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Opportunities for social work arising from the appropriation of hybrid spaces by children under 14, with focus on the garden of the UAS St. Pölten

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## Bachelor thesis

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# Abstract

## English

Hybrid spaces, emerging from urban and spatial planning, and functional considerations such as the public use of private areas, are present in various urban areas, including gentrified districts. One such example is the garden of the UAS St. Pölten, which serves a diverse range of users and demographic groups. This bachelor thesis focuses on neighboring children under the age of 14. The research combines a desktop research -focusing on space appropriation, place attachment, and gentrification- and an empirical research and highlights the target group's active engagement in the garden, their perception of the area as an open, welcoming, and shared space, and their need for a community-oriented design, autonomy and self-determination, and positive social and interpersonal interactions. The presentation of the results aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of this intricate scenario.

## Deutsch

Hybride Räume, die aus städtebaulichen, raumplanerischen und funktionalen Erwägungen wie der öffentlichen Nutzung privater Flächen entstanden sind, finden sich auch in gentrifizierten Stadtteilen. Ein Beispiel dafür ist der Garten der Fachhochschule St. Pölten, der von unterschiedlichen NutzerInnen und demografischen Gruppen genutzt wird. Diese Bachelorarbeit konzentriert sich auf die Nachbarschaft von Kindern unter 14 Jahren. Die Untersuchung kombiniert eine Literaturrecherche – mit Fokus auf Rauman eignung, Ortsbindung und Gentrifizierung – mit einer empirischen Untersuchung und beleuchtet das aktive Engagement der Zielgruppe im Garten, ihre Wahrnehmung des Areals als offener, einladender und gemeinsam genutzter Raum sowie ihr Bedürfnis nach einer gemeinschaftsorientierten Gestaltung, Autonomie und Selbstbestimmung und positiven sozialen Interaktionen. Die Präsentation der Ergebnisse zielt darauf ab, ein umfassendes Verständnis für dieses komplexe Szenario zu schaffen.

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# 1 Introduction

*“Tous les destins sociaux, positifs ou négatifs, consécration ou stigmat, sont également fatals -je veux dire mortels- parce qu'ils enferment ceux qu'ils distinguent dans les limites qui leur sont assignées et qu'ils leur font reconnaître.”*

“All social destinies, positive or negative, consecration or stigma, are equally fatal -I want to say deadly- because they confine those whom they distinguish within fixed limits and make them recognize those limits.”

*“Les Rites comme Actes d’Institution”* - Bourdieu (1982, p. 61)

The bachelor project Bib Space, conducted at the UAS St. Pölten on the fifth semester of our bachelor studies as a preparation for the individual bachelor theses targeted the library of the university and its integration on the local social fabric, its uses, users, and possibilities. It resulted in a group research focused on three main areas -space, users, and administration- and highlighted several aspects, issues, and points of interest regarding users, types of use, stakeholders, management or network, amongst others. My research addressed the space.

Throughout history, social spaces have been and are defined from a broad range of perspectives. Some point to their functionality, some to the interpersonal relationships that happen in them, others refer to the type of use that people make of them. But what most have in common is the fact that they have been contextually conceived and defined and, therefore, also subjected to the very definition of space in each one of those contexts. One example of this are hybrid spaces.

The academic research and definition of Hybrid spaces dates back to the 1990’s. It referred to the intersection of digital and analog / physical spaces and environments (cf. Hybrid Space Lab, n.d.). The concept of space as heterogeneously defined started then being exported to other disciplines and it didn’t take long until social sciences started looking into it. This resulted in researches and academic publications tackling a variety of topics and points of interest; one of them: hybrid spaces as privately owned spaces of public use and their social dimensions, effects and significance (Leclercq & Pojani, 2020; Lee, 2022; Nissen, 2008; Varghese, 2019).

The public use of privately owned spaces presents some particularities, opportunities, and challenges for everyone involved (users, administrators, owners) that often add up to the dynamics and phenomena already existing in other types of social spaces (e.g. colonization, appropriation, gentrification, etc.) resulting in complex synergies.

This bachelor Thesis intends to take a first approach on understanding how the forementioned topics work and relate with a focus on the outer areas of the UAS St. Pölten, more concretely on its garden area; the characteristics, views and needs of children using it; and the opportunities for intervention / action that arise from them, both for social work and for the UAS St. Pölten.

## 2 Problem outline

When it comes to programs offer for children in St. Pölten, those under 14 tend to end up stranded. Most of the projects and initiatives are intended for children over 12 / 13 years old (Youth Center Steppenwolf, Streetwork St. Pölten, youth counseling, open house at JLW – *Jugend und Lebenswelt*, ...). Although there are some occasional activities and events for children organized by the city, there´s a general lack of long-term projects for the target group. Additionally, the fact that children under 12 years old can legally stay outside without supervision until 21:00 and those under 14 until 23:00 (Bundeskanzleramt Österreich, 2019; Jugendportal.at, n.d.; Österreichische Verwaltung, 2023), increases the chances of the target group to occupy and use the open spaces they have available. This results, amongst others, in space appropriation.

In the case of the UAS St. Pölten, the outer areas of the UAS St. Pölten, due to their open and comfortable architecture, present themselves as optimal and inviting, attracting different demographic groups, and thus opening to different uses. With focus on the target group, this refers mainly to the garden area, that neighboring children use as a meeting point and playground. This presents a variety of points of interest and research possibilities: use, needs, dynamics, and interactions, etc.

The garden area of the University shares its space with a small area belonging to the municipality of St. Pölten. The division is almost inexistent and not easy to perceive visually. This area had a playground regularly visited and used by that neighboring children and families. Last summer (2023), the playground was taken down by the city council. There are plans to build a new one, but there has not been much communication about when, how, etc., which has left the children and their families without an important meeting point and leisure area, which has increased the use of the garden of the UAS as a leisure are and playground.

## 3 Relevance for social work

The relevance of the aspects presented to this point lays on their social dimension and significance, and on the approaches, phenomena, and consequences they link to, i.e. empowerment, exclusion, postcolonial perspectives, democratization, gentrification, etc. These are terms at the core of social work. Addressing them by tackling the forementioned aspects does not only bring the opportunity to have and support an impact on the life of the persons involved, but also to reflect on and reevaluate our professional practice, its adequacy / contemporality or consider new or alternative approaches to deal with new / evolving situations and issues. Additionally, it can have potential benefits for both the UAS St. Pölten and the social work profession, by presenting alternative approaches and opportunities for action / intervention and by offering relevant up-to-date data and actualized perspectives in

relation to work with groups, community work, social space-oriented social work, empowerment, participation, or democratization, amongst others.

## 4 State of research

Hybrid spaces appear to be a topic with limited research. Nevertheless, since the 2000's there has been an increase in studies and publications related to it. They tend to tackle topics related to the public / private character of public spaces , their relation to Urban transformation (Nissen, 2008) and / or organization or their effects on individuals and groups of population (Varghese, 2019). However, there is not much literature in relation to the social aspects of hybrid spaces beyond those specific aspects. Likewise, there is a scarce availability of information and research regarding hybrid spaces in relation to some specific demographic groups, as well as a lack of information linking them, exploring their synergies, or offering a more comprehensive perspective about their social dimension and significance for children under 14. Consequently, the present bachelor thesis aims to tackle space appropriation (Carr, 1995; Rioux et al., 2017), place attachment and place identity (Rioux et al., 2017; Varghese, 2019), Temporary Autonomous Zones (Beautiful Trouble, n.d.), or gentrification (Kent-Stoll, 2020; Quastel, 2012), amongst others.

Due to this complexity, and to establish a theoretical framework and deepen in the variety of aspects related to the research topic, desktop research has been conducted (see section 7.1, "Results of the Desktop Research – Theoretical Background").

## 5 Research questions

Based on the process conducted to this point and after narrowing down the research focus and target group, this bachelor thesis' research questions are as follows.

### 5.1 Main research question

- With a focus on the appropriation of hybrid spaces, what's the perspective and needs of children under the age of 14 regarding the use of the garden area at the UAS St. Pölten and what opportunities for action arise from it for social work?

### 5.2 Secondary questions

To address the various specific aspects of the main research question, it has been divided into four secondary questions.

- How do children under 14 use the garden area?
- Regarding this area's use, which are the views and needs of the focus group?
- Which conflicts / frictions present hybrid spaces (Focus FH)?
- Which potentials / opportunities for social work intervention arise from the appropriation of the outdoor area (garden)?

## 6 Methodology

This chapter summarizes the method, research design, analysis and evaluation method and additional aspects of the conducted research.

### 6.1 Method

The research conducted was qualitative and based on desktop research as well as empirical research - field observations and a FGD (Focus Group Discussion). As mentioned before, the aim was to get an overview of the dynamics and interactions in the outer areas, as hybrid spaces, of the UAS St. Pölten, the characteristics and needs of their users, and to consider the opportunities for intervention / action that arise from these.



## 6.2 Research design

The research was conducted in two main blocks:

- Desktop research

Theoretical background and improvement of the understanding of the researched topic. This block tackled the different aspects referred at the point “State of researched”. In this stage natural data from other researches, specialized literature, official publications and reports, newspaper articles, blogs, etc. was reviewed.

- Empirical research

### **Non-Participant field observations**

Observational data about focus areas, types of use and users was collected through non-participant field observations.

### **FGD**

This data collection stage intended to gather qualitative data in the form of first-hand information from the personas (personal experiences, their needs, views, opinions, etc.). In this regard, the characteristics of the target group (children under 14) determined and guided the process. Therefore, the data was collected through a FGD with a Sample Group (SG) composed by 7 children aged 5 to 12. An accompanying questions guideline was used for this<sup>1</sup>. At the end of the FGD, a concluding graphic summary in the form of a poster was drawn by the children.

The data was then transcribed and analyzed (see “Analysis / evaluation method”). The results of this part of the research are available in chapters 7.3 (“Results of the empirical research”) and 8 (“Conclusions”).

## 6.3 Analysis / evaluation method

The characteristics of the present research include observations and interviews / FGD with users in real situations. This means, the bibliographic aspect and the consideration of the persons in their concrete situation is highly relevant. Likewise, a method that helps construct an explanation about the processes inherent to the research topic(s) is also indicated in the present research.

Taking this into consideration, the analysis has been carried out by applying Grounded Theory (open coding, axial coding, and selective coding) according to Przyborski and Wohlrab (2014)

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<sup>1</sup> See „FGD questions guideline“ in the Attachments section.

and Strauss and Corbin (2010) in order to follow the path transcription → development of concepts → grouping concepts into categories → establishing core categories → formation of a theory.

## 6.4 Additional considerations

### 6.4.1 Personal data and data protection

- "Declaration of consent for the use of personal data" forms, provided by the St. Pölten UAS, were filled out and uploaded in digitalized form as a PDF to the e-Campus from the UAS St. Pölten ("*Lehre Allgemein > Info zum Studium > Abschnitt 3 > Upload Einverständniserklärung*").

### 6.4.2 FGD, interviews and transcription

- The FGD and interviews were captured (audio or audio + video) and transcribed and the graphic material produced by the sample group has been digitalized and can be found as a reference in the chapter 7.3 ("Results of the empirical research").
- In compliance with Article 4(5) of the Austrian General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), the personal data of the participants will be pseudonymized with identifiers (C1, C2, etc.) (Jusline, 2024). The corresponding identification will be secured and stored by the observer or interviewer.
- The time stamps at the transcription correspond to the recorded video / audio recordings, not the actual time of the FGD / interview. A few seconds difference / discrepancy is to be expected.
- All time stamps are displayed in mm:ss (minutes and seconds).

## 7 Results

This chapter compiles the results from the two research blocks: desktop research and empirical research (non-participant field observations and Focus Group Discussion) as well as a contextualization of the UAS St. Pölten based on the collected material.

### 7.1 Results of the desktop research - Theoretical Background

This block focuses on addressing relevant aspects and characteristics of social spaces, their evolution, or their usage, as well as the dynamics, synergies, practices, or phenomena they involve or result in. The results here presented have been delimited to the dimension and

points of interest of this bachelor thesis. Special attention is directed to types of (social) space and their attachment and appropriation processes.

### 7.1.1 Social space

This section covers various aspects of social spaces, including their definition, different types, and forms of engagement within them.

#### 7.1.1.1 General definition of social space

The Digital Dictionary of the German Language<sup>2</sup> defines space as “the required, free, available place for the reception or accommodation of something or someone” and as a “not accurately delimited geographical area, region” (cf. DWDS – Digitales Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache, 2024). Although this definition tilts toward dimensional considerations (urban planning, geography, etc.), it also points to aspects like the accommodation of persons or the imprecise delimitation of the place.

