Can openness be planned? An essay on the temporal dimension in spatial planning
Siegmund, Yvonne

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Yvonne Siegmund

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Yvonne Siegmund

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Abstract

Urban planning processes manoeuvre within the interplay between constantly shifting global, regional and local dynamics. Considering processes from a temporal perspective can therefore provide a key to understanding these complex contexts. Although the time factor is still largely ignored in planning practice, some exceptions, such as *rapid planning* or *slow urbanism,* experiment with it. In these cases, planning processes are either accelerated and simplified or expanded and designed openly. This essay focuses on the slow, open-process developments of creative quarters in Munich and Hamburg. In both cases, the temporal dimension will be used to elucidate path dependencies in the negotiation and design of urban spaces.

Keywords

Time – temporalities – planning time – space-time – slow urbanism – fast urbanism – open planning – creative quarter – acceleration – deceleration – own times – timescapes – time structures – openness – flexibility

1   Making planning time visible

> *'Three questions have always driven and preoccupied me in my research:*
> *Which causes and motives are connected with the structuring of space?*
> *How does built space influence our actions?*
> *And how can I decipher these hidden connections and make them visible and explicable?*
> *I am convinced that the temporal dimension represents a key to this.'*

In *The smallest possible intervention*, which was written between 1979 and 1981, Lucius Burckhardt expressed surprise at spatial planning – more precisely, at '[...] how seldom such time-related information is included in it, and how seldom the planner admits that they are unable to predict the course of events. This is probably because the urbanist planner has learnt to deal with space but not to have an overview of time. The planner sees time simply as the empty elapsing of in-between spaces [...]. There seems to be no sense of the fact that the time of planning itself is the actual time that we live in, that our life does not pass in the time of realisation but in the time of planning'. (Burckhardt 2013: 51).

2   Time structures in transition

There have been increased attempts for some years now to combine the strands of space and time research more closely together – in planning practice, however, this connection is still far too rarely addressed. This is surprising, since the discrepancies and tensions between political, structural, economic and civic society perceptions of time and objectives now emerge more clearly than ever in city planning. This development can be partially explained by upheavals in the structure of time within society. In the areas of cultural studies and the social sciences which research time – for example, philosophy and geography – the focus for decades was on social acceleration processes. However, the theory of incessant acceleration is strongly criticised today. It is argued that acceleration is a problem that has long since been overcome and is now only a symptom of temporal scattering or 'dyschrony' (Han 2009: 7), since people today lack order, rhythm, stability and a meaningful sense of duration.

Although the causes are assessed differently, there seems to be agreement about the social consequences: acceleration, flexibilisation and fragmentation increasingly characterise everyday worlds. And these tensions, also referred to as a 'blurring of boundaries' (Läpple/Mückenberger/Oßenbrügge 2010), are increasingly reflected in a changed use of the city. Urban spaces with numerous, dense and overlapping functions and infrastructures, similarities and contrasts, events and possibilities are searched for and formed by so-called 'time pioneers' who have to manage their unpredictable everyday life flexibly (Oßenbrügge/Vogelpohl 2010). They are the pioneers of dissolving living and working environments, as explained by Hartmut Rosa: events, actions and processes increasingly lose their time, their expectable duration, their 'place in the temporal sequence' (Rosa 2009: 33). Unpredictability, openness, and multi-optionality are part of everyday reality for more and more people, and these social developments are increasingly, although still too rarely, the starting point for planning activity.

Exemption clauses or plans attempt to integrate the temporal dimension into their processes, for example the *accelerated processes* (*section 13a and b Federal Building Code*) anchored (in some cases temporarily) in the Federal Building Code, the *Rapid Planning* research project , or comprehensive urban strategies such as *Città Slow* and *Slow Urbanism*. If, therefore, planning strategies are temporally 'labelled', this is done predominantly with reference to speeds, with either *fast and targeted* or *slow and open-processed* planning. Planning thus attempts to react dynamically to overarching

economies, as well as to local needs, with a suitable tempo. But what are the limits to accelerated and decelerated planning? And what happens when they are exceeded? These questions lead me to the following theory.

