Hey, summer!
Hello, community!
Welcome, diversity!
With this year’s second issue of WE MOVE, we’re ringing in the summer. So it’s fitting that we’re all experiencing a renewed sense of ease and possibility at the moment. All signs are pointing to encounter and dialogue – to building bridges.

Our new office Be7 gives us the space for this. We can make it a place of diversity and exchange if we recognise other people’s opinions and attitudes as an enrichment. When everyone has the opportunity to develop their potential, we expand our horizons together and become even more productive as a team.

Building bridges is a metaphor for many topics that we’re currently concerned with. It begins with our move and our new work culture, it defines our understanding of diversity, it’s part of all of the development plans for the METRO Campus as well as other urban development projects that place people at the centre, and it’s present when we encounter other cultures in our travels. Bridges, as far as the eye can see.

We’re looking to this summer with optimism – we wish you a relaxed and wonderful holiday season!
Life is gathering pace. People are getting together again and enjoying being reconnected. Culture and cuisine are enriching our lives again. Jean-Christophe and Jürgen’s summer chat is marked by optimism as well. They emphasise the strengths to be found in encounter and in the new spirit of togetherness.

That’s a good cue! I look forward to celebrating with all of our colleagues: our #NEWGETHER, our move to our new office, METRO PROPERTIES’ first 10 years …

Exactly, there are many reasons to look towards the future with a good feeling. With the Guiding Principles, we really have a strong foundation to build on: our strength comes in part from the power of relationships, which means we have to reach out to one another and cultivate our spirit of togetherness, our connections.

As I see it, Be7 also represents a new corporate culture. We’ve learned a lot of new things in the past year. We’ve become more flexible in terms of our working hours and our actual work location. At the same time, we’ve all been called upon to assume greater responsibility, take a broader perspective and rely on our own organisational skills. Be7 gives us the right space for these changes.

I agree, and I’d like to add: it certainly took a huge effort to make this move happen so smoothly and on schedule. For this, I want to thank all of our employees who handled the planning, design and organisation … and made such a good transition possible. This work took a lot of very good bridge builders.

Now it’s time to get comfortable in our new surroundings and catch the new energy and spirit that are in the air at the moment. So much is now possible again. A new start – why not? It’s down to us. We’ve demonstrated great timing with our move, haven’t we?

‘We have to cultivate our spirit of togetherness.’

‘Diversity is a fundamental value that can work to our benefit. We’re all different when it comes to gender, age, language, identity, mindset and much more. I see this as something that enriches us, something from which we, through the right approach, can generate significant strengths.’

Summer, sun, travel season

Jürgen, what are you really looking forward to after the long deprivation of the pandemic?

Travelling!

Have you planned your summer holiday already? Where are you headed?

USA

Was begleitet dich immer auf Reisen?

Curiosity

What book are you packing to take along this summer?

Barbara Resch’s book on garden landscaping

What sort of ice cream do you like best?

Classic

Fruity

Amarena-Cherry

Experimental

Welches Eis magst du am liebsten?

Klassisch

Fruchtig

Malaga!

Experimentell

... Exactly, there are many reasons to look towards the future with a good feeling. With the Guiding Principles, we really have a strong foundation to build on: our strength comes in part from the power of relationships, which means we have to reach out to one another and cultivate our spirit of togetherness, our connections.

... but first, we wish you a relaxed summer break.

‘Be7 stands for a new corporate culture. The Guiding Principles are the pillars of our togetherness and the strong foundation upon which we can build bridges.’

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Building bridges – that’s a truly fitting theme for this moment. I see many bridges that are currently being built. With Be7, I’m convinced that we’ve created a new place of encounter. We have to ensure that we keep connected, whether physically or digitally. Progress in digitalisation is enabling us to come together with all of our colleagues – from Düsseldorf, Saarbrücken, Istanbul, Warsaw, the METRO countries, or right here at the METRO Campus – much more closely, easily and naturally.

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Even though we couldn’t plan it this way: as a time of getting closer again, of a new spirit of togetherness, this summer truly fits our situation ...

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Now it’s time to get comfortable in our new surroundings and catch the new energy and spirit that are in the air at the moment. So much is now possible again. A new start – why not? It’s down to us. We’ve demonstrated great timing with our move, haven’t we?
We're currently in a phase of many changes and transitions. Following months in shutdown, things are gradually getting back to normal. Many people are enjoying the new possibilities, going shopping, going out to eat and meeting with friends. But instead of rushing from one appointment to the next, some are beginning to choose their social occasions more consciously.

