

Property Panic: Rehearsals of Sharing - A Series of
Collective Acts Provoking Sharing among Neighbours

Master thesis for obtaining the academic title according to the curriculum
Submitted at the University of Applied Arts Vienna

At the Institute for Social Design

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Vienna, on the 16.06.2025

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1. The Journey from *Property Panic* to *Rehearsals of Sharing*

We are “Property Panic” - Jona Zwiessler, Kerim El-Mokdad, Marie Siebdrat, and Ladja Tsvetkov - we initiated our project *Rehearsals of Sharing* driven by the idea of exploring circularity not only in ecological or economic contexts but, more specifically, within interpersonal and social frameworks. Our aim is to investigate and make tangible how social circularity can be practiced and experienced in everyday urban environments. For this purpose, we chose to focus our project within the setting of a municipal housing complex in Vienna, increasingly shaped by current social trends, such as growing singularisation in everyday living, where possibilities for interaction and communal sharing among residents are often limited or even absent. It is precisely this gap that we sought to address by creating spaces and moments that enable new forms of neighborhood, togetherness, belonging and interaction.

At the core of *Rehearsals of Sharing* was the idea of provoking and stimulating collective acts of sharing by means of a series of on-site interventions, where residents were invited to voluntarily and temporarily borrow privately owned everyday objects -in our case, electric fans, drying racks and other commodities. We were convinced that the sharing of communal spaces often begins with the sharing of objects, which in turn can act as both a practical and symbolic bridge between private ownership and collective experiences within residential communities. Experiences of this kind can not only spark encounters in the everyday but also serve as a foundation for developing longer-term structures of solidarity-based neighbourly relations within municipal housing complexes. In doing so, we also aimed to revive and re-interpret traditions of neighbourhood coherence and shared resource usage, which were once integral to the social fabric but have become marginalised in contemporary urban life. Our project thus attempted to create moments in which these practices can be reclaimed and integrated into present-day living, actively challenging the dominant patterns of anonymous, individualised life.

Furthermore, our approach sought to contribute to the creation of conditions under which collectively accessible spaces - both indoors and outdoors - within such housing complexes can be appropriated, co-shaped, and used by residents themselves, particularly in the context of upcoming renovation projects that often promise, but rarely deliver, such community-oriented usage. In practical terms, we implemented a series of on-site interventions at the Franz-Adelpoller-Hof, a postwar municipal housing complex

located in Vienna's third district. Through a series of on-site interventions, we directly approached residents and invited them to temporarily lend us their personal electric fans and drying racks against a symbolic receipt.

The series of interventions included first a constructed *Superventilator*, a big device made to provide a shared cooling experience for an hour within the communal courtyard. After this hour of collective use, all electric fans were carefully returned to their respective owners in their original condition.

The second intervention was a *Pasta Drying Rack*. We then made fresh pasta and dried it on borrowed drying racks, while also cooking for the residents, who joined us for the event.

The third intervention was the *Mop Cinema* - a construction of borrowed mops, which are put together as a frame to project a film onto.

Our spontaneous intervention, which we organised two times was the *Espresso Bath* - more of an in-between easy action, including a bathtub on wheels and us making coffee for whoever joined us.

2. Why Aren't We All Sharing More?

The following one might come as an abrupt chapter, but it is meant to give a perspective on the historical context of what I call "non-sharing". As individuals embedded in a system driven by social and monetary capital, we experience life through the interactions of this construct, whose expectations lead us to perpetuating our own existence under its rules.

We go to work, we earn monetary capital, we rent or buy property depending on our social and monetary capital, and we spend money to acquire objects. All this becomes especially visible in densely populated areas. We share spaces with fellow citizens, our neighbours, with our coworkers, with friends and family and more or less we all do the same things: in this shared living, often referred to as cohabitation, we surround ourselves with countless objects. But what actually happens to all the things we acquire? Somehow, many of the objects in our daily lives become invisible for our neighbours, coworkers, friends and family. They seem never to leave the spot we placed them in.

One particular aspect related to these objects seems to be peculiar to say the least, and it traces its roots back to the history of the system we live in. As soon as a landowner in feudal Europe dragged a stick through the soil marking the exact boundaries of his land, everything that was inside those boundaries became "his own". This included cows, sheep, forests, crops as well as the individuals ploughing such soil. Sharing with others was not part of the deal. This particular way of dividing the world never really disappeared. Through time, individuals slowly but surely emancipated themselves from being owned to become owners themselves.

