



1

The human dimension

the human dimension — overlooked, neglected, phased out



1.1

The human dimension

the human dimension
— overlooked, neglected,
phased out

For decades the human dimension has been an overlooked and haphazardly addressed urban planning topic, while many other issues, such as accommodating the rocketing rise in car traffic, have come more strongly into focus. In addition, dominant planning ideologies — modernism in particular — have specifically put a low priority on public space, pedestrianism and the role of city space as a meeting place for urban dwellers. Finally, market forces and related architectural trends have gradually shifted focus from the interrelations and common spaces of the city to individual buildings, which in the process have become increasingly more isolated, introverted and dismissive.

A common feature of almost all cities — regardless of global location, economic viability and stage of development — is that the people who still use city space in great numbers have been increasingly poorly treated.

Limited space, obstacles, noise, pollution, risk of accident and generally disgraceful conditions are typical for city dwellers in most of the world's cities.

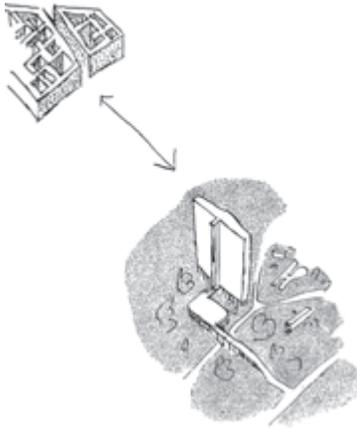
This turn of events has not only reduced the opportunities for pedestrianism as a form of transport, but has also placed the social and cultural functions of city space under siege. The traditional function of city space as a meeting place and social forum for city dwellers has been reduced, threatened or phased out.

a question of life or death
— for five decades

It has been almost 50 years since American journalist and author Jane Jacobs published her seminal book *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* in 1961.¹ She pointed out how the dramatic increase in car traffic and the urban planning ideology of modernism that separates the uses of the city and emphasizes free-standing individual buildings would put an end to urban space and city life and result in lifeless cities devoid of people. She also convincingly described the qualities of living in and enjoying lively cities as seen from her outlook post in Greenwich Village in New York, where she lived.

Jane Jacobs was the first strong voice to call for a decisive shift in the way we build cities. For the first time in the history of man as a settler, cities were no longer being built as conglomerations of city space and buildings, but as individual buildings. At the same time burgeoning car traffic was effectively squeezing the rest of urban life out of urban space.

the human dimension vs. the planning ideologies



Modernists rejected the city and city space, shifting their focus to individual buildings. This ideology became dominant by 1960, and its principles continue to affect the planning of many new urban areas. If a team of planners was asked to radically reduce life between buildings, they could not find a more effective method than using modernistic planning principles (diagram from *Propos d'urbanisme* by Le Corbusier (1946)²). Photos from: Täby, Sweden; Melbourne, Australia; and Nuuk, Greenland).



progress despite the odds

In the five decades since 1961 many researchers and urban planning theoreticians have contributed to the studies and arguments in the discussion of life or death in cities. Much new knowledge has been accumulated.

Valuable progress has also been made in practical urban planning, both in terms of planning principles and traffic planning. Particularly in recent decades, many urban areas around the world have worked hard to create better conditions for pedestrians and city life by making car traffic a lower priority.

Again, primarily in recent decades, there have been a number of interesting departures from modernist urban planning ideals, particularly for new towns and new residential areas. Fortunately, interest in building dynamic, mixed-use urban areas instead of conglomerations of free-standing single buildings is growing.

There has been a corresponding development in traffic planning over the past five decades. Traffic facilities have been made more differentiated,



Cars invaded cities in great numbers all over the world in around 1960, marking the start of a process that eroded the conditions necessary for people to engage in city life. Transgressions were so numerous and so egregious that it is almost impossible to see how detrimental the car invasion has been to city quality (Italy, Ireland and Bangladesh).



principles of traffic calming introduced, and a number of traffic safety steps taken.

However, the growth in vehicular traffic has been explosive, and while problems have been addressed in some parts of the world, they have simply grown apace in others.

far greater effort needed

Despite the negative trend of increased automobile use, there have been some positive developments as a reaction to the lack of concern for urban life as found in around 1960.

