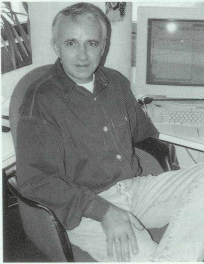


Urban Ethology

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Research

In this century human livelihood migrated increasingly from the countryside to the cities. From 1950 to 1978 the urban world population doubled. If this trend continues, the number will even double until the year 2000; then the majority of the world population will live in cities. The urban environment has become the favoured habitat for humans. Ethological research of the last 20 years showed that the human being is equipped with innate behavioural tendencies and perceptions that had evolved as evolutionary adaptations to the Stone Age when he lived in small groups as a hunter and gatherer.

In the last 10,000 years a precipitous development from the Stone Age to the technically civilized world came about in which man created large cities and an environment for which he does not seem to have evolved. Therefore the Ludwig-Boltzmann-Institute for Urban Ethology at the Human Biology Institute concentrates on the question: How does man manage to survive in this evolutionary young and new situation?

Evolutionary-theoretical approaches allow predictions about the choice of strategies depending on socio-economic conditions. From them, models can be developed and tested by studying human interactions in their natural environment. Our research topics result from everyday life situations that are forced upon us:

Anonymity

The social situation in the big cities is characterized by encountering strangers. Thus, our projects investigate phenomena related to impression-management, judgement of strangers and both verbal and non-verbal communication in public.

Mobility

City-structures enforce mobility. The behaviour in public transport and in the street traffic is an important part of the city-dwellers' everyday life. We investigate phenomena of density and aggression which are considered to be the main cause for stress.

Structural constraints in cities

In this context the relation between physical environment, housing satisfaction and behaviour is studied. Current projects deal with semi-private places and the structure of residential buildings, as well as with public places. First results show a positive relation between block-satisfaction, social networks, interaction frequency and special features.

The development of automatical methods of data collection and -analysis in digital image processing constitutes another focal point of our activity.

Teaching

Evolution of Intelligence
Human Social Behavior
Introduction to Ethology (L)
Ethological laboratory (P)
(in cooperation with the Department of Ethology /
Institute for Zoology)
Human-Ethological laboratory (L)
Housing, Dwelling and Urban Living (Technical
University of Vienna)

International Cooperations

University of Kyoto, Department of Zoology
(Japan); - University of Tokyo, Department of
Anthropology (Japan); - University of New Mexico,
Department of Zoology (Albuquerque, USA); -
Presbyterian Behavioral Medicine Center
(Albuquerque, USA); - Griffith University, De-
partment for Human Sciences (Brisbane, Austra-
lia); - Forschungsstelle für Humanethologie in der
Max-Planck-Gesellschaft (Andechs, Germany)

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