Others, however, are finding it difficult to go back to their former habits. For them, the return to a carefree social life is a longer, slower process.

Simone Dohle, a health and social psychologist at the University of Cologne, attributes the difficulty people have in embracing their new-found freedoms to the great cognitive effort it takes to change habits. Routines such as social distancing, wearing a mask and avoiding personal contact have given people orientation and a sense of security during the pandemic. ‘At first, wearing masks and maintaining a distance from others felt strange, but it has become the new status quo,’ Simone Dohle explains.

What is also certain, however, is that human closeness is a basic need – so we find the adjustment from restrictions to greater social freedom easier than the reverse. In the end, everyone decides according to their own perception of risk how comprehensively and quickly they are willing to establish the ‘new normal’ for themselves.

In choosing ‘building bridges’ as the theme for this issue of WE MOVE, we’re appealing to the constructive power of the connections between different people, opinions and cultures. Let us stay engaged with each other and jointly shape how we interact and how we work together.

We decide how we want to work

The project ‘Be7_Office Culture’ is a shared process designed to include all employees of METRO PROPERTIES in shaping how we work.

In small teams, we are developing solutions for topics that arise in everyday office life in connection with the new work environment and the corresponding changes in employees’ presence under FlexWork conditions. Our aim is to adapt our office organisation to our changed needs, and to regularly put it to the test in the future.

We will additionally identify and discuss the possibilities of a new way of working, while also examining and removing obstacles. The objective is to jointly shape the transformation to a new work culture.

Do you have any questions or suggestions? Is there anything you’ve noticed that you’d like to address? Would you like to be a part of the project team? Then use our MS Teams channel ‘Be7_Office Culture’. Or speak directly with the project heads, Susanne Herfurtner and Roswitha Lücke.

How do we stay connected?

How does the culture of a company reach all employees when the FlexWork model enables everyone to work in different places? What can we do to promote regular exchange – including across departments? What bridges can we build so that we stay connected?

We share information and knowledge

Our new work culture provides for the active invitation of colleagues from other areas to take part in projects in order to form an interdisciplinary team and share know-how. Transparency is important: we share information with the team by, for example, using whiteboards, blackboards or kanban boards. Daily stand-up meetings are a good way of bringing everyone up to the same level of knowledge.

Solidarity builds bridges

‘Companies are collective organisations. No one person alone can guide them to success. It is always a matter of working with others. This relationship (...) should be characterised by solidarity and partnership. (...) Solidarity connects the individual with the community, the company and the employee.’

* Source: Hajo Eickhoff, Jan Teunen: Burra. Der fabelhafte Aufstieg der Büroarbeit. (Burra. The phenomenal rise of office work.) Published by Friedrich Blaha.

We need binding rituals

For Gündüz Bayer, Director Region Asia, staying in conversation with each other is essential. His team comprises 55 people, who meet every Friday for a happy hour – virtually, at the moment.

They talk about everything: fashion, sport and gossip. The small groups of 4 to 5 people change weekly, so that each member eventually meets everyone else.

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The best of both models

Manuela Uhl and Gunther Cüppers, both in a cheerful mood, enter the virtual meeting room at exactly the agreed-upon time. You would never guess that they are separated by about 300 kilometres of motorway. Saarbrücken meets Düsseldorf, and no hint of the fact that they come from 2 different workplaces – thanks to MS Teams. But first things first.

‘METRO has been a part of me since I was very young,’ Manuela Uhl explains right at the start of the conversation. And in fact, her career is a testament to loyalty and consistency – from today’s point of view, hers is an increasingly rare story, and it began 17 years ago. That was when Manuela, a native of Saarbrücken, began her traineeship as a real estate management assistant at METRO, which she directly followed up in 2009 with a part-time degree programme to become a real estate administrator whilst continuing to work at METRO.