Not surprisingly, progress and improvements are seen primarily in the most economically advanced parts of the world. In many cases, however, prosperous enclaves have also adopted the ideology of modernism as the starting point for new urban areas and for positioning introverted high-rise buildings in city centers. In these brave new cities, the human dimension has not really been on the agenda, either now or earlier.

In developing countries, the plight of the human dimension is considerably more complex and serious. Most of the population is forced to use city space intensively for many daily activities. Traditionally city space has worked reasonably well for these uses, but when car traffic, for example, grows precipitously, the competition for city space intensifies. The conditions for urban life and pedestrians have become less and less dignified year by year.

the human dimension — a necessary new planning dimension

For the first time in history, shortly after the millennium, the majority of the global population became urban rather than rural. Cities have grown rapidly, and urban growth will continue to accelerate in the years ahead. New and existing cities alike will have to make crucial changes to the assumptions for planning and prioritization. Greater focus on the needs of the people who use cities must be a key goal for the future.

This is the background for the focus on the human dimension of city planning in this book. Cities must urge urban planners and architects to reinforce pedestrianism as an integrated city policy to develop lively, safe, sustainable and healthy cities. It is equally urgent to strengthen the social function of city space as a meeting place that contributes toward the aims of social sustainability and an open and democratic society.

wanted: lively, safe, sustainable and healthy cities

Here at the start of the 21st century, we can glimpse the contours of several new global challenges that underscore the importance of far more targeted concern for the human dimension. Achieving the vision of lively, safe, sustainable and healthy cities has become a general and urgent desire. All four key objectives — lively cities, safety, sustainability, and health — can be strengthened immeasurably by increasing the concern for pedestrians, cyclists and city life in general. A unified citywide political intervention to ensure that the residents of the city are invited to walk and bike as much as possible in connection with their daily activities is a strong reinforcement of the objectives.

a lively city

The potential for a lively city is strengthened when more people are invited to walk, bike and stay in city space. The importance of life in public space, particularly the social and cultural opportunities as well as the attractions associated with a lively city will be discussed in a later section.

a safe city

The potential for a safe city is strengthened generally when more people move about and stay in city space. A city that invites people to walk must by definition have a reasonably cohesive structure that offers short walking distances, attractive public spaces and a variation of urban functions. These elements increase activity and the feeling of security in and around city spaces. There are more eyes along the street and a greater incentive to follow the events going on in the city from surrounding housing and buildings.

a sustainable city

The sustainable city is strengthened generally if a large part of the transport system can take place as “green mobility,” that is travel by foot, bike or public transport. These forms of transport provide marked benefits to the economy and the environment, reduce resource consumption, limit emissions, and decrease noise levels.

Another important sustainable aspect is that the attractiveness of public transport systems is boosted if users feel safe and comfortable walking or cycling to and from buses, light rail and trains. Good public space and a good public transport system are simply two sides of the same coin.

a healthy city

The desire for a healthy city is strengthened dramatically if walking or biking can be a natural part of the pattern of daily activities.

We are seeing a rapid growth in public health problems because large segments of the population in many parts of the world have become sedentary, with cars providing door-to-door transport.

A whole-hearted invitation to walk and bike as a natural and integrated element of daily routines must be a nonnegotiable part of a unified health policy.

four goals – one policy

To summarize, increased concern for the human dimension of city planning reflects a distinct and strong demand for better urban quality. There are direct connections between improvements for people in city space and visions for achieving lively, safe, sustainable and healthy cities.

Compared with other social investments — particularly healthcare costs and automobile infrastructure — the cost of including the human dimension is so modest that investments in this area will be possible for cities in all parts of the world regardless of development status and financial capability. In any case, concern and consideration will be the key investment and the benefits enormous.



