

## The Warming City

### Visual Narratives of Urban Heat Stresses in Germany

Human induced climate change has a huge impact on our cities. On one hand cities are responsible for contributing to the overall carbon emissions, but cities also suffer from a range of climate challenges like heatwaves, floods, sea-level rise, droughts, and wildfires. However, the warming city is a different yet severe challenge ahead of us.

With a huge concentration of concrete structures like buildings, roads and other infrastructures that absorb and re-emit the sun's heat and with a considerable lack of urban greenery, our cities become islands of urban heat. The recurring heat waves and hot spells tend to become more pronounced and severe in such warming cities.

There is a difference between heat-waves and warm spells. While heat waves last for a longer duration, warm spells occur for a brief period of the day and become frequent and intense during summer days. Warm spells become extremely stressful for different groups of people depending upon their age, gender, occupation, and economic status.

There is not enough general awareness and public discussion about the heat stresses one experiences in a warming city. The media reportage in the popular print-electronic-social media is focused mainly around the heat-waves. There is hardly any attention paid to the heat stresses in everyday life. The visual imagery of the heat-waves is presented as a 'Fun in the Sun' narrative with visual frames showing crowded beaches, people enjoying beers, ice-cream, and a certain relaxed holiday happiness mood. This visual representation is highly misleading. Leading Climate Communication Researchers from the UK, Germany and Netherlands say that this framing does not represent the experiences of a far greater population extremely vulnerable to heat waves. The visuals about warm spells or stresses in urban environs are largely absent and often miss the human face of such stresses.

Visual communication can become an effective tool for creating awareness about heat stresses in warming cities and to inspire public engagement with climate action. It is important to capture the nuances of city-level heat stresses in day-to-day life with a sharp focus on the people.

**'The Warming City' presents visual narratives of how people come across and negotiate with the heat stresses across cities in Germany, that are alarmingly facing warmer days and urban warming.**

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