Manuela is an optimistic person, and her approach has always been to tackle new challenges with an open mind. With her hands-on attitude and friendly demeanour, she accepts new things as they come and always makes the best of them – it may sound like a cliché, but in her case, it’s the truth. For instance, how many people would have the guts to use their high-school-level French to communicate with the workmen when they are naturally being raised bilingually. ‘We believe that growing up in 2 cultures enriches their lives,’ he explains. ‘I want to teach them that having both cultures is an asset.’ In his free time, the football fan plays on a team with players of all ages; their team is called ‘Papa Kowoll’s Last Will and Testament’. If you want to know the meaning behind that team name, you should ask him over a coffee in the office kitchen sometime.

‘It feels to me like everything is coming together right now.’

Manuela Uhl, Team Leader, Real Estate Data Management

Everything is coming together
The 2 people having this conversation happen to have the ability to create connections – between locations, workplaces, cultures, employees and departments, between yesterday and today. Gunther Cüppers describes the move to the Campus and the ‘physical proximity to colleagues’ as an asset, and Manuela Uhl adds that ‘everything is coming together at the moment’. ‘People no longer think in terms of individual divisions; those barriers in their minds are gone,’ she says, summarising the latest developments at group level. The focus now is on a new culture of cooperation between sales lines, METRO and METRO PROPERTIES, she adds.

FlexWork as an opportunity
In the Real Estate Valuation & Data Intelligence division, the focus is on teamwork – and their team has continued to work very well together even during the Covid-19 pandemic, says Gunther Cüppers, who took up the reins of the division about 3 months ago. What he misses, of course, is personal contact. ‘It really is a strange feeling not to be able to introduce myself properly,’ he says critically, and Manuela Uhl also misses her monthly visits to Düsseldorf. However, both of them emphasise how dedicated all the employees have been during this period, and how well they have taken to remote work. 7 of them work in Saarbrücken and 9 in Düsseldorf. Now, their goal is to use the FlexWork model as an opportunity, and as executives, they plan to maintain strong contact with their employees and help keep them motivated. As a father of 2 small children, Gunther Cüppers is particularly pleased with the options the new models of work provide for him, but he still hopes they can find a way to facilitate the important cross-division dialogue they always had in the past. ‘We should try to merge the best of both models,’ Manuela Uhl emphasises.

Gunther Cüppers, Head of Corporate Real Estate Valuation & Data Intelligence

‘The flexibility helps us balance our work and private lives better.’

The Real Estate Data Management team leader hasn’t had much free time in the last few months. Her off-work hours were taken up with the construction of her new house near the French border. It hasn’t always been an easy task during this period of pandemic-related border closures – particularly given the language barrier – but now she, her partner and his 5-year-old son have a new home base. The little patchwork family spend most of their time in the great outdoors or visiting their extended family, who are scattered across France and Germany. For Gunther, a life shared between 2 cultures is a matter of course: most of her friends and acquaintances live in Saarbrücken in Germany, but she also appreciates and enjoys the French way of life.

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Building Bridges – Explore

Think Pink! Summer, Sun and Travel Fun

It doesn’t always have to be a long journey to a distant destination. Often it’s better to take road trips that start light and carefree in the morning and end in the evening with a wealth of new impressions and a sense of satisfaction when you return home.

We set off in a northerly direction, eager to see what today will bring. We are looking forward to enjoying nature and seeing animals that we normally only encounter roaming free in such large numbers in TV documentaries, with their rich colours and graceful movements. After walking a number of kilometres, we are looking forward to a picnic with freshly made snacks. A brilliant treat packed for every trip – Karl’s falafel pita is packed and ready to eat! We can’t wait to visit the flamingo park near Vreden, in the picturesque Münsterland region.

German-Dutch Nature Conservation

The Zwillbrocker Venn nature reserve is located directly on the Dutch border. The stars of the area are clearly the flamingos, which are at home here in the northernmost colony in the world. There are about 40 to 50 birds that spend the summer months in the fen between April and July and even breed on an island in Lachmöwensee (Black-Headed Gull Lake). During the winter months, however, the flamingos migrate to the somewhat milder regions of South Holland.

Off to France!

It’s time for another animal lover’s road trip, this time from Saarbrücken to France, where we will visit the 18-hectare Amnéville Zoo. The animals are allowed to roam through landscapes that are as close as possible to their natural habitats. Exploring on foot, you can easily venture from the African savannah to the lush vegetation of the Amazon jungle. The zoo is committed to species conservation, and it does its part with hundreds of animal births every year. Extremely rare and endangered animals live here, including the Amur leopard, cheetahs and cotton-top tamarins.