Social space as a concept adds a social dimension to the definition. Prof. Dr. Frank Eckardt, professor of social-scientific urban research at the Weimar Bauhaus University, stresses this dimension by focusing on the interpersonal dynamics rather than the functional aspects of social space: “For us, social spaces are places where people live together in one way or another. Social spaces are therefore not functionally definable spaces.” (Prof. Dr. Eckardt, 2024)

As seen, social spaces are contextually defined. Oxford University Press (cf. 2024) defines them as produced by societies according to the spatial practices that exist within. The produced space is a set of relations between objects within the space (Carter, 2004, as cited in Oxford University Press, 2024). Social space provides an environmental framework for the behavior of the group; it’s flexible / networked (Peck and Tickell, 2002, as cited in Oxford University Press, 2024) and multilayered (Watts and Bohle, 1993, as cited in Oxford University Press, 2024).

Social space is thus defined by dimensional, interpersonal (dynamics), usage and contextual considerations. It evolves with societies and history. In this sense, current societal contexts, socio-political frames, space distribution or urban organization result in the emergence of new definitions and types of (social) spaces.

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<sup>2</sup> Some terms have been researched in German in order to respect the polynomial culture-language-reality -as also addressed by Sitti Rabiah (Rabiah, 2018).

### 7.1.1.2 Private, public, communal and hybrid spaces

Traditionally, space ownership has defined and classified the different spaces that people engage on, i.e. private or public space, but it's important to underline their social dimension. They are, indeed, social spaces too and the engagement, access, usage, or appropriation, amongst others, that people make of them, can create new space identities. This section addresses different types of space with a focus on their access, dynamics and significance for society and the persons engaging in them.

#### **Private space**

A first approach to the definition of private space concludes that private space is privately owned and maintained (by a person, family or institution) and whose access is allowed by law or custom. (cf. Allies, 2023; Birch, 2010)

For Allies, the subsuming of public space by private sector, i.e. shopping malls, municipality offices amongst others, is not only controversial, but it also appears to endanger the potential and vitality of public life, and threatens the resilience of democracy by placing the control of civil engagement into private hands (cf. Allies, 2023). However, he points at the potential of those publicly used privately owned spaces as "helpful rather than hurtful to the evolution of (...) urban environment" (ebd.).

#### **Public space**

Public space has been defined as "a place accessible to all citizens, for their use and enjoyment" (Jackson, 1974, as cited in Birch, 2010, p. 118). Carr (1995) defines public space as

"[...] the stage upon which the drama of communal life unfolds. The streets, squares, and parks of a city give form to the ebb and flow of human exchange. These dynamic spaces are an essential counterpart to the more settled places and routines of work and home life, providing the channels for movement, the nodes of communication, and the common grounds for play and relaxation. There are pressing needs that public space can help people to satisfy, significant human rights that it can be shaped to define and protect, and special cultural meanings that it can best convey." (Carr, 1995, p. 3).

The authors' approach underlines the interpersonal and social interactions as well as well-being and personal development. It also refers to the potentials of public space to answer to social and individual needs, protect and support Human Rights and transfer culture.

#### **The limits between public and private space**

Birch (2010) and Varghese (2019) consider the demarcation of public and private space as vague. Varghese (ebd.) writes that boundaries between public and private spaces are strong or diffuse, subcategorizing the last based on materialization, vegetation, and topography (cf.

Varghese, 2019, p. 3f). For the author, “these types of boundaries are connected to certain contexts and functions (...) and are having a negotiating function while combining the characteristics of the neighboring private and public spaces.” (Varghese, 2019, p. 4). He adds “It is continuously subjected to changes from the two neighboring spaces as a result of which it is constantly redefined and covers a wide range of contemporary socio-spatial functions.” (Chermayef and Alexander, 1963, as cited in Varghese, 2019, p. 4).

### **Communal space**

Communal space, is defined as space in the common ownership of a group of individuals –or families, or institutions– and which is maintained by them together (cf. Allies, 2023). Some examples of them would be garden areas shared by the residence owners in residential buildings or areas, or social / event rooms shared by a community.

### **Hybrid spaces**

As mentioned, Allies (2023) attributes more advantages than disadvantages to the public use of privately owned spaces and the overlapping area they create. These spaces may allow for restricted or unrestricted access and. To illustrate the last one, the author mentions university campuses, churchyards, train stations or airports as examples of private spaces which allow unrestricted public access. Contrastingly, he points at the same restriction and non-restriction of access as existing in public spaces, such as parks (cf. Allies, 2023).

Hybrid spaces could be understood as a result of the “contemporary socio-spatial functions” that Chermayef and Alexander (as cited in Varghese, 2019) write about; it means, as a result from the negotiation between public and private spaces.

Nissen (2008) also observes changes in the structure of urban space and agrees with Allies’ (2023) forementioned view on public spaces being subsumed by private ones, and states that hybrid spaces develop as a result to those privatization tendencies. For the author, the transformation from public to private spaces happens through a succession of incremental shifts where a rising degree of privatization results on a higher level of constraints, accessibility, and exclusion (see figure 1: Development of hybrid spaces due to privatization tendencies). Nissen states too that city administrations, i.e. local political and administrative representatives, are held accountable by the public and bear a great part of responsibility for the development of hybrid spaces. The reasons for privatization would be a) the reduction of public debt, and b) security (cf. Nissen, 2008, pp. 292–294).

Development of hybrid spaces due to privatisation tendencies			
	<i>Constraints of usability and accessibility</i>	<i>Example</i>	
Rising degree of privatisation ↓	1	Reshaping of public spaces through private management, installation of signs of private character; symbolic exclusion through signs	Pedestrian areas, Business Improvement Districts (BIDs)
	2	Semi-privatisation of public space by transfer of rights of use and of maintenance tasks on private subjects; temporary exclusion through opening hours	Redevelopment of parks and public greens
	3	Construction of private spaces with limited public character; exclusion through signs and security staff	Skyways; plazas at the entrance of highrises
	4	Full privatisation through sale of quasi-public property; exclusion through signs and security staff	Transformation of railway stations into shopping malls
	5	Full privatisation in the course of public property sale; accessibility reduced to consumers, controlled by security staff	Sale of local property with subsequent erection of shopping centers
	6	Full privatisation in the course of public property sale plus political and administrative spin-off from the municipal collective; private access only	Gated communities, whose inhabitants organise prior local tasks and therefore view themselves exempt from tax liability

Figure 1: Development of hybrid spaces due to privatization tendencies (Nissen, 2008)

Varghese appears to make no distinction between social and hybrid spaces. For him they revolve around a joint of personal or private spaces and have a multipurpose function of social significance (cf. Varghese, 2019, p. 2). The author also points at the overlapping between private and public spaces referred to by Allies and states that the resulting hybrid spaces “assume new functions of providing informal everyday experiences and activities” (Varghese, 2019, p. 19) and that they play a meaningful social role and are highly important in the contemporary society (cf. ebd.). Both Varghese and Allies seems to agree about the potentials and positive aspects of hybrid spaces and the instrumental role they play from a societal perspective, while Nissen, with a more critical stand, underlines the restrictive and excluding effects of the increased privatization shift (cf. Allies, 2023; Nissen, 2008; Varghese, 2019).

Summarized, hybrid spaces result from the public use of privately owned spaces as well as from the overlapping of private and public areas and the contemporary socio-spatial distribution and privatization tendencies. The resulting area is highly relevant for the well-being as well as for the socialization and development from individuals and communities. The next sections will focus on types of use, appropriation and attachment processes, and phenomena as well as perspectives derived from the evolution and transformation of public space.

### 7.1.1.3 Engagement in (social) space

How we engage in social space determines the use we make of it. Carr (1995) and Hutomo & Fuad (2020) distinguish between two types of engagement in public spaces:

- **Passive engagement:** An indirect or passive type of encounter with others (observation rather than interaction, “people-watching”) (cf. Carr, 1995, p. 105). The mere use of space without interacting with others (cf. Hutomo & Fuad, 2020, p. 3).

- Active engagement: “A more direct experience with a place and the people within it” (Carr, 1995, p. 118). Where the users don't limit to the use of space, but also interact with other elements or engages in activities (cf. Hutomo & Fuad, 2020, p. ebd.). This definition underlines the social and interpersonal aspects of engagement.

Although some spaces, often on purpose and by design, allow for just one type of engagement, for Carr “responsive spaces” are those designed and managed to answer the needs of their users, whose primary needs tend to be for “comfort, relaxation, active and passive engagement, and discovery.” (Carr, 1995, p. 19). Both Carr and Hutomo & Fuad place well-being as a central aspect in engagement in public space.

Based on the research conducted so far, it can be observed that these types of engagement don't only happen in traditional public spaces, but in any type of space that allows for them, e.g. communal spaces, and hybrid spaces.

### 7.1.2 Space appropriation, place attachment and colonization

Whether we address social space, public or hybrid spaces, passive or active engagement, it is also important to pay attention to the dynamics -interpersonal and with the space- and phenomena related to them -happening there or because of them. The most relevant, with a focus on the current research, are space appropriation, place attachment and colonization.

#### 7.1.2.1 Space appropriation

“Public spaces are formed by at least two different processes. Some have developed naturally - that is, in an ad hoc way without deliberate planning- through appropriation, by repeated use in a particular way, or by the concentration of people because of an attraction. Each of these results in a place that accommodates people for specific purposes and becomes over time, a site that people rely on to meet, relax, protest, or market.” (Carr, 1995, p. 50)

For Carr, a central question is whether people are free to achieve the experiences they wish for in public spaces. He states that “the rights to use public space and have sense of control within it are basic and overarching requirements” (Carr, 1995, p. 137) and adds that these “spatial rights involve freedom of use, most simply, the feeling that it is possible to use the space in a way that draws on its resources and satisfies personal needs.” (ebd.). This personal freedom is, however, limited by the coexistence with others, norms and systems of rules, supervision, or environmental limitations. The social order present in communities inhibit the freedom of particular individuals (cf. ebd.). Carr states that “a good deal of the conflict over what public space should offer (...) revolves around differences in viewpoint between the dominant group and minority users” (Carr, 1995, p. 137).

When discussing freedom of use and control, Carr adopts the five dimensions of spatial rights, which Lynch (1981, as cited in Carr, 1995, p. 137) defines as presence, use and action, appropriation, modification, and disposition. Carr retitles them as access, freedom of action, claim, change, and ownership and disposition. For the author these are essential components

of control over use and provide a scope to observe and analyze the freedom of use of public spaces (cf. ebd.).

The spatial right “Claim” (for Lynch, “appropriation”) is of special relevance in this section and in this research in general. According to Carr, “the claim to a space goes beyond access and freedom of action in starting a proprietary interest over space” (Carr, 1995, p. 158). The author discusses that a certain degree of spatial control is required for people to achieve their goals in public spaces -this would also be applicable to hybrid spaces-, which can eventually result in one group or individual restricting the freedom of others (cf. ebd.). For Carr, addressing “claim” involves the concepts of privacy and territoriality. Nevertheless, he states that they are not “basic human needs or instincts”, nor goals (cf. Carr, 1995, p. 158f), but mechanisms to increase the range of options and maximize the freedom of choice (cf. Carr, 1995, p. 158; Proshansky et al., 1970, as cited in Carr, 1995, p. 159). As for the reasons why individuals may wish to appropriate a space, Carr points at the achievement of four different states of privacy according to Westin (1967, as cited in Carr, 1995, p. 159): Solitude, intimacy, anonymity and reserve and gives special relevance to anonymity and intimacy as privacy states for freedom from interaction and close observation -control-, and close interpersonal communication with a group or person respectively (ebd.). The author also states that the appropriation of space -normally conducted by individuals or rather small groups- does not claim more than a small piece of space and hence does not generally represent a threat to the freedom of others to use the space (cf. Carr, 1995, p. 164).

Rioux, Scrima and Werner (2017) state that appropriation, as a psychological process, is “a mechanism by which space is transformed into place”:

“Appropriation is a complex concept that has been used to explain the processes by which people claim ownership of, actively use, and ultimately create meaning in and become attached to the physical environment. Appropriation is explicitly proposed to be one of the mechanisms by which people change space to place, whether space refers to natural areas, city neighborhoods, a dwelling, or a myriad of other settings.” (Rioux et al., 2017, p. 61).