3   Compensation theory

Accelerated processes are often accompanied by their opposite, i.e. by 'delay, retardation and deceleration' (Rosa 2005: 51 et seq.). Aleida Assmann explains this phenomenon using the compensation theory by the philosophers Joachim Ritter, Hermann Lübbe and Odo Marquard as follows: in our accelerated world, which itself cannot be changed, breaks and idle times must be incorporated in order to make it more bearable for people (Assmann 2013: 210 et seq.). The dynamic of modernity is therefore no longer linear, but rather – in a far more complex and sometimes paradoxical way – is characterised by a coexistence of opposites (cf. ibid.: 226). Breaks and idle times have now become deceleration trends in leisure time with concepts such as *mindfulness* and *offtime*, while *slow business* is a concept in the working world. *Work-life blending*, i.e. the blurring of boundaries between work and leisure time by means of yoga breaks integrated into the working day or *sabbaticals* – all these things are intended to provide orientation and clarity, and ultimately to optimise work processes.

This essay discusses decelerated planning approaches in two so-called *creative quarters* in Munich und in Hamburg. In both places, the municipal authorities are attempting to maintain built structures and to shape neighbourhood development together with the user community in an open process.

4   Case analyses

4.1   The Munich laboratory in the creative quarter on the Dachauer Strasse

Fig. 1: Impression of the Munich laboratory (2017) / Photo: Yvonne Siegmund

After the realisation of the ambitious design by Kazunari Sakamoto for the replanning of the *Werkbund settlement* (*Werkbundsiedlung*) was rejected in 2007, the city of Munich saw an opportunity in 2011 to announce a competition for coherent planning for the approx. 20-hectare *creative quarter*. The special feature of this site was, and is, its lively cultural and creative scene, which has been established in the north-western area since the 1990s. Thus, a *creative quarter* existed long before the competition of the same name was announced. The intention was to keep the creative uses but to move them to the southern part, while in the main part of the site, approximately 900 apartments were to be created with a social infrastructure, office spaces, retail trade and educational institutions.

The competition for an urban development idea was won by the offices Teleinternet-cafe and TH Landschaftsarchitekten, although they evaluated and addressed the main principles of the competition in a different way. They subdivided the area into four development sites (*laboratory, field, park* and *platform*) and recommended developing each of these at different speeds and within different timeframes. According to their assessment, the approximately five-hectare *laboratory* area, with its creative scene, constituted the centrepiece in which structures should be maintained and only successively converted or expanded. With this approach, the competition winners multiplied the required creative use within the site. An additional green open space known as the *park* area, located between the *laboratory* and the listed hall buildings,

meant that the required 900 housing units had to be accommodated densely and quickly in the *field* and *platform* areas. On the other hand, a great deal of time was allocated to development in the *laboratory* to generate impulses for the entire quarter (more information: Teleinternetcafe, undated).

There was palpable euphoria in the *laboratory* when the competition was won: numerous workshops and art events took place under the motto 'A new start'. Soon, the Munich Laboratory (*Labor München*) initiative (now an association) was also founded on the site: a cooperative community of artists, creative businesses and socio-cultural stakeholders.