Have a Flamazing Summer!

Good thing we brought along our binoculars! That of course makes it even easier to observe the birds. Other animal residents loudly draw attention to themselves. For instance, the reserve is also home to roughly 10,000 black-headed gulls in summer, along with Mediterranean gulls, which are extremely rare in North Rhine-Westphalia – not to mention around 60 other bird species, countless animals and rare plants. We learn about all this right from the start at the Zwillbrock Biological Station during a short tour of the permanent exhibition showcasing the natural and cultural landscape. Not wanting to miss out on the fine sunny weather, we quickly head outside, where a flock of White Polled Heath sheep is happily bleating. Their diet includes the young birch trees in the fen. In this way, the moorland sheep keep the landscape open and perform an invaluable service for this unique natural area.

Nature, Culture and Cuisine

We are on foot today and manage to complete sections of the Flamingo Route, which, laid out as a circular tour, covers a total of 450 km. It extends across the regions of Westmünsterland and Achterhoek and Twente in the Netherlands.

Next time we may opt for a cross-border cycling tour. Our trip ends with a cultural highlight. We visit the majestic baroque church in Zwillbrock. Since we have already consumed our lavish picnic, on the way back we stop off in the charming town of Winterswijk, in the eastern part of the province of Gelderland, where we find the picturesquely situated restaurant De Gulle Smid. After our meal, we set off for home, feeling refreshed and cheerful.

Have a Flamazing Summer!
Pandemics change our lives, but they also alter the towns and cities where we live. Historically, pandemics have always hit densely populated areas the hardest, yet they have also served as a catalyst for the allocation of resources to make necessary changes. What impact will Covid-19 have on our urban structures? Will pop-up cycle lanes and significantly less rush-hour traffic last or will we revert to old modes of behaviour? What can we learn from the new-found longing of city dwellers for a life in the countryside? And how can we put this into practice to transform the urban environment?

Exodus to the countryside

One thing is certain: many people are yearning for new urban concepts. They want more green spaces, less anonymity, shorter routes and more neighbourliness. Many are seeking the qualities that make smaller community structures so appealing – combined with urban amenities and liberal flair. A nationwide survey conducted by Germany’s GfK market research institute in November 2020 reflects this new enthusiasm for rural living. According to the results, around 41% of respondents are open to the idea of moving to the countryside. Young families in particular said they were willing to accept longer commutes in exchange for more peace and quiet and natural surroundings. But they were reluctant to do without a sound infrastructure, a stable internet connection, a wide range of high-quality educational institutions and cultural diversity – many of the things that make urban life so appealing.

Can cities reinvent themselves?

Yes, they definitely can. Throughout their history, urban centres have proved their capacity for change and transformation. We are very clearly experiencing this right now. Remote work has prompted a tangible shift in our lifestyles and consumption away from city centres and towards neighbour- hood centres. Many people have discovered that life is much easier when they limit their trips, especially if they were forced to travel with too many other commuters during peak hours. It became increasingly clear during this period what our surroundings must provide in order to meet our needs and ensure a high quality of life: green spaces, community support, public meeting places, social interaction and supplies of daily necessities. For many people, the pandemic served as a major factor in their decision to leave the city and seek better conditions in the countryside.

CITIES HAVE TO CHANGE. NOW!

The go-to book on the subject: ‘The Ideal City: Exploring Urban Futures’ A passionate appeal in favour of the creative power of involved citizens and their diversity of ideas.

41% WOULD LEAVE THE CITY FOR GOOD!

For the vast majority of people, though, the last 1.5 years have demonstrated the potential for change and even renewal that is already inherent in the urban environment. All that is needed now are viable programmes and visions of the future that will enable change so we can avoid returning to the status quo.

So many ideas for the city of the future

Düsseldorf’s urban development vision is called Raumwerk D. This 5-stage process has been underway since 2018 and involves citizens, politicians and experts in the field. 4 interdisciplinary planning teams from across Germany have developed bold ideas for the future of Düsseldorf and provided a forum for the city’s residents to discuss them.

Popular ideas include making more space available along the Düsseldorf river to serve as a recreation area and building green areas that bridge major railway corridors. When it comes to climate neutrality and sustainability, there is a trend towards increasingly green and energy-efficient building standards.