A lively, safe, sustainable and healthy city is the top-level goal of New York's Plan NYC from 2007.³ A new bicycle path and widened sidewalk on Broadway in Manhattan (established 2008).⁴

more roads — more traffic. fewer roads — less traffic

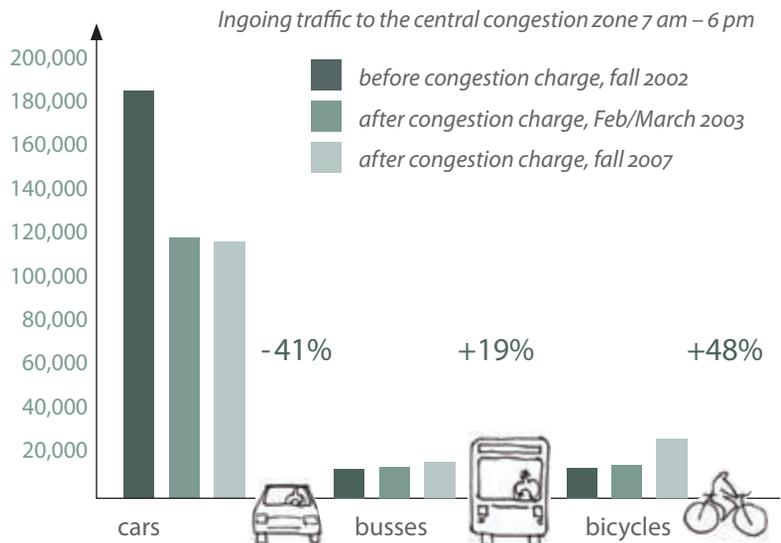
After 100 years of car traffic, the notion that more roads lead to more traffic is accepted as fact. In Shanghai, China, and other major cities, more roads do indeed mean more traffic and more congestion.



When the extensive Embarcadero Freeway in San Francisco was closed after the 1989 earthquake, people quickly adapted their traffic behavior and residual traffic found other routes. Today the Embarcadero is a friendly boulevard with trees, trolley cars and good conditions for city life and bicyclists.



In 2002 London introduced road congestion pricing, which meant that motorists have to pay to drive into the designated part of the inner city. From the start, the congestion charge led to a dramatic reduction in vehicular traffic. The fee zone was later expanded towards the west and now comprises almost 50 km²/19 square miles.⁵



1.2

First we shape the cities — then they shape us

city planning and patterns of use
— a question of invitation

If we look at the history of cities, we can see clearly that urban structures and planning influence human behavior and the ways in which cities operate. The Roman Empire had its colony towns with their fixed and regimented layout of main streets, forums, public buildings and barracks, a formula that reinforced their military role. The compact structure of medieval cities with short walking distances, squares and marketplaces supported their function as centers of trade and craftsmanship. Haussman's strategic urban renewal of Paris in the years after 1852, the broad boulevards in particular, supported military control of the population, as well as providing the platform for a special "boulevard culture" that sprouted promenades and café life along the city's wide streets.

more roads — more traffic

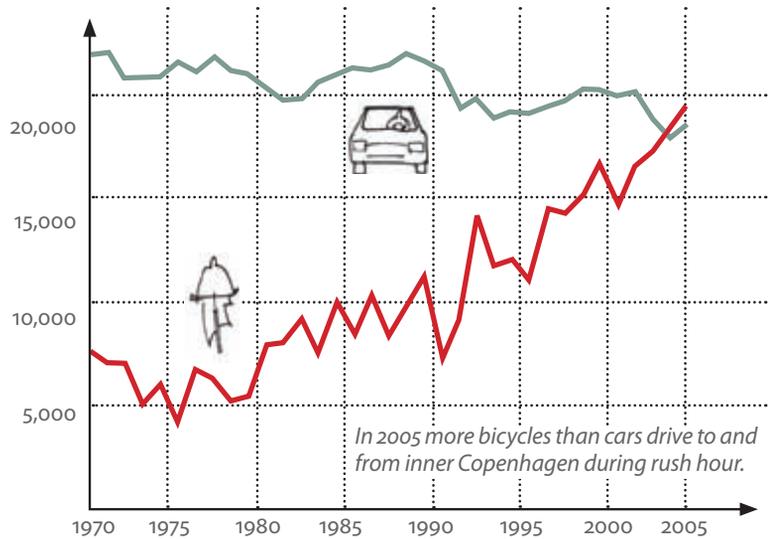
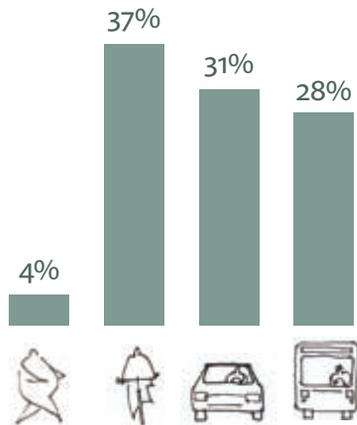
The connection between invitations and behavior came to a head for cities in the 20th century. In the efforts to cope with the rising tide of car traffic, all available city space was simply filled with moving and parked vehicles. Every city got precisely as much traffic as space would allow. In every case, attempts to relieve traffic pressure by building more roads and parking garages have generated more traffic and more congestion. The volume of car traffic almost everywhere is more or less arbitrary, depending on the available transportation infrastructure. Because we can always find new ways to increase our car use, building extra roads is a direct invitation to buy and drive more cars.