The subsequent Regulation on the Awarding of Contracts for Freelance Services (*Vergabeordnung für freiberufliche Leistungen, VOF*) process was also won by the competition winners, and in 2014 they developed a framework plan which recommended structural-spatial stipulations in potential temporal developments within the regulations and structural guideline.
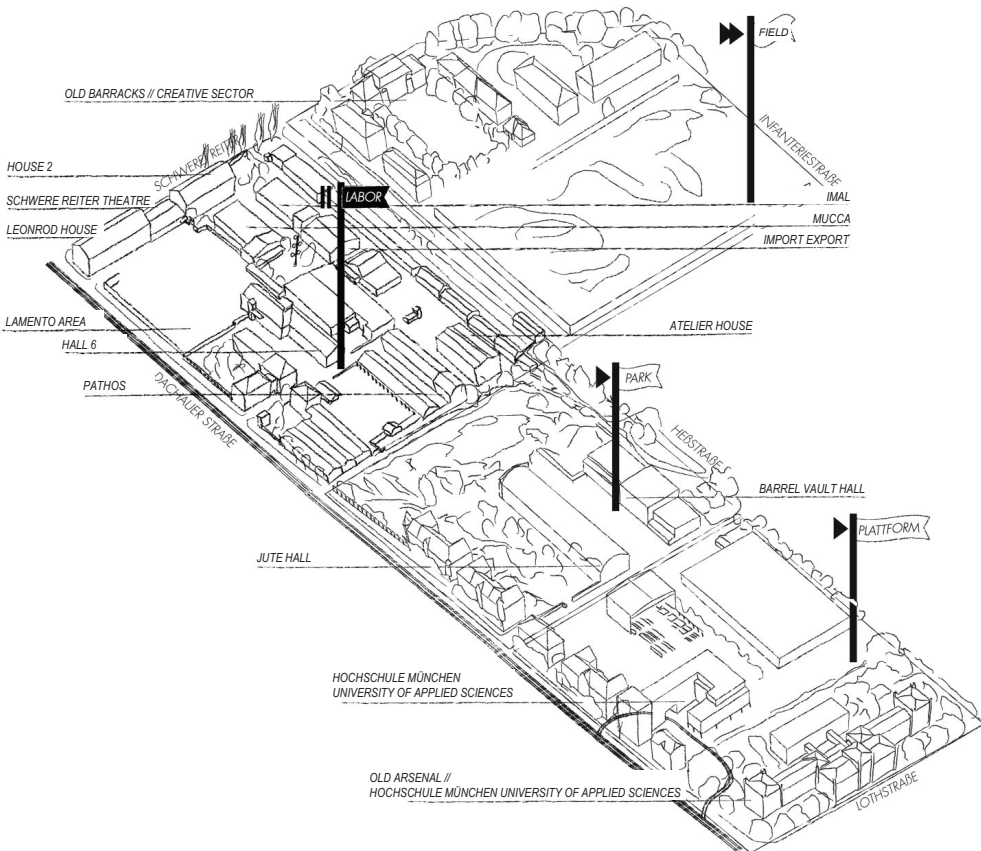

Fig. 2: View of the laboratory in the Munich creative quarter (2018) / Source: the author

Seven years have now passed in the *laboratory* since the competition was won. The creative user community has grown and is, in some cases, active in the quarter's management. In 2016, a coordination office was set up, which started upgrading part of the building stock in line with fire protection requirements. However, not every building could be maintained. The demolition of the Lamento hall produced a 6,000-square metre hole in the *laboratory*. Since space-time gaps in the neighbourhood are to be avoided, not only is interim use made of the existing building stock, but provisional arrangements are also experimented with in vacated areas – such as the vacated *Lamento area*.

4.2 The Hamburg Oberhafen quarter in HafenCity

Fig. 3: Impression of the Oberhafen in Hamburg (2017) / Photo: Yvonne Siegmund

The first creative artists also discovered this unusual place at the end of the 1990s. The *Oberhafen* spans approximately 1,300 metres between the slanting Oberhafen canteen, the *Deichtorhallen* art centre, between the harbour basin and the railway embankment through the north-eastern part of *HafenCity*. Single-floor goods halls and head-end brick buildings characterise the quarter.

Deliberations took place at the end of the 1980s and specific planning from the 1990s for the development of today's *HafenCity*. The master plan in 2000 intended to use the almost seven-hectare *Oberhafen* as an industrial and commercial area. In subsequent years, however, circumstances changed (e.g. because of the financial crisis), while at the same time, difficult spatial constitutions caused headaches for the planning authorities (e.g. flood protection, difficult access, traffic noise). Furthermore, the 'Creative milieus and open spaces in Hamburg' (*Kreative Milieus und offene Räume in*

Hamburg) survey by UC Studio identified the creative potential of *Oberhafen* and deemed it absolutely worthy of protection. This meant that the development of a *creative quarter* was the only logical scenario. Existing halls were to be maintained, space was to be offered for creative use in the low-threshold area, and the future of the place was to be shaped in an open dialogue process with the local stakeholders. In the revised master plan of 2010, the *Oberhafen* was intended to be a space of inspiration which, in the long term, would form the heart of a creative, cross-district networking space.