An important measure to combat climate change is the unsalting of soil. Over the coming months, for instance, concrete and/or flagstones from paved surfaces will be removed from a number of Düsseldorf schools and children and teachers will pitch in to transform these areas into flowering insect meadows and semi-natural spaces. A budget of €1 million has been made available for this purpose – sufficient funds to rewild several thousand square metres.

WE NEED TO BECOME FASTER AND MORE RADICAL IN MANY WAYS!

Cordelia Polinna, urban planner, managing partner at Urban Catalyst

Focusing on people

The Raumwerk D concepts are intended to make the city not only greener, but also more worth living in. Ultimately, the people of Düsseldorf can play a major role in this process. After all, this opportunity to help shape the urban environment offers them a real chance to put the focus of urban life back on residents.

Düsseldorf citizens plan a new district

The response of local residents to the METRO Campus urban development competition has also shown that the issue of urban development is widely recognised, as is the urgent desire for change.
The pandemic showed us what makes cities worth living in.

Architecture and urban development can create spaces for communication and dialogue and ensure that the conditions are right for people to feel at home and talk to one another. The quality of spaces – be they in offices, workplaces, classrooms, public squares or parks – plays a key role in determining whether or not we enjoy a sense of well-being and security, and whether we can be creative and approach others. In this sense, architecture can truly build bridges.

If we were to imagine a utopia – what would an ideal city look like today, and what characteristics would it have to possess?

There are numerous criteria that make up an ‘ideal city’, far too many to name them all here, but one of the key factors in making cities attractive locations is mobility. In the second half of the twentieth century, many of Germany’s cities were redesigned for cars. There was a societal consensus that cars should enjoy a dominant position in public spaces. Today, however, this is increasingly being called into question. In light of climate change and the energy transition, the leitmotif of cities revolving around cars is increasingly under fire, and a new definition of urban structures appears to be urgently needed. Barrier-free public spaces that are safe and convenient for pedestrians and cyclists and which make it easy to quickly and flexibly switch between walking, cycling and local public transport can make cities safe and attractive to everyone while promoting post-fossil fuel mobility.

Particularly when one considers demographic changes and inclusion, compact cities with pedestrian-friendly public spaces represent an opportunity for many people – including senior citizens – to live autonomously in their own apartments. If we are to turn our backs on cities that are shaped by mass automotive mobility, a key factor in achieving this will be designing public spaces to make car-free mobility attractive – so that people can be convinced to do without cars.

WHAT ARE THE WEAKNESSES OF URBAN SPACES THAT HAVE BEEN HIGHLIGHTED BY THE CORONAVIRUS? WHAT ARE THE STRENGTHS? AND WHAT CHANGES WILL REMAIN AFTER THE CRISIS HAS PASSED?

The crisis has shown many people just how important parks and green spaces are to their quality of life. Every residential area needs to have open areas and green spaces available within walking distance – spaces that people can call their own. Places where it doesn’t matter if they want to play table tennis, read a book, look after the plants or even grow vegetables. The pandemic showed us what makes cities worth living in. It has forced cities to confront the question as to what must change if they are to be better able to withstand crises and become more sustainable – and therefore more attractive.

What are the weaknesses of urban spaces that have been highlighted by the coronavirus? What are the strengths? And what changes will remain after the crisis has passed?

The quality of spaces plays a key role in determining whether or not we enjoy a sense of well-being and security.

Cordelia Polinna, Urban Catalyst
The winning design in the urban development competition launched by METRO PROPERTIES for the METRO Campus in collaboration with the Landeshauptstadt Düsseldorf has now been chosen: the bold design submitted by ACME (London) with Stadt Land Fluss (Berlin) with Kieran Fraser Landscape Design (Vienna) has won out over the plans of the other 5 finalists. The winning submission is an urban concept that maps the diversity of living and working culture in the 21st century.

The Green Lane District
This is a commercial and social district that encompasses the southern METRO buildings and unites these with new buildings, including residential buildings as well as assisted-living and childcare facilities along the ‘Green Lane’ that stretches along the western part of the district and extends from Schlüterstraße and the Stadtwald forest to the Quartiersplatz square on Walter-Eucken-Straße to the east.

The Garden District
With its protective perimeter structures and individual buildings within, with a school, kindergarten, spacious private and communal green spaces and open areas, as well as publicly accessible green rooftops.