fewer roads — less traffic?

If more roads mean more traffic, what happens if fewer cars are invited rather than more? The 1989 earthquake in San Francisco caused so much damage to one of the vital arteries to the city center, the heavily trafficked Embarcadero freeway along the bay, that it had to be closed. Thus a significant traffic route to the city center was removed in one fell swoop, but before plans for reconstruction were off the drawing board, it was clear that the city was managing just fine without it. Users quickly adapted their traffic behavior to the new situation and instead of the damaged double-decker freeway, today there is a city boulevard with trolley cars, trees and wide sidewalks. San Francisco has continued to convert freeways to peaceful city streets in subsequent years. We can find similar examples in Portland, Oregon; Milwaukee, Wisconsin; and Seoul, Korea, where dismantling large road systems reduced capacity and the amount of traffic.

inviting bicyclists: example Copenhagen

Below: going to and from work and education in Copenhagen (2008).



For many years Copenhagen has invited more bicycle traffic. Networks of good bicycle paths now support a safe and effective alternative transit system. By 2008, bicyclists account for 37% of commutes to and from work and education. The goal is 50%.⁶

The development of a distinct bicycle culture is a significant result of many years of work to invite people to bicycle in Copenhagen. Bicycling has become an important part of the daily activity pattern for all groups of society. More than 50% of Copenhageners bicycle every day.⁷



In 2002 the City of London instituted road pricing for vehicles driving into the city center. The immediate effect of the new “congestion charge” was an 18% traffic reduction in the 24 km² (9.26 sq. miles) central city zone. A few years later traffic increased once again in the area, after which the fee was raised from 5£ to 8£, and traffic has lessened once more. The fee has made the invitation to drive to and from the city a guarded one. Traffic has been reduced, and fees are used to improve public transport systems that by now carry more passengers. The pattern of use has been changed.⁸

better conditions for cyclists
— more cyclists

The City of Copenhagen has been restructuring its street network for several decades, removing driving lanes and parking places in a deliberate process to create better and safer conditions for bicycle traffic. Year by year the inhabitants of the city have been invited to bike more. The entire city is now served by an effective and convenient system of bike paths, separated by curbs from sidewalks and driving lanes. City intersections have bicycle crossings painted in blue and, together with special traffic lights for bicycles that turn green six seconds before cars are allowed to move forward, make it considerably safer to cycle around the city. In short a whole-hearted invitation has been extended to cyclists, and the results are reflected clearly in patterns of use.

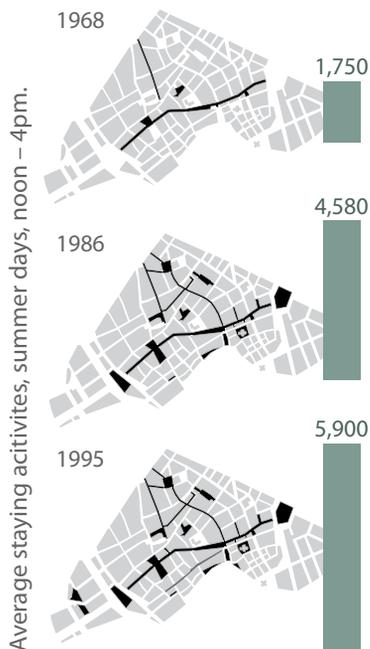
Bicycle traffic doubled in the period from 1995 to 2005, and in 2008 statistics showed that 37 % of personal transport to and from work and educational institutions was by bicycle. The goal is to increase this percentage considerably in the years to come.⁹

