). Allerleih-Team. [https://www.dein-allerleih.de/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Allerleih\\_Team\\_%C2%A9WiebkeHuck-2048x1365.jpg](https://www.dein-allerleih.de/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Allerleih_Team_%C2%A9WiebkeHuck-2048x1365.jpg))

## Appendix C - Prefiguration in Dessau: the example of the Vor Ort-Haus

Interview VorOrt e.V.  
I conducted an interview with members of the board of VorOrt e.V. in order to gain insights on a well established and successful practice in Dessau. The interview may provide an insight into the context.  
- Brigitte Hartwig = Chairwoman of VorOrt e.V., Dean of the Anhalt University of Applied Sciences, Department of Design in Dessau  
- Ulrike = Deputy Chairwoman of VorOrt e.V., works in the 'Office for Urban Renewal' (Büro für Stadterneuerung), headed by Prof. Dr.-Ing. Holger Schmidt  
- Stefan Petry = Treasurer of VorOrt e.V., works as a social worker for the city administration

The history of the house is rather long. It was built in 1870 as a hospital for nearby military barracks. After it wasn't used as a hospital anymore different uses followed, e.g. as a school. The building was vacant from 2000 until students used it 12 years later in the context of a project. The building was structurally unsound which is why a first 14-day pilot if the design student could only utilize the garden. Through the project a lot interest was stoked in the citizens of Dessau which made using it for the rest of the semester possible. For this the municipality even handed over the keys for them to be able to store things in the house. The municipal utility company enabled access to electricity and water free of charge. The students could use the space to initiate uses which they missed in Dessau, e.g. a communal garden, a library or a design office. The association 'friends of the university' applied for federal urban design funds in order to fund securing the structure. The right to use the building was only given by the municipality for limited terms and periodically renewed. In order to be able to conduct renovations themselves and to not be dependent on the municipal administration anymore a proper association had to be founded which also was capable of taking on the building as property as this is a requirement to be eligible for much needed subsidies. This step was taken in 2014 in parallel to talks with the city to transfer the building to the association in the form of a leasehold, a model which was introduced by Ulrike as she knew it from a different project. The talks with the municipality took one year and a

lot of convincing but were ultimately successful. The details of this leasehold arrangement will be described later.  
Whoever wants to use the house has to be a member of the association, the users are supposed to be able to identify themselves with the building as well as the association values. The upper levels of the building are still officially a building site and the members of the association are building assistants and are thus allowed to be there. Members who want to use a room in the building sign a contract, they pay a their part of the running cost calculated according to the fraction of the entire area which their room presents, have to renovate their room and are in exchange allowed to use it for creative purposes. Initially there was a specific amount of work-hours for users but this was unpracticable which is why the previously described arrangement came to be, nowadays everything is based on volunteering. The volunteering is organized as a 'Subbotnik', which is voluntary collective work on Saturdays followed by a collective meal. Once per month the board meets, they would like the users to organize regular meetings as well but so far the user meetings only work if there are pressing issues.  
The funding for the renovation is from federal urban design subsidies ('Städtebauförderung'). In a first wave of securing the structure, the roof, facade, windows and fundamental structure were renovated between 2016 and 2018. A second wave of upgrades started in 2024 and concerns the interior, heating, electric installation and fire safety systems. This second wave could not be completed due to price hikes, a large online fraud as well as additional measures, the necessity of which only became apparent during the works. This led to the approved subsidies not sufficing and results in an application for further subsidies. The architect (Jens Fischer) associated likes supporting such projects, helps with small things voluntarily and gives tours but fundamentally has to be paid for the big work. The target condition for these renovations is not and has never been a clean, '100%' renovation, which according to the interview also fits in with the character of the practice. So far not all rooms are usable but all available ones are in use and there is a waiting-list for free capacity.  
The leasehold agreement with the city has a

runtime of 50 years with the first ten years of use not counting towards it due to the renovations. As the ten years have not been sufficient to finish the renovation, the association will apply with the city for an extension of this period. Residential uses are forbidden and any uses have to comply with the aims of the association as written in their constitution. The city sold the building to the association for a symbolic value of 1€ and gave the plot on said leasehold for 50 years after which a renewal is possible. If the association disbands, the building will fall back to the city free of charge. If the city does not want to renew the leasehold they will have to buy back the building for a fair price.

On the effects of the association in Dessau, the association was described to be like an UFO. Many Dessau citizens are a bit cautious and skeptical at first and are more likely join for established events like the 'day of the open atelier' or the 'advent market'. This may be due to language barriers as there are a lot of international students engaged as well as the character of the student event which are more geared towards participation and less towards consumption. Offers that do work well are the garden, as it provides the possibility to participate in gardening without becoming member in an allotment garden association (Note: which comes with a lot of strict responsibilities), or the community kitchen, as it provides a low barrier offer to get to know people in Dessau. There are many artists from Dessau but they are to 'colorful' for many Dessau citizens. There is a continuing stream of publicity that the project gets from the local newspaper. In July the association organizes the 'klink' festival which has become a constant in Dessau cultural life. It is a three-day-festival with workshops on the afternoons and live music (and party) in the evenings. Neighbors get free entry as a sort of compensation for the noise. The student are a great help for publicity. The general dynamic of Dessau citizens around new events has been described like this: At first actually nobody will show up, regardless how much publicity one produces, if it happens somewhat regularly, word will get around and people will come. The community around VorOrt has motivated some people to stay in Dessau. There have also been already two examples of people successfully starting a business in the house (and then leaving

the house when successful).  
On the question of transferability of the VorOrt-concept it is stated that leasehold agreements could definitely be a door-opener for other projects. Nonetheless it the number of people to successfully conduct such a project with its own building should not be underestimated. There should always be people with experience in the building sector. The municipality owns many vacant properties which they should make available. The municipality should furthermore be more responsible to provide non-commercial third places.  
The association structure is essential for the success of the VorOrt-house. The board is rather big with many age groups and backgrounds present. It is reelected every two years with some board members being regularly reelected which is useful as it makes continuity easier. The users of the room should maybe take on more responsibilities. The association members feel little responsibility, support more financially and sometimes join for renovation activities. Students which only join for one to two semesters do not feel responsible and oftentimes also don't understand the German association system. The association structure is very essential for the interactions with the municipality as there are many legal implications with such a project that are better to deal with through an association (leasehold, subsidies etc.). An association is suitable as it is the easiest way of founding a legal community entity.  
On the issue of right wing tendencies, the main fear is that, if the AFD will gain a significant amount of support in 2026, it might be able to cut cultural funding for 'colorful' projects like VorOrt. Whilst this is the main fear, there have already been instances of acts of hatred against foreigners: e.g. an attempted break-in and verbal abuse. The police does not act despite reports being regularly filed to them even if there is evidence. These types of aggression would probably increase if the association would be perceived more left. Right now it is perceived as a colorful bunch and if the members practice activism they do it privately. The association does host some queer and anti-rightwing program in the house though. Difficulties for the association stem from the dependence on the municipal politics and administration. At the time of founding the circumstances were suitable as the municipality

saw an opportunity to pull more of the students into the inner city and as Ulrike knew some people in the municipal parliament due to private civil engagement. Nowadays a BUGA will happen in 2035 which is where the municipality wants to put all its money leaving very little funds for Soziokultur. Probably Dessau is not big enough right now / does not have enough engagement for a second place of a similar size. This is also due to a suboptimal urban structure with many satellite suburb where most people with either the temporal or monetary means to support such projects live.

