Public Space Public Life studies— the foundation for people first design

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WE ARE INTERESTED IN WHY SOME PLACES ENDS UP BECOMING UNINTERESTING, UNSAFE AND DESERTED
... WHILE OTHER PLACES ARE INCLUSIVE, INSPIRING, SAFE AND LIVELY
...AND WHATS MAKE PEOPLE WANT TO TAKE THE BICYCLE EVEN THOUGH IT RAINS...
...AND CHOOSE TO STAY OUTSIDE WHEN IT IS COLD!
....AND WHAT SPACES INVITE FOR A CHANGE OF BEHAVIOR

Malmö, Sweden
Creating Cities for people is about prioritizing the needs of people and carefully designing space for the unexpected to unfold and for city life to flourish.
40 YEARS OF RESEARCH IS OUR FOUNDATION

Life Between Buildings
Jan Gehl 1971

New City Life
Gehl, Gemzøe, Søndergaard & Kirknæs

Public Spaces - Public Life
Jan Gehl & Lars Gemzøe

Cities for People
Jan Gehl & Lars Gemzøe 2010

You can buy the books at www.arkfo.dk (DK) or www.islandpress.com (US)
40 years of research is our foundation

1971

2010
It is about the interaction between **FORM** (buildings and infrastructure) and **LIFE**
What kind of city do we want?

This is both the first and the last question we should ask ourselves when dealing with cities!
We need to know:

Who we are designing for?
What are their needs?
How can we invite for a wide range of sociability and mobility?
PEOPLE ARE NOT IN THE CENTER OF THE CURRENT PLANNING PROCESS
OUR METHOD: PEOPLES BEHAVIOUR AND NEEDS ARE STUDIED
TODAY, PEOPLE ARE NOT IN THE CENTER OF THE PLANNING PROCESS

All cities have
- Traffic departments
- Data on traffic volumes and needs
- Prognoses for future traffic volumes

Few cities have
- Departments for pedestrians and public life
- Statistics for the use of public spaces
- Strategies for development of city life culture
Data is key - Making People Visible in Planning
Public Space - Public Life surveys

This empirical understanding of how people use urban spaces was inspired by William H. Whyte
Two key indicators to help city leaders make wiser decisions about the city for people

- We count how many are walking - Movement
- We log what they are doing when they are staying in a space - Stationary activities
Copenhagen is our urban laboratory

A gradual process with focus on establishing a pedestrian- and public space network

PS PL 1968
PS PL 1985
PS PL 1995
PS PL 2005
PS PL 1996
PS PL 2006

New City Life 2006
From car invasion
From car invasion ....to people places
Development of car-free streets and squares 1968 - 1995

In 1962
The first pedestrian promenade is introduced

By 1973
Car-free street network is developed

1973-2005
In all 22 squares that were once parking lots are today places for people

m² pedestrian areas
Copenhagen – stationary activity
From 1968 to 1995:
Almost 4 times more space and almost 4 times more activity
80,000 people per 24 hours in the summer

“Strøget” to day
Understanding how the street performs for people

Pedestrians

Thursday, March 10, 2011

Weather: Mix of rain and sunshine, windy, high in the low 50's
Relation between buildings and space

Ground floor frontage potential

The character of the built environment and its impact on public space and public life varies dramatically throughout the length of the project site.

Below we analyzed the grain, quality of frontage and scale of buildings. Each area present a unique set of challenges and potential to be addressed in the design.

Octavia Blvd - Van Ness Ave
- Medium grain
- Low quality ground floor facades
- Narrow sidewalks

Van Ness Ave - 8th St
- Large grain
- Low quality ground floor facades

8th - 5th St
- Small grain
- Low quality ground floor facades

5th - 4th St
- Large grain
- Good quality ground floor facades

4th - 1st St
- Medium grain
- Medium quality facades

1st - Steuart St
- Large grain
- Low quality ground floor facades
Not one street, but many

3 Distinct types of use and intensities

**Mid-Market**

- Market St, between 8th St and 9th St
- Weekday, spring 2011, pedestrians by hour

**Retail Heart**

- Market St NE of Powell St
- Weekday, spring 2011, pedestrians by hour

**Financial District**

- Market St SW of Fremont St
- Weekday, spring 2011, pedestrians by hour
Joined-up thinking: overlapping modes in time and space

During weekday peak periods, the average number of people traveling along Market Street

Number of people along Market Street - by mode - peak weekday, 5-6 PM
Joined-up thinking: Relation between buildings and space

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75% of lingering activity is either standing or waiting for transport.
Homogenous public life

Utilitarian uses dominate
- 75% of activities are standing and waiting for transport

Very few recreational activities like playing and physical activities.