DAS CAMPUS DISTRICT
A broad spectrum of utilisations are grouped around an active Campus square, the functional centre and design focal point of the new district, which serves as an interface between the headquarters of METRO AG and the new buildings – it is a vibrant public square and marketplace for the surrounding area, a location interposed between working and living.

The Park District
A place where people can live and work in the neighbourhood, located between the Campus and Walter-Eucken-Straße, that can be reached via the Quartiersgasse alleyway and is grouped with green courtyard blocks around a new, open and green Quartierspark district park.

‘Our goal is to create an urban district at the METRO Campus that will offer our employees, customers and the public at large an attractive mixed-used area in Flingern – for working, living, leisure and commerce. The market hall on the central Campus square is the heart of the district: a place that brings people together and which features food service concepts that invite people to spend time here.’

Stefan Herbert,
Head of Studio, Corporate Project Development, and member of the jury

Living and working – for every generation
The winning concept envisages a mixed-used district whose striking buildings and spaces embody an independent identity. Here, new green spaces, inviting and differentiated public spaces and attractive residential locations will be created in conjunction with the necessary social infrastructures. New and existing buildings comprise 4 districts, with a new public space located at the centre of each district. It is important that the varied intensities of working, living, playing and leisure are all able to find their place within the city district. The urban concept consciously strives to create a range of locations with different qualities to foster the development of multiple uses and characters.

The urban development and open-space concept comprises 4 new public districts, each of which has its own spatial relationships and qualities:

METRO CAMPUS – AND THE WINNER IS …
‘It is about ensuring that everyone is treated with respect!’

Let us imagine that our working environment is free from prejudice. Let us also imagine that all employees are valued and respected – regardless of their age, ethnic origin, nationality, sex, gender identity, physical or mental abilities, religion, ideology, sexual orientation or social background.

While this might sound like a utopia or the best of all worlds, it is actually an initiative that was launched by a group of major German companies back in 2006. The heart of the Diversity Charter is a document whose signatories undertake to promote diversity and respect in the working world.

Making tolerance and openness a reality

METRO is a long-standing supporter of these efforts and its commitment is no mere lip service or waving of a rainbow flag. The METRO PROPERTIES networking programme for the MPRIDE network that communicates the importance of mixed and diverse teams. It is also an important component of commercial success. This is something that is also included in METRO’s sustainability strategy: ‘Diversity + Inclusion’ is one of the strategy’s 8 strategic areas of focus, and diversity and inclusion are key components of efforts to tap new and sustainable markets. It is particularly clear here how our differences represent real added value.

At METRO PROPERTIES, Elisabeth Granzow is now responsible for keeping an eye on diversity and inclusion:

‘As an ambassador for diversity and inclusion, I am pleased to be able to raise awareness of all these topics. Companies need to accept their responsibility and do their part to ensure the equality of all identities. At the end of the day, this benefits all of us as individuals and enriches society as a whole.’

With a biography like his, Gündüz Bayer really had no choice but to be cosmopolitan. He was 3 years old when he accompanied his parents from Turkey to Germany, heading first to Bad Godesberg, after which they went to Frankfurt and eventually moved on to Stuttgart – his ‘second home’. Not to forget his 4 years in Athens. His school breaks were spent with his family in Switzerland and Italy. Later, after going to university in Swabia, he felt the pull of Istanbul and decided to return.

Turkey is his home, and it is also his national identity. Even so, the time he spent in Germany during his childhood and adolescence helped make him into the person who has earned the respect of his team in Istanbul and of his colleagues around the globe.

‘I’ve always been good at adapting.’ That has a lot to do with the small red-haired boy, every time he started off at a new school – and there were 6 new schools in 13 years – entered the classroom hand in hand with the headmaster, where he was greeted by a room full of unfamiliar faces, filled with curiosity, surrounded him as soon as there was a break. This helped him to become a good judge of people, and he quickly learned not only what was expected of him, but also whom he could trust and what the rules of the game were. Anyone who meets Gündüz (65) quickly sees that he likes people and that he has the gift of being able to relate to them in any situation, regardless of whether they are strangers or colleagues of many years. According to Gündüz, his openness and trusting nature is due to the fact that ‘I’ve never had a bad experience.’

