

TALK

**ETHOLOGY AS A TOOL IN URBAN PLANNING**

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**ABSTRACT**

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In this talk we present results of the interdisciplinary WWTF project “Urban Art and Green”. One of the key measures to mitigate climate crisis is urbanization, therefore it is crucial to understand how cities affect people’s perception and wellbeing. Understanding our evolutionary nature can advise successful design of urban public spaces that facilitate acceptance and usage by citizens and create favorable social environments. The benefits of urban vegetation and greenery, not only for the city’s climate but also for the wellbeing of inhabitants are well-studied – nature makes us calmer, more social, and healthier. However, recent studies indicate that artworks could have similar positive effects on human wellbeing. Despite this, the effect of art in urban settings has received little scientific attention. Our project investigates effects of art and greening interventions on humans in public space. Throughout a series of field studies, we directly compared art and green using two spatially flexible and temporarily available parking-lot sized ‘interventions’, decorated with different artistic stimuli and plants through A) observation of pedestrians’ behaviour around the various interventions, B) physiological measurements of arousal (HR; HRV; SC; ST), C) participants’ eye-movements and D) self-assessed wellbeing.

Behavioral observations and physiological measurements did not yield any differences between the art and green conditions. Reported wellbeing seemed to be affected by the perceived relevance and beauty of artworks.

Our results highlight the importance of natural and aesthetically stimulating elements for appealing urban landscapes and are actively communicated in urban planning committees, resulting in direct application in ongoing design processes.