As conditions for bicyclists improve, a new bicycle culture is emerging. Children and seniors, business people and students, parents with young children, mayors and royalty ride bicycles. Bicycling in the city has become the way to get around. It is faster and cheaper than other transport options and also good for the environment and personal health.

An extensive expansion of the opportunities to bicycle in New York began in 2007. Photos show 9th Avenue in Manhattan in April and November 2008 with the new “Copenhagen-style” bicycle path designed so that parked cars protect bicycle traffic. Bicycle traffic has doubled in New York in only two years.



better city space, more city life: example Copenhagen



A gradual process starting in 1962 has increased car-free areas in Copenhagen. Public spaces public life studies in 1968, 1986 and 1995 show that the extent of staying activities has increased by a factor of four in the period studied. The more space that is offered, the more life comes to the city.¹⁰ Upper right: Strædet, a Copenhagen street before and after conversion to a pedestrian-priority street in 1992. Right: Nyhavn converted to a pedestrian street in 1980.



better conditions for city life — more city life

Not surprisingly, a direct connection between invitations and patterns of use can also be demonstrated for pedestrian traffic and city life.

Many old cities were established as pedestrian cities, and some continue to have that role where topography has made car traffic impossible, or where the economy and social networks are still based on foot traffic.

Venice enjoys an entirely special status among the old pedestrian cities. In its thousand years of history, Venice has functioned continuously as a pedestrian city.

Even today Venice is one of the few cities in the world that is still a pedestrian city because its narrow streets and many canal bridges have prevented cars from gaining access. In the Middle Ages, Venice was the largest and richest city in Europe. This, combined with the fact that for centuries the city was designed and adapted for pedestrian traffic, makes Venice of particular interest today as the model for working with the human dimension.

Venice has everything: dense city structure, short walking distances, beautiful courses of space, high degree of mixed use, active ground floors, distinguished architecture and carefully designed details — and all on a human scale. For centuries Venice has offered a sophisticated framework for city life and continues to do so, issuing a whole-hearted invitation to walk.

Fortunately, we can now study the results of the invitation for increased pedestrianism and city life in cities formerly dominated by car traffic and years of neglect of the human dimension. In recent decades many such cities have made targeted efforts to give pedestrian traffic and city life better conditions.

Developments in Copenhagen, Denmark, and Melbourne, Australia, are of special interest here, because not only have these cities systematically improved the conditions for city life and pedestrian traffic, they have also recorded the development and can document changes and growth in city life in step with the improvements carried out.

Copenhagen
— better city space, more city life

After many years of pruning back pedestrian areas, Copenhagen was one of the first cities in Europe to grasp the nettle in the early 1960s and begin reducing car traffic and parking in the city center in order to create once again better space for city life.

Copenhagen's traditional main street, Strøget, was converted into a pedestrian promenade already in 1962. Skepticism abounded. Would a project like this really succeed so far north?

After only a short period it was clear that the project was enjoying greater success faster than anyone had anticipated. The number of pedestrians rose 35% in the first year alone. It was more comfortable to walk and there was space for more people. Since then, more streets have been converted for pedestrian traffic and city life, and one by one the parking places in the city center have been turned into squares that accommodate public life.