When it comes to his working life, this globetrotter prefers consistency and continuity. Gündüz, who has been with METRO for 23 years, spent the first 12 years in Istanbul before a stint of more than 6 years in Asia, where he was based in Singapore and Shanghai. Here too, he was able to move flexibly between different cultures and adapted to his new surroundings with ease.

Gündüz believes that the coronavirus crisis is serving to accelerate changes that were already underway, including those related to work culture, flexible working and digitalisation. Although he misses travelling, he has learned to appreciate the fact that he no longer has to spend as much time on the road for work. He predicts that even after the pandemic has passed, work travel will decline to just a third of its pre-coronavirus level.

We finished up with a discussion of the new Istanbul office. Gündüz, ever the optimist, believes that everyone will find a place here where they will be able to work well and happily. It is already clear that he will make sure there is a room where people can strengthen their ties with friendly chats and a game of backgammon during breaks.

Happy hour for team building

Gündüz, who has a degree in economics, started off with all the tools he needed for his confident management style: he listened, he is authentic; and he communicates openly and transparently. He works to reconcile different opinions and bring people together, and trusts others.

His strength lies in the Power of Relationships. Gündüz strives to maintain contact with his 55 employees that is based on trust – and he has maintained these ties during the pandemic. Communication is very important to him. Every Friday there is a virtual happy hour where people are able to engage in small talk, and the same opportunity is provided before every MS Teams meeting.

... and outside of work?

Gündüz and his wife Arzun live where other people go on holiday – in Bodrum, right on the Aegean Sea, and in the vibrant city of Istanbul. His 31-year-old daughter Bike inherited his love of travel and other cultures, and it has taken her to New York, where she lives today. While Gündüz and his wife originally had plans to spend their retirement travelling the world, they have come to feel so at home in the places they now live that they do not plan on going anywhere any time soon. Unless it were to be Bali – Gündüz’ favourite holiday destination.
2 cities in full flow

2 cities with a wealth of stories to tell – both old and new. Active cities with a young and vibrant cultural life. 2 cities that are an open invitation to go with the flow. Our colleagues in Warsaw and Istanbul would like to take you on a journey through their cities and share their personal highlights with you.

SPENDING THE NIGHT IN THE PERFECT AMBIENCE
The little designer hotel Autor Rooms enjoys the perfect location, right at the heart of the popular area around Poznańska Street where young adults congregate. Each of its rooms has been designed by Polish designers – including the furniture and items that are available for sale.

PANORAMIC VIEW
At a height of approx. 114 metres, the observation platform on the 30th floor of the Palace of Culture and Science provides an excellent panoramic view of Warsaw.

A DAY BY THE RIVER
Some cities are shaped by the rivers that run through them – Warsaw is one of these cities. The Vistula flows right through the middle of the city, dividing it into 2 halves. With its wealth of boulevards and cafés, the western half invites people to take a stroll, while the eastern half has retained its wild and natural character. If one takes the Wilga ferry from the old town, they will be transported to a deserted beach near the zoo. It is a vantage point that affords a good view of the old town and skyscrapers alike. And it is a great place for a picnic.

LOTS OF GREEN – AND CHOPIN
One quarter of Warsaw is made up of green spaces. In this plethora of parks, public squares, nature preserves and botanical gardens, Łazienki Park (also known as Central Park) is a piece of particular beauty. Once the summer residence of Poland’s last king, today it is home to countless squirrels and peacocks running free. And on Sunday afternoons at 4.00 p.m., people can even enjoy a free Chopin concert by the Chopin monument.

CROSSING THE VISTULA FOR A BITE TO EAT
Warsaw offers an almost overwhelming range of culinary delights, and hardly a day passes without yet another establishment opening its doors. This makes it difficult to maintain an overview. For a chance to get to know the eastern half of the city, we recommend a visit to Koneser, a former industrial complex in Praga that is now home to numerous cafés and restaurants. The district has become an alternative hotspot that is a huge draw for artists, tourists and residents of the left bank.

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DISCOVER AND ENJOY KARAKÖY
This old port district has been transformed into the city’s new hotspot in recent years and boasts a plethora of hip cafés, traditional bakeries and family-run shops. Its Ottoman-era buildings have been decorated with street art and are now home to young fashion designers and their studios and boutiques. A former shipyard nearby houses the Istanbul Museum of Modern Art and its exhibitions of contemporary Turkish and international art. Anyone looking for a good coffee to start off their morning should pay a visit to Karabatak cafe - tea-drinkers will be well served at Dem.