The whole of humanity became embedded in ownership, and all individuals perpetuate the system of acquiring and owning. As mentioned above, this approach and its continuity becomes strongly visible in contemporary densely populated areas. Each household contains objects which were earned or bought by their owners, and all objects fill the boundaries of each owner's "land". The open sharing of these objects is not foreseen (Nuss, 6). However, especially in densely populated areas, the question arises: why not share (more)? Why always keep things within pre-set boundaries and who are the boundaries set by? And last, where do these boundaries begin and end?

By collecting commodities from their owners and making them accessible to other individuals, the objects become a catalyst of human interaction. Misplacing

household objects and allowing individuals to see them in an unusual environment would create space for asking a central question: *why aren't we sharing more?* The aim of *Property Panic* is to introduce this common interest and investigate its possible spread.

3. The (State of) the Art of Sharing: Vienna and Beyond

In recent years, the concept of ownership has undergone a radical re-examination, particularly within the framework of community-based initiatives and the sharing economy. An example that stemmed within this context was *Carsharing Wien* (Austria, since 1992), one of the earliest car-sharing programmes in Europe promoting access over ownership of vehicles. Other initiatives followed in Europe, such as *Timebank.cc* (Netherlands, 2010), a time-based currency system for exchanging services without money; *Repair Cafés* (originating in Amsterdam in 2009), where communities gather to fix items together instead of discarding them; and *Leila - Der Leihladen* (Germany, 2011), a library of things that has inspired similar projects in Austria. If, on the one hand, these shed light on the growing desire for flexible but above all shared access to resources, on the other hand, they challenge traditional notions of private property and utility. Objects typically fixed in meaning and function within private domains can, and should, move into spaces of common use, so they function as symbolic and practical (mobile) for exploring blurred boundaries between the individual and the collective. They encourage us to question whether their value lies solely in its proprietary status or in their capacity to support shared experience.

In *What's Mine Is Yours*, Rachel Botsman and Roo Rogers introduce the concept of collaborative consumption to describe systems where access is valued over ownership, often enabled by digital platforms. They state that when "we engage in collaborative consumption, we are tapping into a reservoir of social capital that has always existed" (Botsman & Rogers, 92). Although their main focus is on online platforms, the principle their research is based on is transferable to physical, community-level interactions which are based on trust and initiate community engagement. The idea of transforming private property into temporary commons resonates with the framework described in Dockx and Gielen's *Commonism: A New Aesthetics of the Real*, which explores artistic practices that reframe ownership, authorship, and materiality as shared *conditions* (Dockx & Gielen, 54). According to the authors a fundamental question must be asked in order to frame the commonality of an object and that is: what happens when artistic practices no longer reflect reality, but actively shape it as a common experience? (Dockx & Gielen, 17). From this perspective, the act of borrowing is no longer seen as a deficit that must be compensated, but as a contribution to a broader communal fabric.

The Art of Civil Action deepens this argument by highlighting how cultural initiatives can function as subtle acts of civic resistance as they "can prefigure alternative forms of citizenship by producing political space" (Dietachmair & Gielen, 42). Temporarily lending an object becomes a political act, quietly opposing commodification and isolation. It reveals how even small gestures when repeated, trusted, and ritualised can become vehicles of disagreement. However, the act of borrowing comes with an ontological ambiguity, discussed by Pascal Gielen and Nav Haq in *The Aesthetics of Ambiguity*. Here, they argue that ambiguity in cultural production allows resistance to the monoculture of clarity and utility, because ambiguity is not to be read as it "the absence of meaning", but rather as its "multiplication" (Gielen & Haq, 13).

This is exactly what lies at the heart of *Property Panic: Rehearsals of Sharing*. The act of lending of a commodity is neither strictly public nor private, neither utilitarian nor symbolic – it is an ambiguous gesture that creates shared value through an absurd act. It permits people to participate in ways that are flexible, experimental, and intuitive by allowing for exchange to happen not through digital mediation, but through social rituals and neighbourly interaction, both inherently and simply human acts.