Few cultural activities

Types of activities in the weekend are similar to weekday

75% of all activity is waiting for transport and standing

Types of stationary activities
Average level of activity, noon - 4 pm
all 7 locations, spring 2011

UN Plaza  Hallidie Plaza  Linear Plaza  One Post Plaza  Crown Zellerbach Plaza & 576 Market Street  Mechanic's Plaza & 466 Market Street  Embarcadero Station Plaza
Qualitative studies as well – Hallidie Plaza
12 key quality criteria

Quality criteria for the public realm

Protection

Comfort

Delight
Link quantitative and qualitative – Mechanics Plaza
Qualitative studies as well – Hallidie Plaza

Qualities

The western edge of Hallidie Plaza is of relatively good quality with small units and transparency. However, the space provided along the edge is limited due to the sunken portion.

The Powell street cable car turnaround provide one of the few reasons to stay at Hallidie Plaza.

The cafe at the lower level is one of the few places in Hallidie Plaza where seating is provided. However, the environment isn’t very attractive.

Challenges

The built edge with the most favourable climatic condition have only one entrance and does not invite for interaction or staying activities along the edge.

The sunken portions create unattractive edges to the Plaza and limit the way in which the Hallidie Plaza can be used.

Large parts of the sunken portions are very unattractive and do not invite for people to use them.
84% of all activity is waiting for transport and standing
Link quantitative and qualitative - Hallidie Plaza

Thinking about necessary and optional activity throughout the week

Necessary and optional activities
Average level of activity, noon - 4 pm, spring 2011

- Necessary Activities
  - Waiting for transit (MUNI or Bus)
  - Lying down (undesirable, or anti-social)
  - Advertising
  - Cleaning/working
  - Security Guard
  - Commercially active (selling)
  - Culturally active (performing)

- Optional Activities
  - Sitting
  - Standing
  - Children Playing
  - Physically active
  - Waiting for transit (Powell street cable car)
Cyclists as part of public life?

CYCLING WEEKEND

Cyclists
Saturday, April 2, 2011

The Saturday survey extent extended to 10th St

Following similar use patterns as Market Street

More used ones located by commercial centre
THE STREETLIFE ZONE

A Sidewalk Zone Inviting for a New Synergy

The BMS Project aspires to introduce a new multi-use zone that will invite diverse public life, create continuity along Market Street, and promote opportunities for the integration of walking, biking and public transit.
VISION – A NEW SYNERGY
THE MARKET STREET
NEW YORK – WORLD CLASS STREETS
New York - Process

A pilot project based process enabling city spaces to be re-imagined.

Change of mindset, leading to development of a public realm strategy and permanent projects

- PS PL 2007
- Implementation of Pilot projects 2008-2009
- Advisor to the City of New York 2008 -
Method for measuring pedestrian traffic

This part of the study provides information on how much—and where—people walk, sit, stand or carry out various stationary activities in the city. These activities are a good indicator of the quality of urban public space.

A high number of pedestrians walking in a city does not necessarily indicate a high-quality walking experience. However, a large number of people choose to engage in voluntary activities having an outdoor lunch, playing, or walking then a city must likely have an excellent public realm.

NYCDOT and Transportation Alternatives recruited over 450 volunteers to assist the Gehl staff with data collection in Fall 2007. NYCDOT and Gehl Architects conducted through volunteer orientation sessions to ensure data was collected in accordance with the methodology employed by Gehl Architects in cities around the world.

Gehl and NYCDOT are currently coordinating the training and transfer of the Public Space/Public Life survey methodology to NYC agencies.


Surveyors counted pedestrians on streets for 10 minutes every hour between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m.