According to Fieldman and Stall (ebd), “Appropriation is conceptualized as an interactive process through which individuals purposefully transform the physical environment into a meaningful place while in turn transforming themselves“. These definitions harmonize with the ones discussed so far in the sense that it adds layers to dimensional / spatial considerations. It presents the “place” as an evolved construct where the layer-adding aspects are synergies, experiences, purpose, etc.

For Carr (1995, p. 19f) “Democratic spaces protect the rights of user groups. They are accessible to all groups and provide for freedom of action but also for temporary claim and ownership.”. He adds “Meaningful spaces are those that allow people to make strong connections between the place, their personal lives, and the larger world.”



Based on the above it can be concluded that space appropriation -and the exercise of spatial rights- would be related to the exercise of the rights to self-determination and social participation.

### 7.1.2.2 Place attachment and place identity

Place attachment is defined as “the bonding that occurs between individuals and their meaningful environments” (Scannell & Gifford, 2010 as cited in Rioux et al., 2017, p. 60). According to Amin (cf. 2008, as cited in Varghese, 2019, p. 4) the functional utility of (public) space influences public behavior and hence develops sociocultural identity of the built environment. The functional utility of space refers to the available activities and uses meeting the needs of the individuals and the community, which, consequently influences its culture (cf. Amin, 2008, as cited in Varghese, 2019, p. 4). Montgomery (cf. 1998, as cited in Varghese, 2019, p. 4) adds that the built environment comprehends activity -reason for users to use the space, related to “liveliness” and “diversity”-, form -also referred to as “access”; integration in the surroundings- and image -how the space is perceived; based on values, experiences, beliefs and the individual development of identity with respect to the space- and that each one of them is instrumental in building an identity of place or the built environment (cf. Montgomery, 1998, as cited in Varghese, 2019, p. 4f).

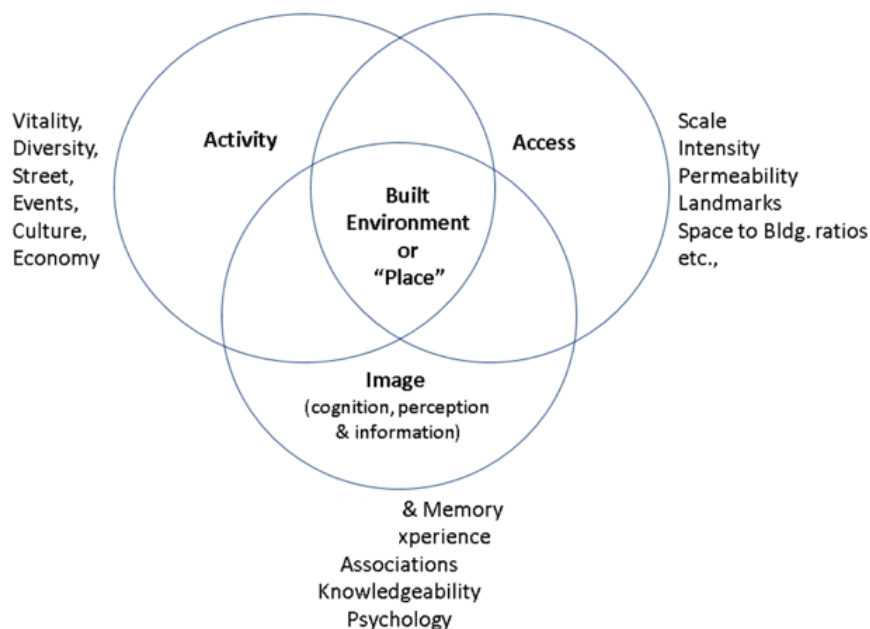


Figure 2: The qualities of the built environment that build an identity of Place (Varghese’s 2019 adaptation from Montgomery, 1998)

The progression “identity of the built environment” → “culture of the community” → “sense of place” is characterized by two types of bonds:

- place attachment: a positive emotional bond developed to the places we have close contact with and where we feel safe and invest our resources (cf. Brown et al., 2003; Giuliani, 2003, as cited in Varghese, 2019, p. 6).
- place identity: where the individual is part of the identity of the place (cf. Sharifi & Murayama 2013; Pretty, Chipuer, & Bramston, 2003, as cited in Varghese, 2019 ebd.).

“In conclusion, it can be understood that the culture of the community is the sum of the “sense of place” and the “social behavior” of all the residents of that community. As a result, space and spatial organization of the built environment is capable of being used (...) to shape the culture of a community” (Varghese, 2019, p. 6).

This would not happen spontaneously, but as a progression from “place identity” to the “communal wellbeing of the residents” (and users) with two intermediate stages: “sense of belonging” and “culture of place” (cf. Hernández, 2007, as cited in Varghese, 2019, p. 7).

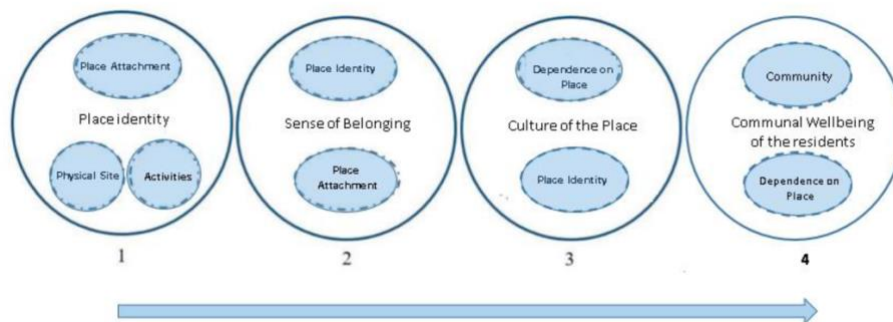


Figure 3: Relationship between Place Identity, Sense of Belonging, Culture of the Place, and Communal Wellbeing of the Residents (Hernández, 2007, adapted by Varghese, 2019)

### 7.1.2.3 Colonization - from the rave scene to Temporary Autonomous Zones

For the last decades, space appropriation and place attachment have resulted in concrete phenomena and initiatives. The insufficiency of available suitable spaces can lead to the claim of vacant spaces and lots in order to satisfy the personal and collective needs mentioned above. Carr, states that “another form of claim can be found in community open spaces where local people take over a vacant lot (...) taking responsibility for the ongoing management or stewardship (...)”. (Carr, 1995, p. 61). Some of its examples are the rave movement from the 90’s or the emergence of temporary autonomous zones. They serve as examples of “space colonization”.

Raves can take place in vacant lots, rural settings, empty buildings, etc. but also in privately owned locations. Although the goals may defer from rave to rave, the main focus is not so much the space appropriation, but the activity conducted -mainly electronic music events- and its recreational dimension. Raves tend to happen in a pop-up manner and the fact that they are self-organized and managed facilitates their rapid appearance and dismantlement. Anonymity and intimacy -as seen above, mostly sought states of privacy in space appropriation- are also instrumental in the rave scene in order to achieve freedom from (external) interaction and close observation, and close interpersonal communication with a group or person.

Temporary Autonomous Zones (TAZ), coined by Hakim Bey in 1990 and commonly associated with anarchist views, refers to the preservation of creativity, energy, and enthusiasm of autonomous uprisings (cf. Beautiful Trouble, n.d.). A TAZ is a liberated area -“of land, time or imagination”- that would allow individuals to *be* with a purpose and explore new ways of coexistence. This area would be located away / hidden from control -and free of it- (ebd.). For Bey, TAZ need to remain mobile and stealthy to avoid the inevitable crushing reaction of the state, reforming and reappearing in other unexpected places. Bey (as cited in Beautiful Trouble, n.d.), recognizes several examples of TAZ in history, from secret societies in the ancient Persian empire to the communes of Paris and Munich (ebd.). Some additional more contemporary examples would also be protesting encampments, squat homes, community gardens in squatted vacant lots, raves -the rave scene- or even the Burning Man Festival in Black Rock City (US), amongst many others. Although TAZ may seem a radical idea, they also seem to exercise spatial, self-determination and social participation rights to the highest levels.

### 7.1.3 Gentrification

The Digital Dictionary of the German Language<sup>3</sup> defines gentrification as the “renovation and upgrading of (centrally located) districts and residential areas (through the purchase of properties by investors), accompanied by the displacement of local residents by the wealthy.” (DWDS – Digitales Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache, 2019).

The Term Gentrification was coined in 1964 by Ruth Glass in an effort to classify the transformation in several levels -economic, demographic, cultural, etc.- of many central neighborhoods in London (cf. Brown-Saracino, 2013). Glass observed a shift to middle class population in working-class areas through their relocation, the opening of businesses or the lobbying for infrastructure improvements (cf. Glass as cited in Brown-Saracino, 2013). For Glass it was due to a switch to urban aspirations, urban renewal projects -renovation and expansion of central areas-, relocation of factories out of city areas, an increment of incomes per household or commuting difficulties and expenses (ebd.). Already in 1964, Glass referred to (population) displacement as a result of Gentrification; those who could not keep up or hold their own would be pushed to the side (cf. Glass as cited in Brown-Saracino, 2013). Brown-

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<sup>3</sup> As mentioned in “general definition of social space” (p. 11), some terms have been researched in German in order to respect the polynomial culture-language-reality -as also addressed by Sitti Rabiah (Rabiah, 2018).

Saracino states that, although there may be disagreements on the definition of Gentrification amongst the scholar community, there's the general consensus that it is consequential for cities (cf. Brown-Saracino, 2013). Studies and researches conducted since 1964 have expanded the understanding of Gentrification and of the role that more contemporary concepts -the upscaling of rural villages, the involvement of corporations in the "uplift" of areas, etc.- play in it.

A review focused on neighborhood gentrification as a socio-ecological process conducted by Quastel (2012) also observes an impact on the social structures in gentrified areas. In line with Glass, the author points at a shift of population -increase of middle class, students, artists, etc.), decrease of cultural diversity and population with a migrant background, increased in and out mobility due to relocation, etc. New sustainability and life-style trends are also being adopted and implemented, although they seem to exclude those with lesser financial resources (cf. Quastel, 2012, p. 37).

Gentrification, started in the 70's partly as state-driven in an effort to tackle disinvestment in certain neighborhoods, was by the 90's well outspread and driven mainly by large-scale investment developments, government policies, and public-private partnerships. As for the causes of gentrification, for some scholars, interested in its political dimension -more specifically in income inequality and racial segregation-, gentrification "occurs as a result of underlying social forces such as capital and class" (Quastel, 2012, p. 37). Other academics see the causes of gentrification in a cultural turn where concrete neighborhoods would become more attractive because of the persons moving in and the values and lifestyle they bring with them -which would present "changing social values and cultural trends" as drivers or urban change.

Traditionally, gentrification has been addressed from humanist perspectives. Nevertheless, environmental considerations are also consequential. Gentrification and the different issues it involves -construction, mobility, deployment of resources, transport of goods, consumerism, etc.- has a high ecological footprint and environmental impact. The differences between neighborhoods can lead to inequality of access to resources and life quality. (cf. Quastel, 2012, p. 37f)

In conclusion, although gentrification presents positive aspects regarding urban transformation and "cultural turn", it also leads to exclusion, displacement, social stratification, high environmental impact and ecological footprint, or environmental inequality, amongst others. Relevant aspects in the process are the public-private partnerships.

## 7.2 The UAS St. Pölten area in context

This section aims to offer an overview of the UAS St. Pölten area and its intersections with the desktop research conducted so far.

### 7.2.1 Evolution of the area

The UAS St. Pölten is located in the “Center-north” district of the city. This is one of the districts resulting from the expansion city through the last centuries. Traditionally, the area was characterized by industry and working-class housing. A gentrification process can be currently observed.