Byung-Chul Han's *Vom Verschwinden der Rituale* deepens this idea, asserting that modernity has eroded collective rituals, leaving societies more and more fragmented and individualized: "Rituals stabilize life by structuring time and relationships" (Han, 28). The communal pasta session reintroduces a form of ritual that anchors people through repeated, meaningful action. It transforms what could be a purely functional event into a shared performance, replete with rhythm, tools, and time-bound roles.

Another notable project is *Pumpipumpe*, a Swiss initiative where residents place stickers on their mailboxes indicating what household items they are willing to lend. This makes visible the resources to be shared within a community. While similar in its way of sharing, our project differs by putting the lent object in a collective, time-bound, and productive ritual (fresh pasta-making), rather than simple bilateral exchanges. The shared tool is not only borrowed – it is used in a setting that encourages dialogue, co-presence, and shared authorship.

This project positions object-lending as a deliberate Social design methodology for sharing to become a cultural and political act. It situates itself within ongoing discussions about the commons and rituals in community life. The act of lending becomes a micro-social rehearsal of a different future – within the municipal housing

complex, the neighbourhood, the city - one where care, mutual respect, and creativity displace enclosure, and alienation.

4. *Rehearsals of Sharing* – Participatory Action Research

Rehearsals of Sharing is conceived and enacted as a *Participatory Action Research (PAR)* project, that is to say one that merges the generation of knowledge with direct, transformative engagement in a specific social context. At its core, *PAR* emphasises collaboration, reflexivity, and co-authorship by dismantling traditional hierarchies between the researcher and the researched object(s) while ensuring that those most affected by the issue under inquiry are active participants in every stage of the process. In our case, this means that we meet residents of Franz-Adelpoller-Hof not as subjects of inquiry, but as co-researchers, interlocutors, and co-creators of the project's trajectory.

The cyclical nature of *PAR* – observation, action, reflection, and adaptation (Buckles & Chevalier, 3-4) – is fundamental in understanding how our project is structured. In the early phase, we immersed ourselves in the site, conducting informal conversations, emotional mapping, and active listening. These practices served not only as data collection but also as trust-building rituals, a term that resonates with Byung-Chul Han's understanding of the social necessity of repeated, meaningful gestures. The insights gathered during this phase directly informed the design of each intervention, from the symbolic act of borrowing fans to the organisation of communal gatherings.

Our methods do not rely on extractive tools, such as surveys or structured interviews but revolve around shared experience and embodied participation which entail deliberate acts of willing partaking such as lending household fans, preparing pasta together, or simply making coffee and being present in the courtyard are not instruments of research—they are the research itself. The impressions we gather is qualitative, affective, relational. It is recorded through field journals, photographic documentation, and post-event reflections written both by our team and, when possible, by participating residents.

What distinguishes *Rehearsals of Sharing* as a participatory action research initiative is the intentional reorientation of authorship. The project's outcomes are not predetermined; they emerge through the evolving collaboration between the initiating team and the residents of Franz-Adelpoller-Hof. This openness demands constant recalibration, which explains why we adjusted our approaches several times during the project. We remain flexible, acknowledging and responding to resistance, enthusiasm, or ambivalent reaction within the community in this area.

In keeping with *PAR* principles, *Rehearsals of Sharing* aims not merely at describing or critiquing but more importantly at initiating transformation. It introduces a platform – both symbolic and literal – for new rituals of interaction which, in turn, become tools for mutual recognition, allowing participants to rehearse new roles and relationships in a low-stakes, imaginative space. Over time, these small interactions can shift perceptions, making the possibility of alternative forms of neighbourliness feel more accessible and emotionally meaningful.

Moreover, our project generates knowledge that is highly situated. Unlike abstract policy reports or distant case studies, the findings of *Rehearsals of Sharing* are embedded in the spatial, social, and emotional geography of a single municipal housing block, although their resonance extends far beyond such geographical constraints. As a *PAR* project, our work contributes to broader conversations around urban commons, participatory design, and the reintroduction of rituals in daily life – inquiry fields that are gaining urgency in an age of urban alienation, climate anxiety, and social disconnection.