Since 2003, all the buildings in the *Oberhafen* have been the property of the City and Harbour (*Stadt und Hafen*) special fund of the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg, represented by HafenCity Hamburg GmbH as an urban development company. The last commercial enterprises and shipping agencies moved out in 2013. But it was not until the release of the land from railway use in 2015 that the quarter could be developed intensively, and work was started on regenerating the halls, some of which were 100 years old. Nevertheless, the general situation for the local creative and artistic scene are not easy. The area is not built at a flood-safe level and the technical standards of the buildings are very low, such that investment on the user side has to be compensated by lower rents (cf. HafenCity Hamburg GmbH 2011). New rentals for temporary use are organised in cooperation with the Hamburg Kreativgesellschaft, which also has its premises in *Oberhafen*.

Thus, between 2011 and 2014, an experimentation phase began which was planned to last for approximately 20 years, since by then, the stability of the halls could be guaranteed, urban investment should have been recouped by rental income, and the creative quarter – it is hoped – will have grown and established itself.

Nine years have now passed since the revised master plan. The creative user community has grown, and part of the building stock has been minimally regenerated. However, not every built structure could be retained. Part of Hall 4 had to give way to sports facilities. No decision has yet been made about the demolition of the rail hall roof between Halls 2 and 3.
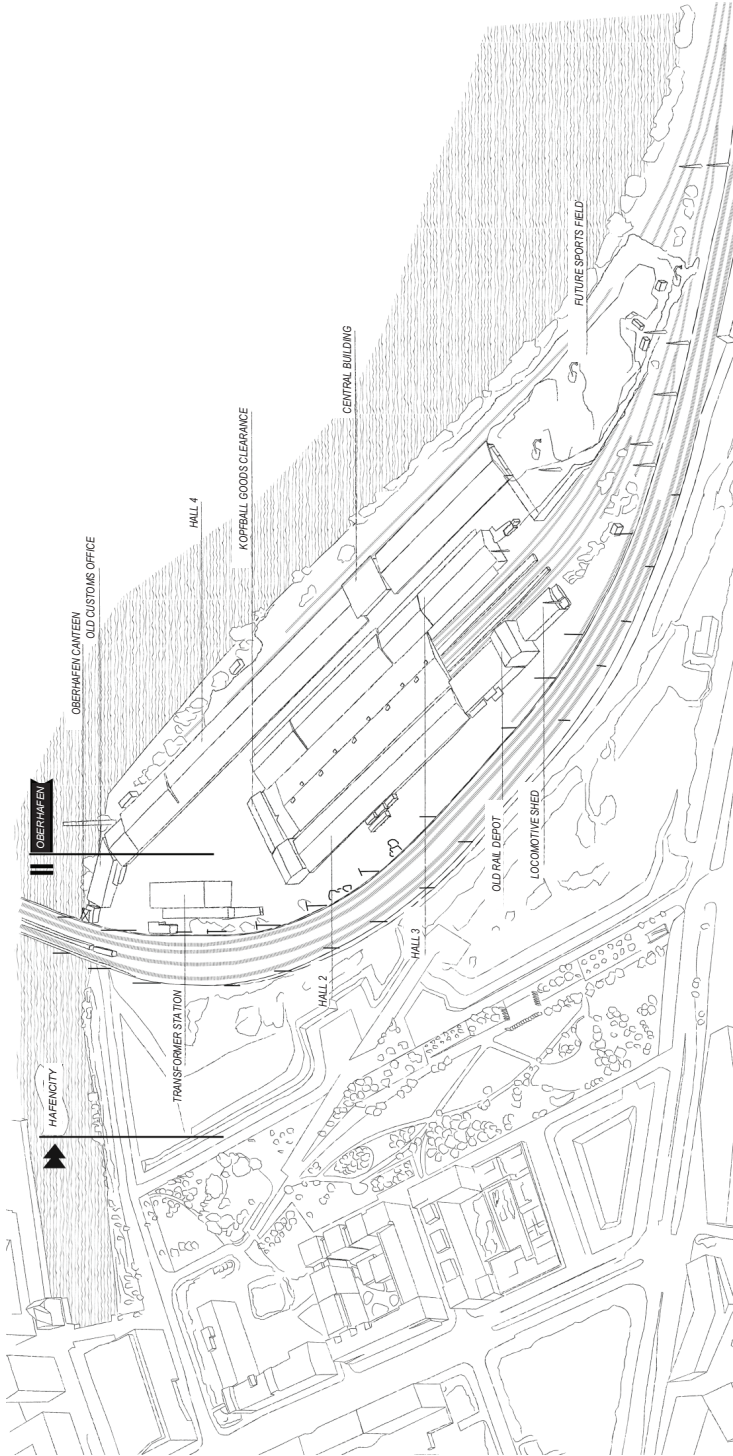
Fig. 4: View of Oberhafen in HafenCity (2018) / Source: the author