No first-time visitor to Istanbul can afford to miss the city’s Sultanahmet and Fatih districts. Almost all the most magnificent buildings can be found in the area around the peninsula’s tip: Hagia Sophia, the ‘Blue Mosque’, Topkapı Palace, the Grand Bazaar, the Basilica Cistern, the German Fountain, the Hippodrome, the Süleymaniye Mosque and the Chora Church. Exploring them all is a mammoth journey through a storied history. Köfte (Turkish meatballs) offer excellent sustenance for your journey, as well as a way to get your strength back once you have finished your sightseeing excursion.

TAKE A LOOK
If you are looking for a spectacular view of Istanbul’s excellent natural harbour – the Golden Horn – Pierre Loti Hill was seemingly created for this very purpose. Many people pay a visit to this vantage point for a chance to savour the sunset, and a 3-minute ride in the Eyüp Piyer Loti cable car is all it takes to reach the summit. An even better-known destination for those in search of the perfect view is the 67-metre-high Galata Tower located on the northern shore of the Golden Horn – it is an Istanbul landmark.

EXCURSIONS THROUGH BALAT
The colourful rows of houses in Balat have become a frequently photographed Instagram motif. The district, which is located just a few kilometres away from Topkapı Palace and the Hagia Sophia, has yet to be overrun by hordes of tourists. Numerous designers, artists and other creatives have come here to take advantage of premises that are still affordable. Buildings such as St. George’s Cathedral, synagogues and Byzantine churches offer physical proof of the city’s cosmopolitan character and its history as a centre of the Jewish, Greek and Armenian communities.

BALIK EKMEK – FISH SANDWICHES EVEN MORE POPULAR THAN DONER KEBAB
The Galata Bridge spans the Golden Horn to link the harbour districts of Eminönü and Karaköy. The 2-storey bridge attracts scores of fishers, and their fishing lines adorn both sides of the bridge. While the bridge’s lower story is home to numerous fish restaurants, nothing tastes better than Balik ekmek – a fish sandwich – from one of the many street vendors, including a rather nondescript stand in Karaköy at the end of the Galata Bridge. Every evening, 2 older gentlemen can be found here contentedly tending their grill and selling the city’s most popular snack – the sea view is included free of charge.

RENT A BIKE
Simply take the ferry to Büyükada island and its magnificent old villas. Reinvigorated with an ice cream from Prinkipo, visitors can rent a bicycle and admire the beautiful old homes while enjoying a relaxing ride.

METRO PROPERTIES – WE MOVE 2/2021

SMACZNĘGO!
EXPERIENCING EUROPE AT HOME

SUMMER - that means it is time to travel: a journey to Italy, perhaps camping in Sweden, or even island-hopping in Greece. For everyone who will be spending their holidays at home this year, we have a few tips for conjuring up a slice of sunny Europe even at our latitudes. We hope you enjoy putting them to the test.

ITALY

THE TASTE OF ITALY (GUSTO ITALIANO)
Grab a slice of Italian la dolce vita during your holidays. With GINROSA, the summer aperitif, it’s easy.

SAVOUR YOUR APERITIF IN A PIAZZA!

Finland

into the sauna – then the lake!

France

Play boules!

Simply enjoy a siesta

Portugal

Galão und Pasteis de Nata

A strong milky coffee and a traditional pudding pastry - the perfect way to start a day. And it’s available at Clube Português in Düsseldorf.

Spain

Visit an open-air theatre

The Greeks may have invented theatre, but we’re pretty good at it, too. Why not pay a visit to the open-air summer programme at the Düsseldorfer Schauspielhaus Theatre or enjoy the Mischel Rockt! concert series in the Franco-German Garden in Saarbrücken?

Sweden

Almost like camping in the wilderness

Admittedly, we do not have the ‘ allemansrätt’, the Swedish right to roam, but in the Eifel you can camp in a natural setting under a starry sky legally: in the High Fens - Eifel Nature Park.

Greece

Visit an open-air theatre

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METRO PROPERTIES – WE MOVE 2/2021

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EVEN MORE SUMMER SPIRIT CAN BE FOUND ON UNITED ...

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