By combining artistic practice, reflexive observation, and direct collaboration with local residents, *Rehearsals of Sharing* uses the framework of *Participatory Action Research* to generate not only insights but also experiences, moments of presence, togetherness, and shared care, that are themselves both method and result (Fezer, 83)

The choice of situating our project within the socio-spatial ecosystem of the Franz-Adelpoller-Hof, a municipal housing complex in Vienna's 3rd district, was led by the *Urban Living Lab Circular Construction Vienna*, an initiative and a project by the city of Vienna to redesign this exact area in eight years time. While architecture offers physical space, our argument is that repurposing/renovating space alone is not enough to nurture a vivid social ecosystem; therefore, we embed ourselves not in built form, but in social rhythm *vor Ort*, aiming to "weave" new social fabric created by interaction.

5. Set-Up and Structure of the Intervention

Our on-site intervention comprised three specific phases: 1) **curiosity** and activation phase; 2) **participatory** action; 3) **reflections**. The first one started in mid-April 2025. After we found a bathtub for free on *willhaben* (Austria's largest online marketplace), we attached wheels to it and went for a walk with it around Franz-Adelpoller-Hof. We noticed people's reactions to the absurdity of the situation: four people sitting in a bathtub on wheels. It was in this exact moment, that we realised absurdity would serve as a purposeful first step, as it triggered the curiosity of the passersby, who were at the same time puzzled and amused at seeing something "odd unknown" contextualised in their "usual and known". A further important aspect connected to our project was to shape a way of introducing ourselves to the neighbourhood. This was achieved through posters we designed and hung on each building's entrance of all three apartment blocks of Franz-Adelpoller-Hof, the surrounding apartment blocks, and at Fiakerplatz, making sure that as many people as possible in the area would acquire some contact, awareness or merely information about the initiative.

The second phase ("participatory action") developed across three different participatory actions, aimed at bringing the collectivity together within a context of sharing for the purposes of communal good: 1) *Superventilator*, 2) *Pasta Drying Rack* and 3) *Mop Cinema*.

Our first action, *Superventilator*, took place on 2 May 2025. The idea was to put together an installation made up of fans lent by the community (who had been informed of the collection of the objects through the posters we had previously hung) to be assembled onto a wooden frame, in order to create a gigantic fan for all: a *Superventilator*. We used a three-metre-high wooden ladder to which we attached wheels, so as to be able to move it around the area more easily. We then collected wooden bars and fixed them to the ladder, so that they would serve as shelves on which the fans would sit. On each of these, we placed as many fans as we could fit. The fans were the commodity we chose to borrow from the residents of Franz-Adelpoller-Hof for the first participatory action mainly for two reasons: purpose and memory. The former was connected to an actual need of creating fresh air for the community on a very hot mid-spring day; the latter to re-activate a memory of the past by resuming the fan's forgotten usage and retro-looking design. In order to supply power for all the fans to be

switched on, we decided to use a borrowed automobile battery, which we'd previously tested.

On the day on which the participatory action took place, we arrived on site in the late morning and we started to walk around the area with the installation, so as to attract the attention of the passers-by. As we predicted, several people approached us to enquire about the *Superventilator*. Not only were the inhabitants of the compound interacting with us, we immediately noticed how the communal fan had fostered new interlocations among acquaintances, neighbours and strangers alike. Our presence on site lasted about four hours, during which we noticed an incredible amount of interactions in which the common object(s), our project team and the audience all merged into a live performative act.

The success of our first on-site participatory action was key in our decision to foster our continuous presence in the neighbourhood. We appeared on 18 May 2025 in the afternoon for our second action: *Espresso Bath*. Our equipment this time was our bathtub on wheels, a Bialetti Moka Express, a small camping cooker, some mugs to share, and, of course, ground coffee to make for whoever wanted to have one with us. We used the water provided by the public fountains in the area both to make the coffee and to wash the mugs once they had been used. The intention behind our *Espresso Bath* was to have casual talks with people living in the area while sharing a cup of coffee with them. The topics discussed with the residents were bountiful, mainly about everyday routines, social relations at Franz-Adelpoller-Hof or simply who lives where.