The evolution of the area can be observed through the following historical and reference maps (Kamper, 2021; Kopecky et al., 1988a, 1988d, 1988b, 1988c):



Figure 4: St. Pölten in 1821 (Kopecky et al. 1988a)

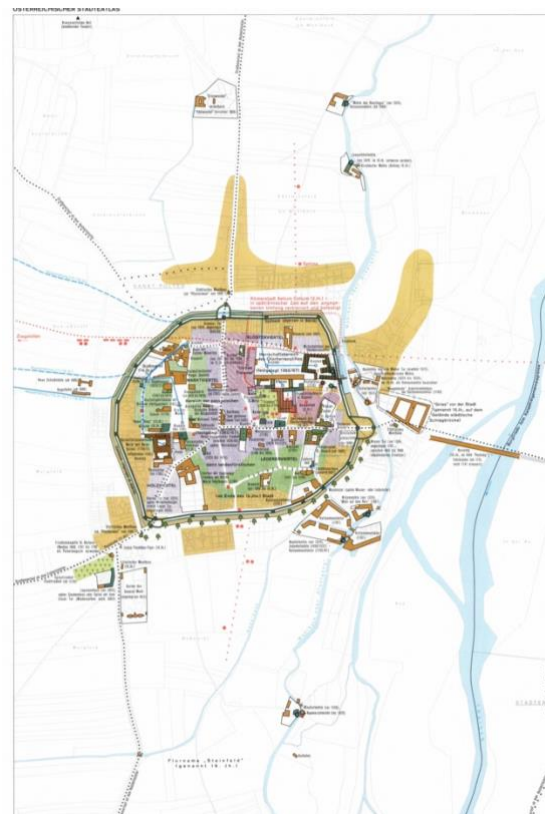


Figure 5: St. Pölten growth phases (Kopecky et al., 1988d)



Figure 6: UAS St. Pölten area 1985/86 (Kopecky et al., 1988b)

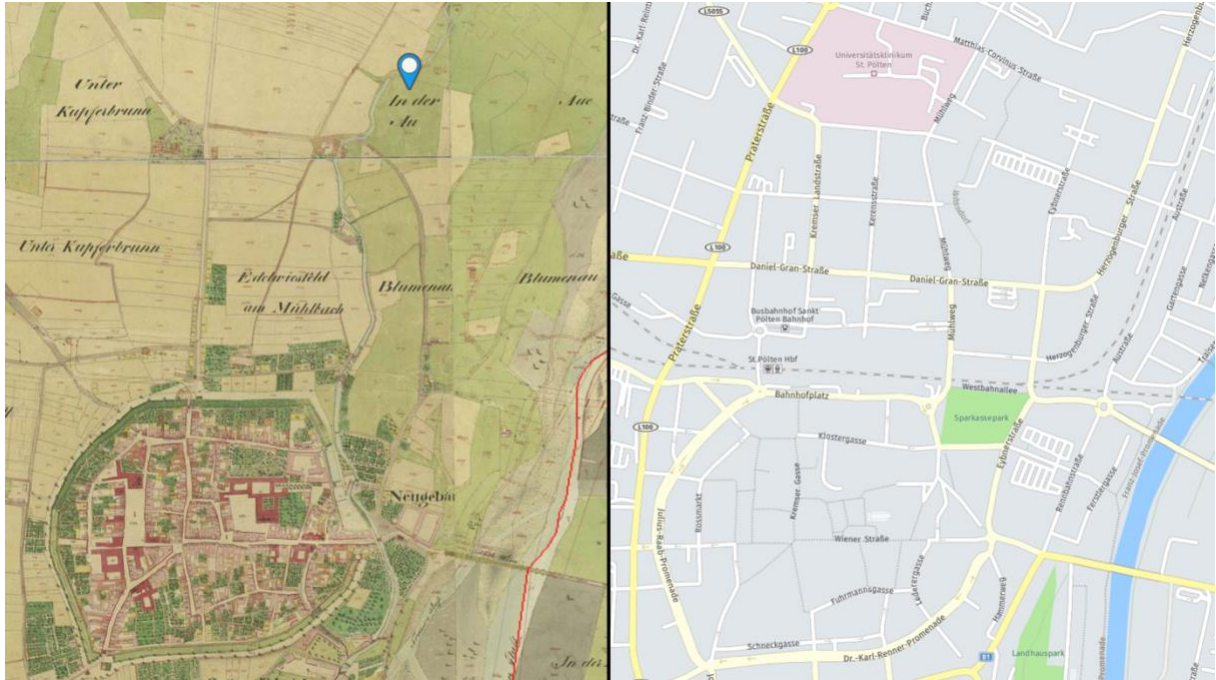


Figure 7: Comparison: St. Pölten at the time of the Habsburg Empire and today (Kopecky et al., 1988c)

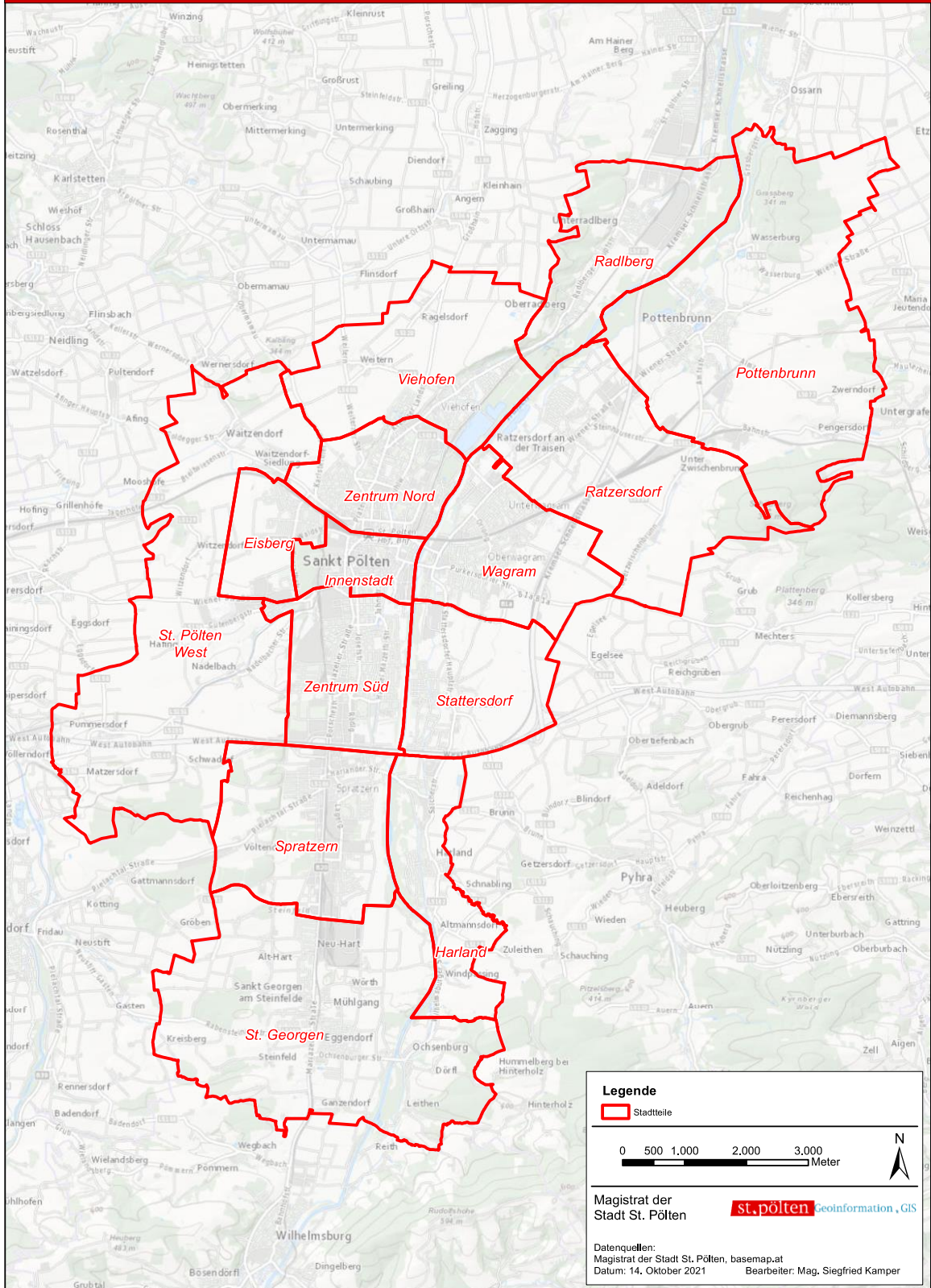


Figure 8: St. Pölten's current master plan of the city districts (Kamper, 2021)

## 7.2.2 Space, users, and current situation

With the desktop research as a reference, it can be observed that the UAS St. Pölten is located in a gentrified area. Its garden conforms a hybrid space (cf. Allies, 2023; cf. Nissen, 2008; cf. Varghese, 2019). It's generally well delimited from the surrounding areas, but some spots presents diffuse boundaries between the public and private space (cf. Varghese, 2019). Likewise, It's open access motivates both passive and active engagement (cf. Carr, 1995; cf. Hutomo & Fuad, 2020) from different demographic groups and users, which show to translate into place attachment and space appropriation (cf. Carr, 1995; cf. Rioux et al., 2017; cf. Varghese, 2019) -in depth on the next section: 7.3 Results of the empirical research. In this regard, a range of social and interpersonal interactions, as well as activities -recreational passive use, leisure, and sporting activities, etc.- have been documented in the area. This also underscores the exercise of spatial rights as defined by Lynch and Carr (cf. Carr, 1995) - especially the right of access, freedom of action and claim- as well as the achievement of intimacy and anonymity as privacy states (ebd.).



Figure 9: Example of space appropriation in the district



Figure 10: Active use of the garden area



Figure 11: Signs of space appropriation

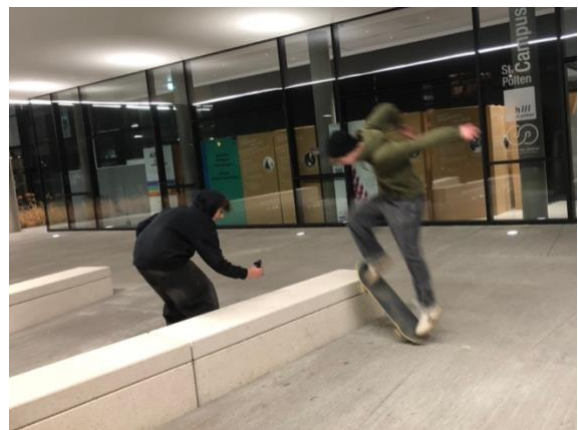


Figure 12: Space appropriation and unforeseen use





Figure 13: Diffuse boundaries in the garden area

### 7.3 Results of the empirical research

As stated in the research design section, the empirical research for the present bachelor thesis has been conducted in two blocks: Non-participant field observations and a FGD (Focus Group Discussion). The following sections summarize and present the data collected on both blocks and its consequent analysis.

#### 7.3.1 Non-Participant field observations

4 non-participant field observations were conducted at the Garden of the UAS St. Pölten in four days and at different times of the day. They registered a total of 41 individuals. These observations were prior to the delimitation of the focus group and intended to observe and get a first impression on how the focus area is used, by who, when, etc.

The following table summarizes the collected data. For the purposes of the research, “number of items” represents the reach and dimension of the area usage, its characteristics, and the interactions with and in the area. A higher number of items indicates a less specialized and broader use of the space, as well as a higher number of interactions. Conversely, a lower number of items suggests a more specialized and specific use of the space and fewer interactions.

		Children	Young persons	Young adults	Adults	Seniors
	Nr. of Persons	13	8	6	9	5
Constellation	Alone	X		X	X	X
	Two persons	X	X	X	X	X
	Group	X	X			
Type of engagement	Active	X				
	Passive	X	X	X	X	X
Area usage	Transit	X	X	X	X	X
	Localized	X	X	x	X	X
	Partial	X			X	
	Broad	x				
Interaction	Inner interactions	X	X	X	X	X
	w. other individuals / groups	X			x	
Use of space	Foreseen	X	x	X	x	X
	unforeseen	X				
Number of items		13	7	7	9	7

These observations indicate that children use the area alone, two persons, group; engage with the area actively and passive; use area in transit, localized in concrete spots, partially and broad; interact internally with their group of peers, but also with other individuals (mainly university staff) and occasionally with groups (small groups of students), and make a foreseen use of the space (sitting in benches and using tables, etc.) as well as unforeseen (e.g. play football on non-dedicated areas, play standing on benches, etc.). Likewise, the number of persons in this group is higher than in other observed groups. The integration of the Nr. of items and the number of persons translates into a broader, less specialized use by a larger demographic group.

### 7.3.2 FGD

As mentioned in research design, the FGD was conducted with a group of seven children (ages 5-12). The data collected was then analyzed using Grounded Theory. Through this method, relevant passages of the FGD produced a range of concepts that were then summarized in 13 categories. These were in turn organized into 3 core categories.

### 7.3.2.1 Categories

The categories produced through the analysis of the collected data are as follows.