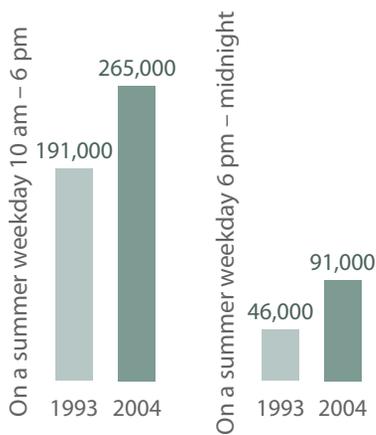
In the period from 1962 to 2005 the area devoted to pedestrians and city life grew by a factor of seven: from approximately 15,000 m² (161,500 sq. feet) to a good 100,000 m² (1,076,000 sq. feet).¹¹

Researchers from the School of Architecture, Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts monitored the development of city life throughout the period. Extensive analyses in 1968, 1986, 1995 and 2005 documented a significant change in city life. The many whole-hearted invitations to walk, stand and sit in the city's common space had resulted in a remarkable new urban pattern: many more people walk and stay in the city.¹²

The pattern in the city center is now being repeated in outlying districts where in recent years many streets and squares have been converted from traffic islands into people-friendly squares. The conclusion from Copenhagen is unequivocal: if people rather than cars are invited into the city, pedestrian traffic and city life increase correspondingly.

better city space, more city life: example Melbourne

Pedestrian traffic in Melbourne



In the years from 1993 to 2004 Melbourne, Australia, carried out an extensive program to improve conditions for life in the city. A study conducted in 2005 showed an increase of pedestrians of 39% from 1993 and three times more people staying for a while in the city. Quality improvements have served as a direct invitation to increased activity in the city.¹³

Federation Square is one of Melbourne's new well-functioning city spaces, and many of the city's neglected lanes and arcades have been incorporated as staying space. All in all, Melbourne has made impressive efforts to invite city dwellers to use their city.



Melbourne — better streets,
more squares, more life in the city

In about 1980 Melbourne's inner city was an indifferent collection of offices and high-rises, lifeless and useless. The city was nicknamed "the doughnut" because it was empty in the center. In 1985 an extensive urban renewal project was initiated to transform the city center into a lively and attractive hub for the region's more than three million inhabitants. From 1993 to 1994 the city center's problems were analyzed, the volume of city life documented and an ambitious program of urban improvements drawn up for the next decade.

An impressive number of urban improvements were implemented in the decade from 1994 to 2004. The number of housing units in the city grew by a factor of 10, and the number of inhabitants rose from 1,000 (1992) to almost 10,000 (2002). The number of student enrolments in or near the city center increased by 67%. New squares, including the architecturally significant Federation Square, were laid out, and small arcades, lanes and promenades along the Yarra River were opened up for pedestrian traffic and staying.¹⁵

The most remarkable factor was, however, the intention to invite people to walk in the city. Since its establishment, Melbourne has been a typical English colony town of broad streets and regular blocks. Early in the urban renewal process, it was decided to pull out the stops to invite people to walk in this city of streets. Sidewalks were expanded, new pavements were laid with local Bluestone, and a system of new city furniture in good materials was designed. The city's pedestrian-friendly profile was followed up by an extensive "green" strategy that included the annual planting of 500 new trees to safeguard the character of and provide shade for the sidewalks. A comprehensive art-in-the-city program and thoughtfully designed night lighting completes the picture of a city that has pursued a targeted policy to invite pedestrian traffic and staying. Two large public spaces public life surveys conducted in

After the conversion of New Road to a pedestrian-priority street in Brighton, England, pedestrian traffic increased by 62%, while the number of staying activities increased by 600%. Photos show New Road before and after conversion in 2006.¹⁴



better city space, more city life: example Århus river, Denmark



The river running through Denmark's second-largest city, Århus, had been covered and used as a major thoroughfare before being reopened in 1998. Since reopening, the recreational pedestrian area along Århus River has been the most popular space in the city. Real estate prices along the river are also among the highest in the city.



1994 and 2004 show that both pedestrian traffic and staying activities have increased markedly in step with the many urban improvements. On the whole, pedestrian traffic during the week in Melbourne's inner city has increased by 39% during the day, while pedestrian use of the city at night has doubled. It is interesting that increase is found not only on individual main streets, but in the city center as a whole. People are flocking to it. Staying activities in the city have also increased dramatically. The new squares, broad sidewalks and newly renovated passages offer many new and attractive staying possibilities, and the activity level has almost tripled on ordinary workdays.¹⁶