Our third action, the *Pasta Drying Rack* was by far the most complex in its realisation. On 21 May 2025 we made thirty portions of fresh pasta dough (3 kg of wheat flour and thirty eggs, no water, no salt). We arrived at Franz-Adelpoller-Hof at 5pm and our idea was to make fresh pasta as an early dinner for whoever wanted to join us. Although we had hung posters on the buildings main entrances as we had previously done before each of the other interventions, this time they had all been removed. We were surprised, but took in consideration also the fact that hanging posters which are not by the administration of the municipal housing is not allowed - which would explain why someone removed our info material.

The commodity we asked to borrow on this occasion was a drying rack, with the aim of drying home-made fresh pasta on them. Our equipment included two tables for rolling out the dough and for cooking, a pasta machine, a cooker, a pot, plenty of plates and cutlery, and of course olive oil, parmesan cheese, lemons, tomatoes, salt, and black pepper.

During the evening the inhabitants of Franz-Adelpoller-Hof lent us six drying racks and about a dozen people from all age groups came to make and/or eat the fresh pasta with us. We had informal conversations with many of the residents. Not only did we succeed in meeting many new people, but we also succeeded in offering a platform for some of them to meet and talk to each other for the first time; in that sense, our list of individuals we interacted with at Franz-Adelpoller Hof continued to grow, especially because some of the people we had already met came to greet us. *Rehearsals of Sharing* had become a platform for interaction for the residents of the housing complex. In order to establish our presence in the community we decided to repeat the Espresso Bath action on 30 May 2025 with the same structure (see above).

We decided to structure the last phase of our intervention, reflections and mapping, as a hybrid on-site performance that merged elements of participatory action and post-action reflection. Our *Mop Cinema* took place on 14 June 2025 in the usual common space between the apartment blocks. This time the idea was to borrow mops, bind them together to create a cinema frame that would serve as a projecting frame/surface to show our video documentation about *Rehearsals of Sharing*. The documentary is a collection of all the experiences, pictures and videos gathered during all the phases of the project. We were present the whole time to liaise with the audiences who, at the same time, were the actors and partakers of the experience itself. The whole neighbourhood was invited through posters and this final action-reflection consolidated *Rehearsals of Sharing* as a good example for the residents of Franz-Adelpoller-Hof, so much so that the hope for the future is to turn the "rehearsal" into a willing, deliberate, uninterested and internalised "Act of Sharing" among the neighbourhood.

6. Reflection – What Happened Below the Surface?

Our method derives from a hybrid of participatory action and urban intervention. The element of surprise breaks the routine and captures attention, lowering the threshold for participation because it enables the spark of curiosity, subsequently provoking reflection and eliciting conversations that would not normally occur among residents of a large and often anonymous housing complex.

This was the first phase of our intervention method: the **curiosity and trigger** phase, thanks to which we allowed for a disruption of the ordinary with a light, humorous, and vivid interaction that invited people to reflect on the boundaries between private and collective. Social design strategies such as our installation, object repurposing, and symbolic rituals were used to create a new platform for exchange that is not digital, but that can only function through real-time, face-to-face, neighbourhood-based engagement. These interactions served as a soft entry into a deeper reflection of social coexistence. As temporary and symbolic as they may were, they opened a portal into the realm of the possible: a society in which shared ownership, mutual aid, and informal collectivity became visible and valued. In doing so, not only did the project address interpersonal dynamics, but it also commented strongly on larger societal patterns that prioritise possession over participation – a clear provocation to share with one another.

The second phase, the **participatory action**, was about repeating that trigger, as well as leaving the impression of a good example to the residents of the housing complex. It further developed into three interconnected parts: a) observation, b) exploration, and c) participation. Once the initial symbolic gesture was enacted, we offered a repeatable model of sharing based on trust, low effort, and symbolic reciprocity. Through this model, we sought to build an embodied sense of collectivity: the physical act of contributing, being present, and receiving care within a communal gesture. This became both a new way of communication and a new design strategy for (im-)material social infrastructure and, over time, this embodied repetition began to foster a culture of shared responsibility, because the process is iterative, responsive, and embedded – a contribution to a sense of belonging to the neighbourhood among residents.