#### **Needs and wishes**

Throughout the FGD, the SG (sample group) expressed, directly or implicitly, a variety of needs and wishes related to the garden infrastructure and the facilities. Most of them pointed to equipment facilitating an active engagement in the area and facilitating a usage adapted to the characteristics of the target group. In this regard, the children were eager to express their needs and, when asked what's important for them in an outdoor area like the garden of the UAS, they mentioned a playground as well as a variety of urban, play and leisure equipment and areas. A comment was also made mentioning a possible partition of the outside area with a dedicated space for children while keeping spaces for the students. (cf. FGD Transcript, ls. 130, 310, 317-320, 340, 359)

A relevant aspect mentioned on several occasions by the SG was the illumination of the area. It shows as an important factor related to the usage of the garden -mainly in winter-, especially on those areas mostly frequented by them or associated with the activities and type of engagement of the target group. The children agreed that some areas are well illuminated whereas others are often too dark. (cf. FGD Transcript, ls. 370, 373f, 404)

When asked if something should improve, the answer from a considerable part of the group was affirmative with a general agreement and no objections from any of the participants. They mentioned a variety of infrastructures / areas for sporting activities (soccer, basketball, running, trampoline, beach volley, training) for them as well as for the students, should they need them too. An intervention also suggested equipment for other demographic groups (like benches for elderly people). A comment from one of the participants, seconded by most in the group, proposed having a skatepark instead of a playground. This intervention seems to point towards more teenager-oriented resources -like in the case of the forementioned sporting possibilities-, which not only accounts for the transition of part of the target group into their teenager years, but also their need for spaces that adapt to that transition too. (cf. FGD Transcript, ls. 404, 810, 812, 838, 849, 857, 872, 879, 885f, 900, 937, 1107, 1127)

The SG also expressed their concerns about keeping the space in good condition and improving the well-being of its users. This shows by the suggestion to install more trash cans -they are aware that there are several of them around but show concern about other users not using them and littering- as well as a drinking fountain/ water bubbler (currently non existing). (cf. FGD Transcript, ls. 1159, 1176f)

#### **Social and interpersonal dynamics**

A total of 17 interventions in the FGD referred or were related to different aspects of social and interpersonal dynamics with peers, professionals, and other groups of users of the garden area of the UAS.

When asked about the reasons for them to visit and use the garden, the SG mentioned that it is “fun to play with friends” there (FGD Transcript, l. 96f), referring also to it as something amusing, entertaining, or enjoyable. A determining factor for it seems to be in the group setting and dynamics of the SG.

Social dynamics with other groups of users, neighbors and professionals were also present in the interventions of the participants. They experience these dynamics as positive. In this regard, they defined the students using the library as “nice” (FGD Transcript, l. 253f) and when asked who they would contact in case of need, their replies referred to Library workers and acquainted staff and to personnel communication, showing some sense of familiarity with them and easy access (cf. FGD Transcript, ls. 619, 632, 649). Regarding other groups of users, the participants show some awareness of how they may be perceived, and conscious about possible irritations (cf. FGD Transcript, ls. 674, 676, 697, 707, 727). This empathy and consideration for others also showed in a suggestion for specific / adapted equipment for the elderly (e.g. a bench), as well as in the expectation for others to also be considerate and keep the area in good condition -indicated by a complain about littering and not using the trash cans (FGD Transcript, ls. 1107, 1176f).

When addressing existing or past irritations and conflicts with other users / visitors, the SG expressed and agreed that they did not experience any so far. (cf. FGD Transcript, l. 771)

## **Safety**

This category refers mostly to equipment / infrastructural elements and preventive measures that provide a sense of safety as well as emergency procedures.

The lighting conditions of the areas used by the SG show as an important aspect for the children. Given that in winter the days are short, it not only affects their engagement in the area, but also influence their sense of safety and the time of the day they feel more comfortable in the garden. (cf. FGD Transcript, ls. 370, 373f, 404, 430)

Some interventions pointed at the occurrence of accidents and injuries and the involved procedures. The SG knew about how to act and who to contact, referring to official emergency services and the staff of the UAS -mainly mentioning library workers and some other acquainted personnel. For the children, safety-related topics are amongst the main reasons to actively seek communication with the UAS as institution. In this regard, they give more importance to the reasons why they would seek contact than to the channels or ways to do it and favor personal contact with a trusted / appointed interlocutor. (cf. FGD Transcript, ls. 1031, 1035, 1043, 1073)

## **Well-being**

The feeling of collective and personal well-being in the area shows as an important factor that the SG. They link it to aspects like social dynamics and interpersonal relationships with the

group of equals (cf. FGD Transcript, ls. 96f) as well as infrastructural aspects like lightning, the availability of sufficient trash cans or the access to drinking fountain / water bubbler (cf. FGD Transcript, ls. 370, 373f, 404, 697, 1159, 1176f, 1192-1194). The interventions of the SG presented these factors not only as influencing on how they engage with the area, but also on the collective well-being, which underlines the consideration and empathy towards other groups of users (elderly people, students, neighbors, etc.)

### **Recreational (passive) use / engagement**

Regarding how the SG engage with the garden, one of the types of use referred by them is more recreational / contemplative -passive use. Some interventions mentioned aspects that can improve life quality, like fresh air or space availability (cf. FGD Transcript, ls. 84, 391).

The infrastructural needs of the SG (light, water fountains, etc.) also seem to play an important role by not only improving the active engagement of the children with the area, but also bettering how they perceive and experience it. In this regard, this equipment and infrastructures seem to play a role beyond their practical considerations. (cf. FGD Transcript, ls. 96f, 189, 370, 373f, 404, 1107, 1159, 1192-1194)

The recreational use of the garden of the UAS also shows as an aspect related to the forementioned feeling of well-being. Most of the aspects mentioned by the SG are in fact indicators for both categories.

### **Active use / engagement**

The SG engages with the garden area mainly through active use. The activities they undertake compile a variety of games and sports -some self-designed- characterized by a dynamic component (cf. FGD Transcript, ls. 68, 96f). Active use shows as a very relevant aspect for the SG, who also value related factors that may allow / difficult it, like dimension and polyvalence of the area (cf. FGD Transcript, ls. 114, 156, 391); infrastructural equipment such as illumination or drinking fountain (cf. FGD Transcript, ls. 370, 373f, 404, 1192-1194); or daytime (cf. FGD Transcript, l. 430).

This category shows as intensively related to the wishes and needs of the children as well what they think that could improve, since the results are formulated as necessary to allow for this type of use and engagement. The mentioned activities compile games and sports such as soccer, basketball, training, running, trampoline, beach volley or skateboarding (cf. FGD transcript, ls. 849, 857, 872, 879, 900, 937) as well as the necessary infrastructures -also for other groups of users, like students- to practice them, such as a soccer field, general sport training areas or a skatepark (cf. FGD transcript, ls. 838, 885f, 1127).

When addressing the involvement on the design and operation of some aspects related to the garden outer area of the UAS, the SG referred to the mentioned activities as reasons for them to get involved (cf. FGD transcript, l. 979).

Some interventions also pointed towards the consequences of the active use of the garden area, such as impact on the infrastructures and equipment or effects on other users (annoyance, irritations, etc.) (cf. FGD transcript, ls. 674, 677, 707, 727f, 917).

### **Participation and involvement**

Throughout the FGD, there were several interventions related to participation or implying it. Some of them were in the form of answers to concrete questions regarding involvement in aspects related to the outer areas of the UAS St. Pölten (operation, design, consultation, etc.). Several participants spoke proactively and positive about the possibility of getting, in some degree, involved on the forementioned aspects. (cf. FGD transcript, ls. 969, 974, 976, 979, 986, 989, 1006, 1020)

Other mentions regarding participation and involvement were either autonomously brought up by the SG or were implied in the responses. In this context, aspects such as communication, its content, and the underlying reasons appear to be of relevance when it comes to participation and the SG show to favor personal contact and familiarity (cf. FGD transcript, ls. 619, 1020, 1031, 1035, 1043). Additionally, one intervention showed a certain degree of sensitivity towards the participation of others -in this case, on the FGD itself- (cf. FGD transcript, l. 1067).

The SG show a positive regard of this category, its implications, and the possibilities it could raise. Assistance, problem resolution and leisure or sporting activities show as central aspects for the SG in regard to participation / involvement. (cf. FGD transcript, ls. 979, 1020)

### **Inclusivity**

The SG shows to perceive the garden of the UAS as a space shared with other demographic groups and users -students, neighbors, personnel of the university, etc. This sharing involves not only the recognition and awareness for others, but also their inclusion, which manifests through the design of the area allowing it or taking it into consideration. In this regard, some of the interventions in the FGD pointed at the garden area as inviting for several population groups and, therefore, inclusive (cf. FGD transcript, ls. 114, 317-320).

Some interventions seem to suggest some room improvement which manifests on the installation of equipment for the elderly and the need to take them more into consideration (cf. FGD transcript, ls. 1107, 1114).

A remarkable aspect is that, when talking about improvements mainly intended for or benefited by others, the SG formulated them as “we need...” (cf. FGD transcript, l. 1107), which underlines a sense of community and presents inclusivity as a collective responsibility and issue.

## **Area design - spatial planning**

An aspect of special relevance for the SG is the design of the area or spatial planning -here understood as the distribution of space and its adequacy. The participants made some statements referring to their perception of the area as visually pleasing, spacious, and polyvalent. Indicators expressed by the children for that are its appearance, dimension, or the multiple possibilities that the area presents (cf. FGD transcript, ls. 98,114,156,213). A positive comment was also made referring to the university facilities (inner areas) and defining them as “cool” (FGD transcript, l. 743).

The infrastructural needs and wishes expressed by the SG also refer indirectly to the spatial planning, since it's instrumental for them to be viable. The forementioned items and infrastructures -illumination or urban, play and leisure equipment, sporting, and leisure areas- point in this context to a spatial planning counting on areas dedicated to them (cf. FGD transcript, ls. 317-320, 340, 359, 370, 373f, 391, 404, 817, 838, 849, 857, 872, 879, 995f, 900, 925, 937, 1159, 1127).

For the SG it seems important that the area design and spatial planning takes the diverse demographic groups and users as well as their transition to new stages (e.g. to their teenager years) into consideration. Inclusivity shows here too as a relevant aspect. (cf. FGD transcript, ls. 885f, 1107, 1127).

The SG shows some awareness of a relationship between space, type of engagement, and infrastructural needs. This is, for instance, manifested on a comment stating the correlation of having a playground, being / getting hot when using it and needing a drinking fountain (cf. FGD transcript, l. 1192-1194).

## **Perceived type of space**

Most of the statements and comments made by the SG regarding the garden area refer to the whole outer area. The children seem unaware of the formal space distribution of the garden area of the UAS -i.e. which part is responsibility of the municipality and which of the university. It shows that their views and needs go beyond spatial organization and ownership and that, as long as the space is accessible, available, attractive, and adequate, they will use it. The fact that it's also a shared space, adds an extra layer of social dynamics with groups and users alien to the group of equals, which the SG values positively. The participants not only regard the area as public and inviting, but they also feel entitled to use it. This can also be applied to areas of UAS St. Pölten that, although not necessarily external, are associated by the SG with the garden area, extending their dynamics and perceived rights of use to them. (cf. FGD transcript, ls. 150, 317-320, 743, 758, 763, 817)

## **Space appropriation / place attachment**

Some of the interventions referred to in the previous category also point at space appropriation and place attachment. This is signaled to by statements based on the openness, accessibility,

and polyvalence of the garden and regarding its self-designed and self-determined usage; including the use of the infrastructures and equipment in other ways than what they are intended to -e.g. playing games standing on benches or soccer on slope grass areas usually destined to rest or recreational use- (cf. FGD transcript, ls. 156, 150, 233f, 758, 763). As a result, the SG seems to have developed an attachment to the place, which also shows in interventions pointing at the importance of keeping it in good condition (cf. FGD transcript, ls. 912, 917, 925, 1159, 1176f) and correcting some deficits in order to improve the SG experiences -e.g. having access to drinking water- (cf. FGD transcript, l. 1192-1194).

Space appropriation and place attachment can also be observed by the own setting of rules and regulations based on what the participants believe that is necessary to guarantee a positive coexistence within the group of equals, alien population groups / students and the UAS St. Pölten. This will be further described in the category “rules and regulations”.

### **Space administration**

An important aspect when addressing space, infrastructures, spatial planning, etc. is who oversees what, how can they be contacted, or which topics are in fact relevant to each department, subdepartment or person. In this regard, the SG does not seem aware of the formal spatial distribution of the areas they use, the division of responsibilities between the municipality and the UAS St. Pölten or the structure of the institution. Nevertheless, they do show some simplified, intuitively understood knowledge about these procedures.

