What’s on your desk, Simon Andreas Güntner?

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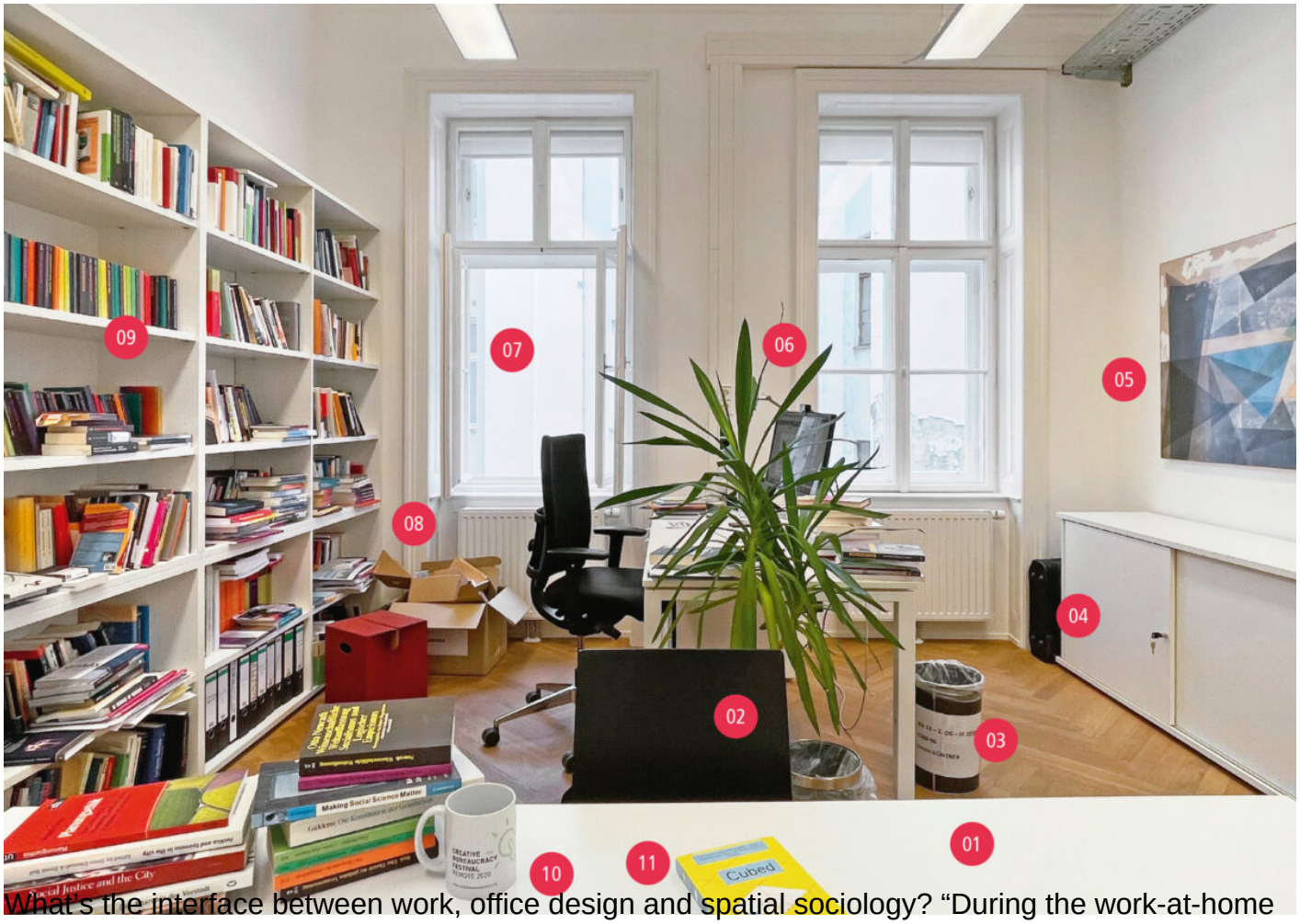

What’s the interface between work, office design and spatial sociology? “During the work-at-home period in the COVID pandemic we realised how closely these themes are connected,” says Simon Andreas Güntner, professor at the Vienna University of Technology and head of the Sociology Research Department. “But even in a loud and hectic open-space office we notice how the social environment forces us to structure ourselves when we can’t rely on external principles of order. Some people do this with headphones, others with cat photos, whereas some do it with a very precise work-and-break rhythm.” Güntner himself doesn’t need to do this. His institute is in a side street behind the Vienna University of Technology, in a stately residential building from the time of Imperial and Royal industrial expansion. A long time ago, this was probably a bedroom. “I can get my peace and quiet here and concentrate wonderfully in this room.” At the moment he’s reading piles of books, new publications on sociology, which have just come out. And diploma theses. And PhD papers. Güntner says the window has to stay open the whole time when he’s working. Fresh air, birdsong, human voices. He shuts it very occasionally, listening to punk and modern jazz while he works, the louder the better.

Wojciech Czaja

1. I don’t have a particularly emotional relationship to my conference table. I had the choice between a few models from the university catalogue and opted for the completely white version.
2. Plastic chairs are out of the question for me. There were still a couple of black wooden chairs in the University of Technology archive.
3. A waste paper basket with my name on it. A bit odd, don’t you think?
4. I use the small trolley case for transporting books for work at home.
5. Looking at art thrills me anew every day: “Nevada” (2017) by Irina Eden and Stijn Lernout, a beautiful panorama painting three metres wide!
6. To be honest: I’ve no idea what kind of plant this is. At any rate, it was waiting for me in the old office and said: “Take me with you!”
7. The window is actually open the whole year round, summer and winter. I need fresh air and the feeling I can hear life going on outside.
8. I moved in here two years ago. The removal boxes are still stacked in the corner. I think arriving somewhere is a process lasting years.
9. Fortunately, many sociology books – particularly from the Suhrkamp Publishing House – are bright and colourful. That suits me down to the ground!
10. I got the cup from the Creative Bureaucracy Festival. A fantastic event format!
11. “Cubed. A Secret History of the Workplace”, a really entertaining and obligatory read for everyone planning office workplaces.

Simon Andreas Güntner
Professor at the Vienna University of Technology and head of the Sociology Research Department