We began with intense **observations** of the site and its existing social dynamics, including informal conversations with residents, and note-taking. By recognising the

needs and identifying early adopters among the residents of Franz-Adelpoller-Hof, we tailored our method and tools and we deliberately plugged ourselves in as a team into the existing social structures, by working with local individuals we met, or curious residents who may function as adopters of our strategy into the broader community. We then structured the process around three temporal phases: exploration, intervention, and reflection. In the **exploration** phase, we map rhythms, routines, and informal spaces of exchange through, note-taking, photographing or making videos. In the **participation** phase, we implemented the playful disruptions, each time tweaking and adjusting to feedback and participation (see above for detailed explanation of each of the three participatory moments).

Finally, in the **reflection** phase, we gathered insights, shared observations with the community and prepared for the next loop of activity. By doing so, our practice remained adaptive and open-ended. Each intervention is structured as a temporal loop: borrowing, transforming, returning. This clear arc enabled the method to become more and more familiar over time, while encouraging reflection on the very act of sharing. As the project evolves, the structure becomes increasingly dialogical. Residents not only borrowed our objects but also began to suggest ideas, or take co-ownership of the next step. In this way, *Rehearsals of Sharing* became an evolving ecosystem of shared rituals because the main media are everyday objects (household items like fans, kitchenware), informal written receipts, video documentation, audio recordings, and spatial installations. We also work with posters and Instagram ([instagram.com/propertypanic](https://www.instagram.com/propertypanic)) to communicate both within and beyond the site.

Ultimately, our medium is also the interaction itself: it is ephemeral, embodied, live and context-specific. Rather than building new structures, we repurpose what already exists, turning the commons into stages for exchange. We do not ask for architectural changes; they will happen anyway, we ask for relational ones. In doing so, we anticipate the constraints of the City of Vienna, that is to say limited budgets, slow bureaucracies, and the need to show “usefulness” in quantifiable terms, and we instead propose low-cost, high-impact social interventions that work within these limits.

The project was presented both in situ and through public documentation. Off-site, we presented the process and reflections in exhibitions (AAA Angewandte Festival and Urban Living Lab Circular Constructing Vienna). This dual context ensured both local impact and transferrable insights. By showing what worked (or didn't) in Franz-Adelpoller-Hof, we hope to invite other urban actors – municipalities, artists, planners – to consider our approach as a plausible process in their own contexts.

Our primary target group is the vague, but whole community of residents in the Franz-Adelpoller-Hof– particularly those who are usually not addressed in cultural programming. We also speak to the wider urban population by presenting this model of sharing as a good example for reclaiming communal life. Furthermore, the project addresses designers, urban planners, and municipal actors, offering them a lens to see design not as form-making but as social infrastructure-building. In this way, we invite multiple audiences to consider the question: what does it take to revive rituals of sharing in cities structured around separation? By occupying space with intention and generosity, *Rehearsals of Sharing* introduces a methodology that doesn't merely ask people to act differently, but offers them a glimpse on how a vivid community feels like, by providing them a tangible experience through a repeatable model.

7. Conclusions

Rehearsals of Sharing attempted to offer a coherent solution to the perceived social singularisation of the Gemeindebau system, and it served as a temporary, experimental platform that made room for informal gestures of mutual care, curiosity, and participation. What began as a symbolic and playful borrowing of commodities evolved into a space for active rethinking of neighbourly relations. This shift – from commodity to common, from passivity to partaking – highlights how even small-scale, low-threshold interventions can inspire habitual patterns and invite new ways for living and sharing.

Through its embeddedness (Snelting, 33) in the Franz-Adelpoller-Hof and its responsive, non-linear methodology, the project allowed for implementation of what social design can do, not by imposing structures, but by revealing the latent ones, such as hidden rhythms, casual solidarities, unspoken needs. As each phase unfolded, a subtle choreography of proximity emerged: object-circulation became conversation, absurdity became encounter, and ritual became relation. We do not claim to have built community, but we believe that we gave greater visibility to the conditions under which it manifests.

By using and re-interpreting the playful serious, the everyday simple, and the usable non-efficient, *Rehearsals of Sharing* contributed to an evolving vocabulary of urban commoning (Laermans, 137), one that insists on attention, repetition, and the embodied presence of others. If anything, the project suggested that the future of urban togetherness may not lie only in technological innovation or architectural redesign, but in everyone's capability and willingness to share space and time, in this case again and again, until the puzzling "extra-ordinary" becomes new, aware, social ordinary.

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Date 16.06.2025

Signature

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'L. Müller', written in a cursive style.