For the SG the UAS has the overseeing responsibilities on the areas they use. In this regard they recognize some kind of structure and hierarchy (cf. FGD transcript, ls. 451, 452, 547). When asked about the existing communication channels or how would they contact the institution, the participants referred to personal communication -mainly based on familiarity with some university personnel and students- and direct access -e.g. the library counter or addressing a trusted person- and relied on the correct forwarding of information and issues to the appropriate departments and professionals (cf. FGD transcript, ls. 619, 632, 649, 655). The SG also valued having an accessible interlocutor linking the UAS to the neighborhood (cf. FGD transcript, 1035, 1043, 1067). Main topics for them to report on would be those related to the playground -this is one of the points where an unawareness of formal spatial distribution shows-, maintenance of defective equipment, injuries / emergencies (cf. FGD transcript, ls. 1031, 1035, 1067).

### **Rules and regulations**

The SG is conscious about the importance of keeping a good coexistence with other demographic groups, users, the UAS and its personnel. For it, they try to follow some rules. Although they recall that a university worker occasionally mentioned some of them, these rules have been mostly self and established by the participants and, although simple, aim to prevent and tackle possible frictions and conflicts. They refer to the internal and external dynamics and interactions of the SG, and manage how they play with each other, where, how not to disturb others, how to treat the infrastructures and equipment or which areas are accessible (cf. FGD



transcript, ls. 480, 483, 486, 489, 508, 510, 758, 763, 925). Regarding how the rules are communicated, the SG seems used to verbal communication or written signs (cf. FGD transcript, ls. 522, 925).

### 7.3.2.2 Core categories

Explain that the referred categories and interventions are already cited in the previous point. After establishing the categories, they were clustered into three core categories:

#### **Community-centered design**

This core category was established by clustering the categories well-being, participation and involvement, space administration, area design – spatial planning, inclusivity, recreational use, active use, safety, and rules and regulations. The composing categories and their originating interventions highlight several aspects related to a community-centered design that recognizes different demographic groups and aims to their well-being, inclusivity, safety, and coexistence. This approach requires focusing on the needs and wishes of the users, as well as their involvement, to plan and create spaces where they can freely engage -passively or actively. Also relevant here is the recognition of the existence of different approaches and rules among the users, depending on their characteristics and how they interact with the area and other social groups and users. Space administration, with its responsibilities and potentials on the area and the links to the neighborhood, is likewise an important aspect.

#### **Autonomy and self-determination**

Comprising the categories space perception, appropriation, place attachment, rules and regulations, area design - spatial planning, participation and involvement, recreational use, active use and safety, this core category emphasizes autonomy and self-determination as instrumental for the well-being of the SG, who value the freedom and possibilities that the area provides for engaging in it and with it according to their needs and preferences, which results in space appropriation and place attachment. Self-determination and autonomy show to extend beyond merely using the area freely; they also involve playing a role on its design, transformation, and improvement, which eventually may require participation and involvement. The self-devised rules which also consider other groups of users, reflect this autonomy and self-determination as both collectively oriented and empathic.

How the SG perceives the space significantly influences how they engage in / with it. Factors such as space distribution, area design, and spatial planning show as key in providing safe, open, and creative spaces that stimulate or hinder autonomy and self-determination.

#### **Social and interpersonal dynamics**

As a result of clustering the categories needs and wishes, social and interpersonal dynamics, participation and involvement, inclusivity, well-being, active use, area design – spatial

planning, place attachment, and rules and regulations, this core category identifies social and interpersonal dynamics as instrumental. These dynamics are at the core of the SG's engagement in and with the space, as they represent both the method and the primary goal of their interaction -primarily through active use. The inner dynamics of the SG, along with their awareness of other social groups and users, highlights the importance of coexistence and collective well-being, for which they devise and implement rules. Inclusivity also shows as instrumental here, not only for children but for others as well. Area design and spatial planning, along with participation in these processes, are essential to support and stimulate social dynamics that respect and promote the forementioned values. Likewise, these social and interpersonal dynamics stimulate place attachment and identification with the area, which in turn decisively influences how its users engage with it, creating a reciprocal relationship between social dynamics and spatial planning.

### 7.3.2.3 Illustrated posters

The FGD concluded with the production of a graphic visualization, where the children were asked to sketch how they could imagine the garden area of the UAS St. Pölten (cf. FGD transcript, ls 1210-1340). These are the results.



Figure 14: Poster 1



Figure 15: Poster2

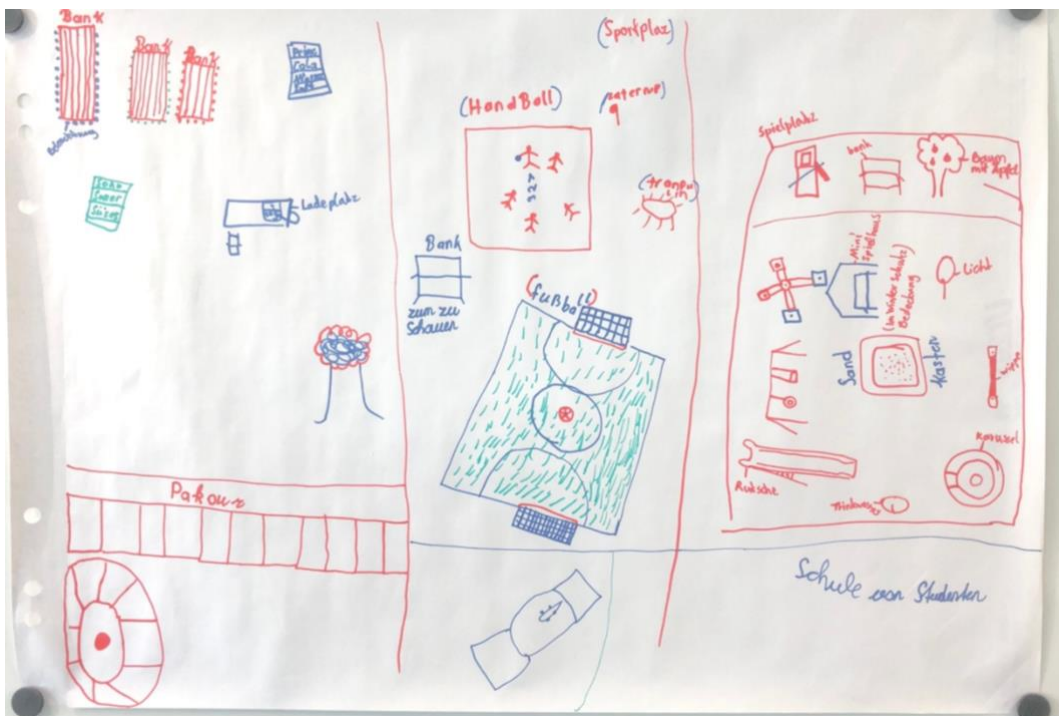


Figure 16: Poster 3

The portray the elements discussed or mentioned by the SG during the FGD. They refer to the urban, leisure and sporting equipment and areas referred by the children as well as to the infrastructural features and spatial planning. In this regard, features related to active and dynamic use show as relevant. A spatial planning that accommodates areas for diverse social / demographic groups and users -students, elderly people, neighbors- is likewise noticeable. These aspects reiterate and underscore the core categories resulting from the analysis of the FGD: community-centered design, autonomy and self-determination, and social and interpersonal dynamics

## 8 Conclusion

This section presents the concluding aspects of the research. Central findings, emerging from the integration of the different sections of the research, are here presented and linked to the research questions. These findings are followed by a short discussion of the implications of the research for both the UAS St. Pölten and the social work field, as well as a section dedicated to the limitations and next steps. The chapter concludes with a summary of the bachelor thesis.

### 8.1 Integrating the desktop research and the empirical research

The integration of the collected data from the desktop and the empirical researches is here presented by categories in order to improve its overview as well as its comprehensiveness.

#### **Social space**

The concluding definition of social space presented in this bachelor thesis (7.1.1.1 General definition of social space) presents it as characterized by dimensional, interpersonal, usage and contextual considerations, and evolving with societies and history. The data collected in the FGD confirms this definition and underlines its considerations. As presented in the results of the FGD (7.3.2), in the case of the garden of the UAS St. Pölten, the SG referred specifically to those dimensional aspects, through spatial and infrastructural considerations; interpersonal aspects, referring to social and interpersonal dynamics as a key aspect; usage, signaled by the type of use and engagement in and with the area. Contextual considerations, although not specifically mentioned, can be understood as implicit in some of the interventions pointing at the need to update the outer area, or the relevance of inclusivity and a positive coexistence with other demographic groups.

## **Private, public, communal and hybrid spaces**

Social spaces can be categorized regarding their ownership -private, public, and communal spaces- or additional aspects like the overlap of areas or the non-classic correspondence between ownership and usage –i.e. hybrid spaces- (7.1.1.2 Private, public and hybrid spaces). The conducted research concludes that the garden area of the UAS builds in fact a hybrid space due to its overlapping with surrounding areas, the diffuse limits between private and public grounds, and the public use of the area -which is de facto a private space. The data collected in the FGD confirms this conclusion, which is shown by how the SG perceives the space and engage with it. Although they show some knowledge regarding the ownership of the area, they are not really aware of its formal distribution and which section is owned by the university or by the municipality. A relevant aspect here is the public access and use of the garden perceived by the SG.

## **Types of engagement**

The types of engagement in space referred to in the section 7.1.1.3 have also been documented on both the non-participant field observations as well as the FGD. The use of the garden area by diverse demographic groups and users results in passive and active engagement; a recreational, non-interactive engagement as well as a dynamic engagement characterized by interpersonal interactions. In the case of the SG, the engagement and type of use is predominantly active and characterized by dynamic activities -games, sports- as well as social and interpersonal interactions with their peers and other demographic groups, users, and university staff.

## **Space appropriation**

The five dimensions of spatial rights defined by which Lynch (1981, as cited in Carr, 1995, p. 137) as presence, use and action, appropriation, modification, and disposition; and by Carr as access, freedom of action, claim, change, and ownership and disposition (7.1.2 Place attachment, space appropriation, place attachment and colonization), have also been documented in the garden area of the UAS. The SG shows to make use of most of them, specially of the rights to access, freedom of action and claim (according to Carr). This is observable by their conception of the space as open and inviting, the foreseen and unforeseen use they make of it or the self-devised of rules. The sequence claim → active use → creation of meaning → attachment to the physical environment, defined by Rioux et al. (2017, p. 61), has likewise been documented and implicitly referred to in the FGD. In this regard, the SG values the freedom and possibilities that the area provides for engaging in it and with it according to their needs and preferences (7.3.2.2 core categories: Autonomy and self-determination).

## **Place attachment and place identity**

The bonding developed to meaningful places described by Scannell & Gifford (2010) as place attachment and referred to in the section 7.1.2.2 of this bachelor project, has been documented in the FGD through the interventions related to needs and wishes, social and interpersonal

dynamics, well-being, active use, participation and involvement, inclusivity, perceived type of space, place attachment / appropriation, and rules and regulations (7.3.2.1). Through social and personal interactions, as well as their engagement in the garden area, the SG shows to transform their physical environment into a meaningful place, thus developing a bond with it, which also resonates with Carr's statement "Meaningful spaces are those that allow people to make strong connections between the place, their personal lives, and the larger world."

Place identity also shows to have been built through the regularity and continuity of the presence of the SG in the garden area, and their engagement in it, with it and with other demographic groups, users, the UAS St. Pölten and its staff; in a way, the children have become part of the identity of the garden.

### **Gentrification**

Aspects characteristics and constitutive of gentrification (7.1.3 of the present bachelor thesis) are present and observable in adjacent and surrounding areas of the UAS. Large-scale investment and public-private partnerships -both intended to tackle previous disinvestment- as well as "Uplift" of the area, cultural turn, and change of social values, appear to shape the area and how the SG –and other demographic groups– engage and interact in / with it and with other individuals and groups. This has been documented in the categories needs and wishes, social and interpersonal dynamics, active use, inclusivity, perceived type of space, or space appropriation / place attachment of the FGD (7.3.2.1). Likewise, preparatory talks and first approaches.

### **Community-centered design**

This core category points towards a community-centered design that recognizes different demographic groups and aims to their well-being, inclusivity, safety, and coexistence. This aligns with the theses from Carr, Fielman and Stall or Rioux et al. in regard to space appropriation or those from Varghese addressing place attachment and place identity (7.1.2.1 and 7.1.2.2 of the present bachelor thesis).

