

tal

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Finally, a turning point!

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### Since prehistoric times, settlements and cities

have mostly been founded next to streams, rivers, lakes or other bodies of water. Water has always been important, as a donor of drinking water for humans and animals, for the disposal of waste water, as a source of food with fish and other animals or for the irrigation of fields. They also played an important role as transport routes.

In regions where it can get hot, water has a climatic balancing effect. Water was and is a prerequisite for economic and political development.

Since the middle ages, the forms of settlement had an increased need for drinking and working water. As locations for handicrafts, trade, administration, the representation of the rulers and the religions, the cities recorded considerable growth. They gained military-strategic importance and they became places of education, science and the arts.

In ancient times, in addition to wells, the Romans had already built water pipes for these reasons, so-called aqueducts, to supply the population with the necessary water from distant sources. Rivers and streams were no longer sufficient for this. Sewer systems with underground systems were built and parts of the cities drained. More and more streams and small rivers were dried out and paved over.

This process accelerated with industrialization, so that the rivers were mainly used as transport and traffic routes – increasingly regulated. Eventually the streams disappeared completely for reasons of urban hygiene. The building land, made available by the paving



over of the streams, had meanwhile become valuable. Freely running water was maintained mainly only in cities with hot climates, also because the humidity had a compensatory effect on temperature.

In the wake of man-made environmental problems and the resulting global warming, air conditioning systems that have high energy requirements have been used more and more frequently in recent years. This brought tolerable room temperatures

into the city apartments. However, water remained and remains important, for drinking for humans and animals, for cleaning, for industrial production and for the entire urban climate – especially in warm, dry summers.

From the middle of the 19th century, in Munich as in many other places, city streams were gradually enclosed or covered over. Before that, they were used, together with the Isar river, as receiving waters for the newly built sewer systems.

Eventually they were gradually eliminated. As superfluous and unhygienic, they were built over or even deserted (see above).

Only a few rivulets remained and the rest were sacrificed to city traffic. This is how it has remained in the Isartor area unto this day.

The car-friendly city, as it was propagated everywhere after the reconstruction phase and in the times of the economic miracle in the last century, meant that flowing waters had to give way to new broad streets.

Alongside several Swiss cities, Freiburg in Breisgau has largely preserved its urban streams or revived them decades ago.

In the meantime, in many places – including Munich – there has been a rethink, mainly because the cities are literally suffocating from the traffic. In this sense, Munich has now become Germany's traffic jam capital.

For ecological, traffic-political and social reasons, it is important to adopt alternative urban planning, as presented by the architect Markus Uhrig with a plan for the redesign of the **Tal** in Munich.

Uhrig suggests revitalizing the urban space around the Isartor and in the **Tal** by reanimating urban streams and historic urban structures. He plans to revive the former setting thus: "Remains of Lueg ins Land and Prinzessturm, the representation of the city moat, the historical fortification with city moat and water moat, possible remains of the outer wall as well as the restoration of the level of the moat in front of the Isartor (here at the level of the mezzanine floor of the S-Bahn)." And he wants to create new references based on historical reference systems in order to reclaim the urban space in the center of the city. This seems forward-looking.

Since it can be assumed that global warming cannot be reversed for the next few decades, the goal in the medium term must be to slow it down, and only in the long term will the environment be improved and, hopefully, repaired. So the initial measures

to adapt cities and settlements to the new conditions are urgently needed.

It is important to look at regions that have been struggling with heat waves for centuries in order to see how these temperatures are dealt with there.

In Munich, too, the city, which is sealed off by buildings and streets, threatens to warm up over the next few years, which cannot cool down even at night. This puts a considerable strain on the health and well-being of the population. In this respect, with the reanimation of the city streams, cooler air can definitely be brought into the city quarters.

The city streams also offer people additional quiet areas and at the same time have a social function. And they bring nature into the city.

Uhrig's proposal is to restore the tradition of the city streams as the city's

old lifelines. Associated with this is the reanimation or renaturation of these waters, also in order to reveal an urban structure that has grown over a long period of time and to anchor it anew in the memory of the city and the people who live in it.

In view of today's technological upheavals, it's about time to promote new developments.

At the Isartor and in the **Tal**, in the city of Munich, which is visibly overloaded by car traffic, a mark could be made that would stand for the basic orientation in urban planning thinking: The urban body as a system would no longer be built with individual additive measures, but, in accordance with a breathing system, further developed in a strategically comprehensive overall context. This would result in future-oriented, content-related discussions that could be measured against structural procedures and results. Social, economic and cultural aspects would be included, as would changing climatic conditions.

It is to be hoped that the urban planner and architect Markus Uhrig can set an initial example with his suggestions regarding the Isartor. In the long term, this would create a lively **Tal** with a city stream and the dawn of a new era: finally, a turning point!





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