5   Compensation levels

The following questions arise when considering both quarters: Is openness plannable? And can a creative quarter be planned? Although it may not be possible to answer these key questions or to resolve the associated paradoxes, they form a connection with the *compensation theory* which I will outline in the following, using the examples of three observed phenomena. The continuation of my theory is namely that the slow and open-process approaches offer the necessary breaks, idle times and also outlets in a linear, and in some cases increasingly accelerating, planning culture. And these compensatory outlets take effect at the spatial, processual and social level.

5.1   Space-time compensation

The competition winners were only able to legitimise the maintenance of the building stock and the slow development of the *laboratory* with the aid of a proposal for the fast implementation of two of the three adjoining areas: the *field* and *the platform*. Thus, these two areas function as outlets for the development pressure in Munich. While housing would be created there rapidly, in the adjacent *laboratory,* creative spaces would be further developed and things would be allowed to emerge. Conversely, however, this legitimation (speed enables slowness) can explain the principle of the compensation theory postulated here (speed cannot exist without slowness). At this point, I will take up the thoughts of Ritter et al. again and apply them to the Munich and Hamburg quarters. The *Oberhafen*, too, constitutes a break from large-scale demolition, rebuilding and reprogramming in comparison with the rest of *HafenCity* – similarly to the Munich *laboratory* in comparison with the rest of the creative quarter. Both locations are intended to develop autonomously, and function, in a sense, as oases of deceleration and possibility spaces in rapidly changing, thoroughly planned neighbourhoods (Fig. 2 and 4).

5.2   Compensation in the planning process

The quarter scale, in turn, reveals a further dialectic: time, as a dimension in the life of a society, can neither be increased nor multiplied but can only be compensated or compressed (cf. Rosa 2016: 34). Thus, for the Munich departments and the Hamburg authorities, compensation means avoiding space-time gaps in the development of quarters. The slow wheel must keep on turning continuously – without breaks. Thus, the building fabric and local features are maintained, but spaces must be made available for temporary use at short notice, quickly and flexibly. This strategy is as reasonable as it is paradoxical: on the one hand, the short-term nature of the uses outwardly extends the provisional arrangements, while on the other, this means that the frequently necessary fire protection measures, authorisations and room rentals must be implemented at short notice and quickly. Accordingly, not every task and planning phase proceeds at an even pace, let alone slowly (cf. Siegmund 2018: 72 et seq.).

5.3   Compensation at the stakeholder level

In both quarters, those involved in the process shape its course and their spaces. On the basis of the interviews I conducted, I was able to identify four planning types which, at the start, fundamentally differed from each other in their typical proper times and understanding of the process. It was exciting to see their development in the slow, drawn-out negotiation processes, since these required the rethinking of handed-down roles and responsibilities. Thus, the negotiations in the *laboratory* and in *Oberhafen* also changed those involved in the process.