On Carr's words "Democratic spaces protect the rights of user groups. They are accessible to all groups and provide for freedom of action but also for temporary claim and ownership.". He adds "Meaningful spaces are those that allow people to make strong connections between the place, their personal lives, and the larger world."

### **Autonomy and self-determination**

This core category emphasizes autonomy and self-determination as instrumental for the well-being of the SG. It underscores the freedom and possibilities presented by the garden area for the satisfaction of individual –and collective– needs and preferences. The forementioned theses from Carr, Fielman and Stall, Rioux et al. or Varghese resonate with these aspects, which are also supported by the self-devised rules to ensure a harmonious coexistence within

the peer group as well as with other demographic groups, thus underscoring autonomy and self-determination as collectivist and empathic.

### **Social and interpersonal dynamics**

The characteristics of the social and interpersonal dynamics of the SG, show to align with the aspects of these dynamics referred to in the definition of social space -regarding its interpersonal dynamics and usage considerations-, active use / engagement -experience with a place and the people within it-, hybrid spaces -as relevant for the well-being as well as for the socialization and development from individuals and communities-, space appropriation and place attachment -regarding the bond between individuals and their meaningful environments-, and gentrification – where users establish interpersonal and social dynamics with alien demographic groups and types of users and experience alternative social values and cultural trends (7.1.1.1; 7.1.1.3; 7.1.1.2; 7.1.2.1; 7.1.2.2; 7.1.3 of the present bachelor thesis).

## **8.2 Central findings in relation to the research questions**

This chapter takes into consideration the integration of the results of different research areas and blocks in order to answer the research questions. The main research question “**With a focus on the appropriation of hybrid spaces, what’s the perspective and needs of children under the age of 14 regarding the use of the garden area at the UAS St. Pölten and what opportunities for action arise from it for social work?**” is answered by addressing its specific aspects through the secondary research questions.

### ■ How do children under 14 use the garden area?

The usage of the area by the target group is characterized by active engagement in the form of games and sporting activities. Through it, the users aim to establish meaningful interpersonal and groups dynamics -with peers and other demographic groups and users. Autonomy and self-determination are also observable on how the children engage in and with the area and on the self-devised rules to ensure a positive coexistence.

The target group, represented by the SG, feels identified with the area, with which they develop place attachment through space appropriation. This is observable through the unforeseen use of the area or the exercise of spatial rights -mainly access, freedom of access and claim- as described by Lynch and Carr (1995).

### ■ Regarding this area’s use, which are the views and needs of the focus group?

The target group show to perceive the outer area of the UAS St. Pölten as a whole. They seem unaware of its formal space distribution -i.e. which part is responsibility of the municipality and which of the university. It shows that their views and needs go beyond spatial organization and ownership and that, as long as the space is accessible, available, attractive, and adequate,

they will use it -in a way, they feel entitled to do it. They also recognize the space as shared with other population groups and users.

The SG values the area and the freedom and opportunities it presents. Yet, they suggest some improvements centered on an inclusive, welcoming, and functional environment for them and for others. Their specific needs are related to their active engagement in the area -drinking fountains, leisure and sporting equipment / areas, better illumination, etc.-, their well-being and positive coexistence with others, and their involvement in some operational or planning aspects of the area.

■ Which conflicts / frictions present hybrid spaces (Focus FH)?

The SG reported an absence of conflicts with other demographic groups and individuals. Nevertheless, they are aware of the potential for irritations arising from their use of the area - for example, due to being loud or running around. The SG also emphasized the importance of keeping the area in good condition and pointed to disrespectful behavior -such as littering and damaging property- as a source of irritation.

■ Which potentials / opportunities for social work intervention arise from the appropriation of the outdoor area (garden)?

Hybrid spaces play a meaningful social role and present potentials and positive aspects from a societal perspective (Allies, 2023; Varghese, 2019). Nevertheless, the increasing privatization that creates those spaces also shows restrictive and excluding effects (Nissen, 2008). In turn, space appropriation, which is also observable in hybrid spaces, presents some relevant potential regarding the exercise of spatial rights defined by Lynch and Carr (1995), especially the rights of access, freedom of action and claim. Based on this, social work can play not only a mediating role, but can also tackle these complex phenomena through:

- Research and actualization on new trends and phenomena related to hybrid spaces, space appropriation and place attachment, and gentrification, as well as their contact points, interactions, synergies.
- Work on the social potential of hybrid spaces and the new contexts they open for social and interpersonal dynamics.
- Tackle restrictive and excluding effects of privatization by
- working with stakeholders, communities, and individuals.
- Tackle the risks of gentrification: exclusion, stratification, inequality, or displacement.
- Work on inclusion, social justice, and environmental / sustainability issues.

Methods and areas relevant or involved, e.g. in the garden area, could be:

- Empowerment
- Community work, youth work, ...
- Eco-social work



## 8.3 Implications

The following are the implications of the results both for the UAS St. Pölten and the social work profession.

### 8.3.1 For the UAS St. Pölten

Understanding the characteristics of the garden area of the UAS and its users -groups and individuals-, as well as how they engage with it and in it can help build and support a democratic, inclusive space where users can feel welcome and satisfy their collective and individual needs. It can also strengthen its position in the local community, as well as in the municipality, as a valuable stakeholder and partner.

“Democratic spaces protect the rights of user groups. They are accessible to all groups and provide for freedom of action but also for temporary claim and ownership.”. He adds “Meaningful spaces are those that allow people to make strong connections between the place, their personal lives, and the larger world.” (Carr, 1995)

### 8.3.2 For social work

The answer to the question “Which potentials / opportunities for social work intervention arise from the appropriation of the outdoor area (garden)?” are just an approach to some of the implications of the conducted research for social work. The central aspect would be the need for further research in new concepts and phenomena, aiming to actualize the profession in order to adapt to the evolving characteristics of demographic groups and individuals and their also evolving needs / problems / realities.

## 8.4 Limitations and next steps

Due to time and organizational limitations, there were some difficulties to iterate the empiric research in form of additional interviews with experts, stakeholders, etc. Therefore, the circularity of the research inherent to Grounded Theory had to be rethought. To observe to standards of the used research method, the collected data form empirical research stage was compared and confronted to the data from the desktop research. In this regard, forward interviews / FGD's would have been ideal.

For more representative data, further non-participant field observations should be conducted in a regular basis for a longer period and in different pre-planned times of the day / week / year.

This research focused on neighboring children under the age of 14. As a first approach to the topic of this research, the amount of personal data and characteristics collected and analyzed was limited. Further researches on the topic could consider additional data (family

constellations, cultural aspects, financial status, etc.) in order to deepen on the understanding of the topics addressed in this Thesis.

It would be interesting to research more about gentrification processes in the area, which realities and phenomena they build or influence –displacement, inequality, segregation, social stratification, exclusion, cultural turn, environmental aspects, etc.– from a social work perspective.

## 8.5 Summary

As a result of the bachelor project Bib Space, which aimed to research the synergies of the library of the UAS St. Pölten with its surroundings and the diverse social groups represented in them, three focus areas were established: administration, inner areas of the library and outer space. With the last as a starting point, preliminary non-participant observations and research were conducted. They helped identify the outer area of the university as hybrid and suggested that the urban planning of the municipality as well as its characteristics and the situation of the children living there -age, milieu, etc.-, results in a lack of adequate areas for them to play, socialize and experience, and thus in an engagement in available nearby spaces -e.g. the garden of the UAS St. Pölten- and their following appropriation. This suggested a problem outline and narrowed down the target group and topic of this bachelor thesis to the appropriation of hybrid spaces by children under 14 with a focus on the garden of the UAS St. Pölten. For it, a qualitative research was designed and carried out in two phases: a desktop research, in order to build a background on characteristics and phenomena associated to social spaces and hybrid spaces, and an empirical research compressing the conducted non-participant field observations and a focus group discussion (FGD), to collect the personal experiences and views of the target group.

### **Desktop research**

With a focus on the bachelor thesis' topic, the desktop research phase addressed social space; place attachment, space appropriation and colonization; and gentrification.

The research on social space presented it as defined by dimensional, interpersonal, usage and contextual considerations, and evolving with societies. A sort of classification can be established through private, public, communal, and hybrid spaces and their limits can be strong or diffuse. The categorization results not only from the ownership of the spaces, but also from their overlap and the phenomena it produces, like in hybrid spaces. Regarding the last ones, they allow for restricted or unrestricted access and are a result of contemporary socio-spatial functions and privatization tendencies and are a responsibility of both private interests and city administrators. Yet they have a multipurpose function of social significance, present potentials and positive aspects, and play an instrumental role from a societal perspective. Regarding the use of social space, it categorizes in two main types of engagement: passive engagement - recreational, observational use of space without interactions with others- and active engagement -active use of a place and personal interaction with the people in it.

Place attachment, appropriation of space and colonization are phenomena and processes occurring in social spaces. Place attachment is the result of the sequence functional utility of space → sociocultural identity of the built environment → culture of community → sense of place, which is categorized by two types of bonds: place attachment -a positive bonding between individuals and their meaningful environments- and place identity -where the individual as part of the identity of the place. This shares similarities with space appropriation; the process where space is transformed into place through claim -also called appropriation-, one of the five spatial rights defined by Lynch (1981, as cited in Carr, 1995) and instrumental in relation to freedom of use and control for individuals to achieve their goals in public (and hybrid) spaces. Space appropriation intends, through it, to achieve certain states of privacy (Westin, 1967, as cited in Carr, 1995), of which the most relevant are anonymity and intimacy. In this process, individuals not only transform the physical environment, but also themselves. This phenomena and processes have resulted in several experiences in the last decades, from the rave scene to the Temporary Autonomous Zones (TAZ), where a variety of spaces have been colonized in order to achieve anonymity and intimacy as well as freedom from interaction and control. They sought alternative ways of coexistence and the satisfaction of individual and collective needs through the exercise of spatial, self-determination and social participation rights.

Gentrification is defined as the renovation and upgrading of centrally districts and residential areas resulting in the displacement of residents. It was first described in the nineties after observing middle-class populations displacing working-class communities in London due to urban renewal and economic changes. Further studies recognized its broad impacts on cities, including cultural shifts brought by new residents and socio-economic changes driven by public-private partnerships and large-scale investments. Gentrification presents as a socio-ecological process that not only transforms social structures, leading to decreased cultural diversity and increased middle-class dominance but also raises significant environmental concerns due to its high ecological footprint and resultant inequalities in resource access. While gentrification contributes to urban transformation and cultural turn, it also leads to exclusion, displacement, and social stratification, underlining its complex impact of its impact on urban landscapes.

### **Focus Group Discussion (FGD)**

The analysis of the data collected through the FGD highlights several insights into how the SG interacts in and with the garden area, and how they perceive it. The interventions of the participants revealed that the SG's engagement with the space is primarily active and influenced by a variety of needs, mostly centered on a welcoming and functional environment. The children expressed a strong desire for playgrounds and adequate leisure and sports facilities adapted to their active lifestyle. They also highlighted the need for better lighting to enhance usability and safety, especially during the shorter days of winter.

Social and interpersonal interactions play a crucial role in the SG's use of the garden; they represent both the method and the primary goal of their interactions. The children enjoy the

space for its socializing potential, particularly appreciating interactions with peers and other population groups and users, like students and university staff. These dynamics are regarded as positive and result in a sense of community and empathy, which is instrumental for the positive coexistence in the garden as a shared space. The SG values visual appearance and polyvalence of the garden. Likewise, the need for the space to accommodate diverse groups and activities shows as relevant for the children.

Well-being is also significant for the SG. They stressed the importance of equipment that enhances the feeling of safety, such as adequate lighting. Additionally, infrastructural elements like sufficient trash cans and accessible drinking water are seen as essential for maintaining the area in good condition and having an influence on the collective and individual well-being.

The SG's active use of the garden includes a variety of sports and games, indicating a dynamic interaction with the space. This active engagement is one of the main sources of the infrastructural needs and wishes referred by the participants, for whom it is instrumental that the garden meets the existing and evolving needs of its users. In this regard, the SG values the participation and involvement in the garden's design and operation.

Inclusivity shows as a key aspect, with the SG advocating for a garden that serves not just children but also other users and demographic groups like the elderly. This approach highlights a collective responsibility to ensure the garden is inclusive and supportive of all users.