Survey Areas

Selection of public life and public space survey areas

The vast size and diversity of New York City’s five boroughs and numerous neighborhoods make it impractical to survey the entire city in detail. Instead DOT suggested survey areas that are centers of activity along key multi-modal corridors. By studying these very different but vibrant centers of city life, this survey provides snapshots of the experiences and challenges found in the public realm of New York City today. The study team joined an overall understanding of pedestrian activities along key corridors in Brooklyn, the Bronx, Manhattan and Queens. These insights form part of the basis for NYCDOT’s public realm program.

Data Collection Locations/Conditions

Gehl chose specific locations near key intersections and major destinations. These were chosen to investigate typical conditions in each neighborhood as well as typical conditions that can be applied to much of each borough. Data was collected from August to November of 2006.
Quantifying impressions

A CITY OF SCAFFOLDING

30% of Broadway buildings between Columbus Circle and Houston Street are covered with scaffolding.
Framing the situation politically

In cases such as Flushing Main St, the number of pedestrians is nearly twice that of vehicle passengers, yet pedestrians are provided less than one third the space.

**Obstacles on Sidewalks**

The effective width for walking is sometimes 50% of the sidewalk.

The numerous obstacles found on New York City sidewalks further contribute to crowding and hurt the quality of the pedestrian experience. Vendors and street furniture play a key role in the public life of the City, but often unregulated vendors and poorly placed or planned furniture restrict pedestrian access. Often the most crowded areas (such as sidewalks near subway stops and street corners) are the places where the most obstacles exist. At some street corners, multiple trash cans or newspaper boxes force people into traffic. Cluttered sidewalks not only impede access but also negatively affect the visual environment.
Seeing places with fresh eyes

Time Square at night. People are crowding on a strip of concrete surrounded by traffic.

Getting to Time Square is a journey dominated by heavy traffic.

TIME SQUARE
- total area: 16,960 m²
- Pedestrian area: 1,880 m²

Times Square consists of
- 89% road space
- 11% people space
Establishing an evidence based decision making framework

Only 10% of pedestrians identified at our survey sites were children or seniors (under 14 or over 65 years old), although these groups account for a combined 30% of New York’s population.

The elderly and young are rarely seen in the street environment in places where streets are traffic dominated and are not perceived as safe.
This process is about balancing interests and needs
‘Green Light for Midtown’
Broadway scheme

Access is allowed but through traffic is prohibited

And space is reclaimed at the Pearls on a String for Broadway
400,000 Square meters of reclaimed space –
3 new Piazza Navona’s in the middle of Manhattan

Total public space reclaimed for people: 3,856,000 ft² (357,771 m²)

Extended public space

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Columbus Circle</th>
<th>Times Square</th>
<th>Herald Square</th>
<th>Greeley Square</th>
<th>Madison Square Park</th>
<th>Union Square</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New public space</td>
<td>50th St. Square</td>
<td>47th St. Square</td>
<td>36th St. Square</td>
<td>26th St. Square</td>
<td>17th St. Square</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gained public space</td>
<td>39,180 ft²</td>
<td>107,790 ft²</td>
<td>79,990 ft²</td>
<td>100,090 ft²</td>
<td>87,788 ft²</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Five extended public spaces and nine new public spaces.
Good for You

Good for the Planet
Consider Behavior and the built environment together

How can we promote or ’nudge’ people to align their habits with the needs of the neighborhood, city and planet?

• Investing in public transport is only worthwhile if it people choose to use it.

• A building is only sustainable if it is part of a sustainable network

• Investments in green technology is only sustainable if people behave the way we predict they will
Copenhagen Municipal Vision

Copenhagen has a vision
We will become the world’s most liveable city: a sustainable city with urban space inviting people to a unique and varied urban life. We will become a metropolis for people.
Copenhagen Municipal Vision

MORE URBAN LIFE FOR ALL

When we talk about a metropolis for people we mean a city for all. Copenhagen will have a varied urban life offering everybody the opportunity to participate irrespective of age, social status, ethnic background, finances or handicap. We will prioritize daily urban life highly while at the same time creating the possibility for the secret, the eccentric and the temporary to flourish. For these reasons, we will create more urban life for everybody with a variety of urban space and activities twenty-four hours a day all the year round.