The planners: The planning instances originally really understood the time over which planning takes place to be merely an intermediate phase. First and foremost, they pursued the aim of completion – the path was linear and clearly timed. When the decision was made to retain and develop a creative quarter, many (but not all) adapted to the sluggish negotiation process. They accepted several possible futures and tried to create the prerequisites for flexible, creative interim solutions.

The creatives: Creative thought and work is usually intrinsic and iterative and works through immersion and quality. This cyclical mode of thinking is naturally connected to a continually extended present. Long-term projects are rarer, and thus long-term objectives are vague. The future is uncertain. But the creative types, too, adapted to the planning process. To do so, it was partly necessary to organise themselves, even to institutionalise themselves, in order to be able to formulate and assert common goals. Some of them are now active in managing the quarter (the quarter's office in Munich; the '5+1' model in Hamburg) and helping to develop the city; thus, they themselves are becoming planners to a certain extent (see also the coordinators).

The coordinators: Their areas of work were initially set up as temporary interfaces in the course of both planning processes. The coordinators are themselves 'all-rounders' who have already gathered experience in art, business and in some cases also in planning. On the part of either the departments or the authorities, they provide local coordination of spaces and processes (e.g. the *Hamburg Kreativ Gesellschaft* or the coordination office in the Competence Team for the Cultural and Creative Sector (*Kompetenzteam für Kultur und Kreativwirtschaft*) in Munich). Or they are coordinators from the user community: whereas the quarter's office in Munich focuses on public relations work, the elected members of the 5+1 model in Hamburg represent and network the Oberhafen community. This interface work has established and perpetuated itself in the course of the process.

The impulse-setters: This refers to individual persons, organisations and institutions which did not constantly participate in the planning process but nonetheless decisively influenced it by one-off or repeated visits or formative interventions. They inspired and set the course, steered planning processes sustainably and also seemed to stabilise themselves in the process.

6   Living planning time

According to the compensatory dialectic, we in the modern world must experience speed as well as slowness (cf. Assmann 2013: 231; Marquard 2003: 239). And in both quarter developments, the principle of these opposites and the tension between them becomes clear. These opposites should be understood not as contradictions but as a paradoxical manifestation of our time (cf. Assmann 2013: 226). Flexible, fast and short-term solutions are equally necessary aspects in a careful process as are compromises and synchronisation, deals and tolerance, or expanded competences and new interfaces. In conversation with one participant, the apt term 'swing process' was mentioned, since both projects are permanently chafing against dichotomies, acting and reacting between acceleration and deceleration, stability and instability, trust and responsibility, coordination and letting go, dynamism and standstills. It seems that a balance must be permanently created in the development of both quarters, which juggles the interests of an accelerated economic usage pressure, the protection of the invested rights of the creative temporary user community, the future interests of residents and the inclusion of provisionalities and unplanned occurrences. And it is this swinging which makes the slow and open processes and spaces so dynamic.

We recall the quote by Lucius Burckhardt, and his astonishment that planning time is merely understood as an empty elapsing of in-between spaces. Even today, urban planning processes and negotiations predominantly take place covertly, and neighbourhoods stand still until the diggers roll up. Or participation is often just a backdrop, a 'particitainment' 'behind which everything stays the same' (Selle 2011). However, in both *creative quarters*, smart decisions and mistakes, provisionalities and protests continually change the urban space (Fig. 1 and 3). Not only creative processes but also negotiation processes become visible in the city. That's life!

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The author

Yvonne Siegmund (*b. 1981*) *studied architecture at the Technical University of Munich and Urban Design at the HafenCity University in Hamburg. After her first degree, she was employed in work and detailed planning and later worked at the Technical University of Munich at the Chair for Urban Architecture under Prof. Dietrich Fink on a densification study for the Munich region, as well as teaching and research at HafenCity University in urban design and neighbourhood planning led by Prof. Dr. Michael Koch. She held a scholarship in the Pro-Exzellenzia programme and is a PhD student in the Forschungslabor Raum International Doctoral Colloquium. In her PhD, she is examining neighbourhood developments as a function of time and temporality. She also addresses the temporal perspective in (sub)urban spaces in her photographs: www.heyvisiona.com.*