Autonomy and self-determination seem instrumental for the well-being of the SG, who value the freedom and possibilities that the area provide for satisfying their personal and collective needs, which results in place attachment and space appropriation. Self-determination and autonomy show to extend beyond the use of the space and involve playing a role on its design, transformation and improvement through participation and involvement. The development of inclusive rules reflects a collective, empathetic approach. Additionally, the SG's perception of the space crucially impacts their interaction, with factors like space distribution and area design being key to stimulating or limiting autonomy and self-determination.

Overall, the FGD underscores that the engagement of the SG with the garden at UAS is multifaceted and influenced by their needs. The children envision a functional and polyvalent garden that offers a safe, inclusive, and enjoyable space for all its users. For it, a community-centered design that supports and promotes autonomy, self-determination, and positive social and interpersonal dynamics, is instrumental. These aspects are likewise crucial for fostering a strong sense of place attachment and a robust community life within the garden area.

### **Integration of results**

The integration of the results served as a visualization of the topics of the desktop research and as a theoretical framing for the empirical research (see 8.1: Integrating the desktop research and the empirical research). In this regard both research blocks confirmed and supported each other.

## Central findings

The central findings aimed to reply to the research questions and concluded that:

- Children actively engage with the garden area through games and sports, fostering interpersonal and group dynamics with peers and other users. They display autonomy and self-determination, even creating their own rules for positive coexistence. Their attachment to the area is evident through both expected and unforeseen uses and exercising spatial rights like access and freedom
- The SG perceive the garden as a whole space, regardless of formal boundaries or ownership by the municipality or the university. They prioritize accessibility, attractiveness, and adequacy of the space over formal spatial organization. Likewise, the SG suggested improvements focus on inclusivity and functionality, such as installing drinking fountains, providing leisure and sports facilities, improving lighting, and involving them in operational or planning aspects.
- While direct conflicts with other groups are absent, the SG is aware of potential irritations from their activities -such as noise, dynamic and active engagement, etc. They also emphasized the importance of maintaining the area and respecting shared spaces to avoid behaviors like littering or damage to the equipment.
- Hybrid spaces are socially meaningful but can also reflect the restricting and excluding effects of privatization. Social work can mediate and address issues like exclusion due to privatization and gentrification, social stratification, or displacement. Potential social work interventions include researching trends in hybrid space use, fostering community and youth engagement, or promoting eco-social initiatives, amongst others. Strategies may involve empowerment, addressing social injustice, or supporting environmental sustainability.

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# Data

- FGD Audio recording
- FGD Transcript
- Posters
- Non-participant field observations

# Abbreviations

FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GDPR	Data Protection Basic Regulation (in German “ <i>DSGVO – Datenschutz-Grundverordnung</i> ”)
SG	Sample Group
TAZ	Temporary Autonomous Zones

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# Attachments

- FGD guideline – List of questions used for the Focus Group Discussion

## FGD Guidelines and questions

### General

4 eyes principle  
DSO Declaration of consent  
Participation permission from parents / legal guardians

### Method

Group discussion  
Talking stick

### Scheduling and participants

Moderator: Enric Torras  
Participants: a, b, c, d, ... (neighboring children)  
Location: FH Library  
Date and time: 18.01 / 17:00  
Duration: approximately one hour

### Materials

Recording device  
Filming device  
Flipchart paper and drawing materials  
Sticky notes / cards  
Drinks and snacks

### Questions

#### Current area usage

1. Warum nutzt ihr den Garten der FH?
2. Welche Bereiche nutzt ihr?
3. Wann nutzt ihr diese Bereiche?
4. Was macht ihr dort?
5. Was gefällt euch?
6. Was gefällt euch nicht?
7. Was ist euch wichtig?

8. Was braucht ihr? Was fehlt euch?
9. Was bietet der Garten, was andere Flächen in der Umgebung nicht haben?

### **Rules and structure**

10. Wer ist für den Garten und andere Außenbereiche zuständig?
11. Welche Regeln gelten für den Bereich?
12. An wen kann man sich wenden, wenn etwas passiert, oder wenn man etwas mitteilen will?
13. Welche Kommunikationskanäle gibt es?

### **Dynamics with other groups / users**

14. Wie ist die Dynamik (Beziehung / Interaktion / Atmosphäre...) mit anderen Nutzer:innen (Student:innen, Nachbar:innen, Nicht-Student:innen, Jugendliche)?  
*Alternativ: Wie geht es euch mit den anderen Nutzer:innen?*
15. Was ist positiv an dieser Dynamik?
16. Habt ihr irgendwelche Konflikte gehabt?
17. Wenn ja, welche und wie wurden sie gelöst?

### **Vision**

18. Eure Meinung nach, sollte etwas verbessert werden?
19. Wenn ja, wie könnte es passieren?
20. Wie findet ihr die Beteiligung / Partizipation am generellen Betrieb des Gartens (z.B. Entscheidungsfindung, Aktivitäten, etc.)? Wie wichtig wäre es?
21. *Wenn es positiv wäre*, wie stellt ihr euch vor, dass dies passieren könnte?

### **Summary (with visual representation)**

Did we forget anything? Would they like to add something?

Summarize the topic in short sentences / terms (words)

Sketch how the ideal outer area and the usage of space would look

- Field observation sample

## Beobachtung 2

Allgemeine Angaben	
Beobachter:in	Enric
Örtlichkeit	BIB (außen)
Uhrzeit von - bis	17:00-18:35
Anzahl der Personen im Laufe der Beobachtungsspanne	11
Spezifische Beobachtungen	
Personen: Wer ist vor Ort? Wie und wobei sehe ich die Personen?	<p>P1, P2, P3 3 männlich gelesene Personen. Jugendliche</p> <p>P4 und P5 2 männlich gelesene Personen. Erwachsene</p> <p>P6 1 weiblich gelesene Person mit einem Hund.</p> <p>P7 und P8 1 weiblich gelesene Person und 1 männlich gelesene Person.</p> <p>ExtMa1 1 weiblich gelesene Person. Reinigungskraft der FH. Mitarbeiter:in der Reinigungsfirma „Hellrein“.</p> <p>P9 und P10 1 weiblich gelesene Person und 1 männlich gelesene Person. Erwachsene. Über 50? Mit Hund</p> <p>Entfernte Beobachtung vom <i>outdoor teaching space</i> Sitzgelegenheiten.</p> <p>Die Personen sind am meisten in ihrer Freizeit.</p>
Interaktionen: Was machen die Menschen vor Ort? Wer tritt mit wem in Kontakt? Wie treten Personen in Kontakt?	<p>17:00</p> <p>P1, P2, P3 sitzen vor der dritten Koje (beginnend an der Außentür der BIB) auf einem Almdudler Liegestuhl. Tun etwas unsichtbar unter dem Tisch (schaut so aus, als ob sie es verstecken</p>

	<p>wollten). 1 Elektroroller steht auf der Seite. Hören Musik auf einem Handy.</p> <p>17:33 Einer der Jungen bekommt an Anruf, steht auf, distanziert sich ein bisschen von der Gruppe und spricht (unverständlich). Kommt zurück 2 Minuten später.</p> <p>17:36 Die drei Jungen verlassen den Bereich in unterschiedlichen Richtungen (2 Richtung BIZ zusammen auf dem Elektroroller und der dritte Richtung Mathias Corvinus Straße).</p> <p>17:45 P4 + P5 sind gekommen und sitzen auf einer Bank bei den Bauarbeiten. Sie haben eine Flasche mit einer orangen farbigen Flüssigkeit mit.</p> <p>17:57 P6 ist mit einem Hund gekommen. Sie sitzt auf der Wiese bei der Terrasse der Mensa. Spielt mit dem Hund.</p> <p>18:02 P4 + P5 sind zusammen gegangen Richtung Wohngebäude in der Eybnerstraße.</p> <p>18:10 P6 steht auf, sitzt am Tisch auf der Terrasse von Mensa und beobachtet den Hund.</p> <p>18:15 P6 Geht durch Heinrich-Schneidmadl-Straße Richtung Herzogenburger Straße.</p> <p>18:25 P7 + P8 Sitzen nebeneinander im 2. Koj (beginnend an der Außentür der BIB). Essen etwas aus einer Mac Donalds Papiertüte.</p> <p>18:30</p>
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	<p>ExtMa1 räumt die Koje, wo P1, P2 und P3 waren, aus. Dann sitzt in Koje 1 und raucht (schaut wie eine Zigarette aus).</p> <p>18:35 P9 + P10 kommen mit einem Hund. Sie lehnen sich an eine der Sitzgelegenheiten auf dem <i>outdoor teaching space</i>, unterhalten sich (nicht unterscheidbar) und rauchen (etwas, das wie Zigarretten aussieht).</p> <p>18:40 Ende der Beobachtung</p>
<p>Was das Feld mir mitteilt: Wer spricht mit mir? Welche Themen werden mir berichtet? Wie wird gesprochen?</p>	<p>Aufgrund der nicht teilnehmenden Beobachtung, war die Interaktion Forscher-beobachteten Personen begrenzt und, wenn möglich, vermeidet.</p>
Reflexion/Interpretation	
<p>Protokollnotizen Was habe ich beobachtet? Was nehme ich an, ist da passiert? Was habe ich gesehen? Was habe ich gehört? Was habe ich gerochen? Was habe ich gefühlt?</p>	<p>2 Hunde. Kein Kontakt unter unterschiedlichen Gruppen. Verbreite Nutzung des Bereichs (Besetzung des gesamten Areals). Mehrere Raucher:innen. Rollpapierreste. Generell sauber und ordentlich.</p>
<p>Wie ist es mir ergangen?</p>	<p>Alles in Ordnung.</p>
<p>Welchen Eindruck habe ich gewonnen – wessen Sicht nehme ich ein? Was sind meine Interpretationen und Deutungsmodelle?</p>	<p>Offene WLAN FH empfänglich von Garten?</p> <p>Unzureichender Zugang zu Hundekotbeuteln, Mistkübeln.</p> <p>Offener Raum begünstigt Personenverkehr und Raumnutzung.</p> <p>Assoziation: Temporary Autonomous Zones Konzept!</p> <p>Weitere zukünftige Recherche: private, public and hybrid spaces.</p>
<p>Was war beim Beobachten schwierig? Was möchte ich anders machen?</p>	<p>-</p>

■ Data analysis – Grounded theory method sample

Open coding					Axial coding	Selective coding
Line Nr.	Transcription passage	Indicator	concept	Memos	Categories	Core categories
68	"To play with friends?"	Mention of interpersonal dynamics and community	social dynamics	Signals relevance of interpersonal dynamics	Infrastructural needs and wishes	community-centered design
			Active use	Signaled by "play"	Social and interpersonal dynamics	Autonomy and self-determination
			Play	Playing as an important activity for children	Safety	Social and interpersonal dynamics
			Friendship	Activities with familiar group of equals	Well-being	
			Community	Signaled by "friends"	Recreational use	
84	"To get fresh air?"	Undertaking healthy activities.	Well-being	Fresh air as stated as something positive	Active use	

96-97	"I don't know what I wanted to say just now. Umm... because it's fun to play with friends in the garden."	Entertaining and motivating activities	Fun	What brings fun is being outside and playing with others in a group of equals	Participation and involvement	
		Playing together	Play	Playing as an important activity for children	Inclusivity	
			Friendship		Area design - spatial planning	
		implies open access to the garden area	Access	Open access is required in order to play with others in the mentioned area	perceived type of space	
		Activities in outer areas	Outer areas	Signaled by "in the garden"	Space appropriation / place attachment	



# Statutory declaration

I, **Enric Torras**, born on **06.03.1979** in **Bescanó**,  
declare,

that I have written this bachelor's thesis myself,  
have not used any sources or aids other than  
those specified and have not made use of any  
other unauthorized aids,

that I have not submitted my bachelor's thesis as  
an examinational document in any form either  
domestically or abroad,

Ich, **Enric Torras**, geboren am **06.03.1979** in  
**Bescanó**, erkläre,

dass ich diese Bachelorarbeit selbstständig  
verfasst, keine anderen als die angegebenen  
Quellen und Hilfsmittel benutzt und mich auch  
sonst keiner unerlaubten Hilfen bedient habe,

dass ich meine Bachelorarbeit bisher weder im  
In- noch im Ausland in irgendeiner Form als  
Prüfungsarbeit vorgelegt habe,

**St. Pölten, on 22.04.2024**

**Signature / Unterschrift**

A large, stylized handwritten signature in black ink, written over the signature label. The signature is highly cursive and loops around the text.