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The Image of the Southern Station District in Munich. Trendy Neighbourhood or Run-Down Problem Area? A Multimethod Study

Janine Bittner , Florian Angerer

*Ruhr University Bochum, Institute of Geography, Germany
Ludwig
Maximilians University Munich, Germany*

Abstract

Station districts, arrival, departure, and stopping points for travellers, have always been interesting microcosms in major German cities. These are important gateways to the city centre, with a particular impact on urban development. However, their importance has declined as the significance of motorised private transport has increased and their economic structure has changed. The southern station district in Munich is one of these exciting neighbourhoods. With notable contrasts, where hotels, social institutions, and ethnic economies intersect. This study aimed to develop an understanding of how the district is perceived by those who use it, work there, shop there, linger for a while, or simply pass through it. We used a multimethod approach comprising a survey of local businesspeople (n=148), qualitative interviews with a selection of these (n=26) and a survey of passers-by (n=751). The interviews were transcribed and evaluated using qualitative content analysis. Descriptive statistics were applied to analyse the quantitative data. The study was conducted in 2009. Our findings show that negative aspects of the district include the uncleanness of the neighbourhood, the perceived decline in status, and establishments in the sex industry. The diversity of shops, the central location, and the multicultural image are often seen as positive aspects. Ethnic diversity is viewed ambivalently: on the one hand, as an opportunity; on the other, as a source of problems. The results show that the southern station district in Munich is perceived as a multicultural urban space, whose specific characteristics and advantages should be made better known.

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