Our goal is:
By 2015, 80% of Copenhageners will be satisfied with the opportunities they have for taking part in urban life.
Copenhagen Municipal Vision

MORE PEOPLE TO WALK MORE

A metropolis for people is a great city to walk in. Walking is our most basic form of movement. It is easy, healthy, sustainable and costs nothing to walk instead of taking the car. It offers us the opportunity to use our senses, to go on a voyage of discovery and to meet other people. Walking is urban life. So, Copenhagen invites you to walk – in greater comfort and safety and more easily able to get from A to B.

Our goal is:
To increase the amount of pedestrian traffic by 20% by 2015 compared to today.
Copenhagen Municipal Vision

MORE PEOPLE TO STAY LONGER

Some urban life is governed by necessity. We have to do the shopping, fetch the children, go to and from work irrespective of how the city is laid out and equipped. All the fun things, recreational life in the city, the experiences and our personal enjoyment and expressions will only happen if it is a pleasurable place to be. For this reason, we will create squares, parks, streets and waterside quays which invite more people to stay there longer - both in the city centre, in new urban areas as well as where we live and go around on a daily basis.

Our goal is:
By 2015, Copenhageners will spend 20% more time in urban space than they do today.
Copenhagen’s Bicycle Account
Every second year from 1995
Why do Danes cycle?

Is it because of the environment?

5% state that it is because of the environment.

Copenhageners cycling save over 90,000 t CO$_2$ annually.

Copenhagen Bicycle Account 2010
A larger percentage bike for financial reasons?

15% state that it is because it is cheap

Copenhagen Bicycle Account 2010
Even more because cycling is part of a healthy lifestyle

17% state that it is because of the exercise

Copenhagen Bicycle Account 2010
But most people bike because it is the most convenient, fast, direct and pleasurable way to move through the city?

63% state that it is convenient and fast and most direct and pleasurable?

Copenhagen Bicycle Account 2010
Why do Copenhageners cycle?

63% Easy, fast & convenient
17% Exercise
15% Financial reasons
5% The environment

Copenhagen Bicycle Account 2010
BICYCLE TRACKS vs. CITY ROADS

DATA SOURCES: KØBENHAVNS KOMMUNE, TRAFIKSTYRELSEN, BANE DANMARK, WIKI

25% of the SPACE

95% of the CAPACITY

1.3% of the COST

38,000/day  40,000/day

$142 K  $11.25 M
Efficiently using scarce public resources

50% earned in 7 extra years of productive life

20% saved on fewer days of illness

30% on health care savings

Example: Odense Bicycle City

| Investment: | -20 mio |
| Proven Health care savings | +33 mio |
| Municipal profit: | +13 mio |
People don’t change their behavior when you tell them to; people change when the context compels them to.

Copenhagen Modal Split
63% of those who bike do so out of convenience

People change when the context compels them to
Feedback loop between people centered analysis and design.
I’m sorry, I have to leave now, in the middle of this panel!
— making cities for people ...

Please email me with comments, questions or input
jeff@gehlarchitects.dk
Or visit our blog and contribute to the discussion
www.gehlcitiesforpeople.com
Or our website and see the latest news
www.gehlarchitects.dk

A Platform for Growth
By gehlblog
October 24, 2012
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Uncategorized
Leave a Comment
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Edited

For the past couple of days we have introduced the report that Gehl Architects have written together with Red3peas, a document that examines the connections between public space, business innovation and growth through a number of principles and best practice examples. The document can be downloaded here (Danish language version only).

Today we introduce some examples of successful integration of urban spaces into business environments.

Google in Silicon Valley California is an example of a business that realizes the potential for a complex urban setting. Although the Googleplex campus is not located in a downtown setting the campus simulates traditional urban patterns by providing traditional services such as dentists, supermarkets and cafes in a city-like setting with streets and public spaces. Google also acknowledges the innovation of the employee as a valuable asset by providing 20% of office hours for “personal development” projects – this has lead to the creation of highly successful products such as Googlenews and Gmail.