documenting city life
— an important instrument for
city development

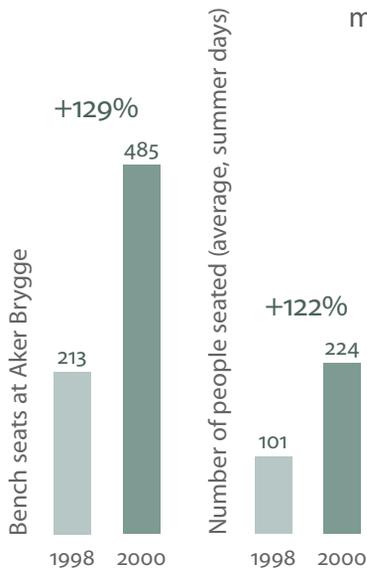
The surveys from Melbourne and Copenhagen are particularly interesting because regular city life surveys have documented that improving conditions for pedestrian traffic and city life lead specifically to new patterns of use and more life in city space. A precise connection between city space quality and the scope of city life has been clearly documented in both Melbourne and Copenhagen — on a city level.

better city space, more city life
— cities, city space and details

Not surprisingly, the close connection between people's use of city space, the quality of city space and degree of concern for the human dimension is a general pattern that can be shown at all scales. Just as cities can invite city life, there are many examples of how the renovation of a single space or even change in furniture and details can invite people to a totally new pattern of use.

The river in Århus, Denmark, which was filled in and converted into a street for vehicular traffic in the 1930s, was uncovered in 1996–98 and the spaces along the reopened waterway laid out as recreational pedestrian areas. Since then the areas along the Århus river have been the most commonly used external space in the city. The conversion has been so popular and economically successful — the value of the buildings along

more benches, more people sitting: example Aker Brygge, Oslo



More modest invitations can also have a measurable effect. Doubling the number of places to sit in Aker Brygge in Oslo has doubled the number of people who are seated in the area.¹⁷

the river has more than doubled — that another large section of the river was opened in 2008. The new city space and new invitations have led to completely new patterns of use in the city.

Simple changes such as improvements in bench seating in the harbor of Aker Brygge in Oslo can significantly change the patterns of use. In 1998 the old benches were replaced by new ones that more than doubled the area's seating capacity (+129%). Surveys in 1998 and 2000 before and after the change show that the number of people who sit in the area has correspondingly doubled in response to the new options (+122%).¹⁸

people in the city
— a question of invitation

The conclusion that if better city space is provided, use will increase is apparently valid in large city public spaces, and individual city spaces and all the way down to the single bench or chair. The conclusion is also generally valid in various cultures and parts of the world, in various climates and in different economies and social situations. Physical planning can greatly influence the pattern of use in individual regions and city areas. Whether people are enticed to walk around and stay in city space is very much a question of working carefully with the human dimension and issuing a tempting invitation.

Every summer the motorway along the Seine River in Paris is closed and converted to "Paris Plage," which is quickly stormed by thousands of Parisians who have been waiting all winter for this very invitation.



necessary, optional and social activities

Necessary activities are an integrated, non optional part of every day. Here we have no choice.



Optional activities are recreational and fun. City quality is a decisive prerequisite for this important group of activities.



Social activities include all types of contact between people and take place everywhere people go in city space.



1.3

The city as meeting place

there is much more to walking than walking!

As a concept, “life between buildings” includes all of the very different activities people engage in when they use common city space: purposeful walks from place to place, promenades, short stops, longer stays, window shopping, conversations and meetings, exercise, dancing, recreation, street trade, children’s play, begging and street entertainment.¹⁹

Walking is the beginning, the starting point. Man was created to walk, and all of life’s events large and small develop when we walk among other people. Life in all its diversity unfolds before us when we are on foot.

In lively, safe, sustainable and healthy cities, the prerequisite for city life is good walking opportunities. However, the wider perspective is that a multitude of valuable social and recreational opportunities naturally emerge when you reinforce life on foot.

During the many years in which pedestrian traffic was primarily treated as a form of transport that belonged under the auspices of traffic planning, city life’s bounty of nuances and opportunities was largely overlooked or ignored. The terms used were “walking traffic,” “pedestrian streams,” “sidewalk capacity,” and “crossing the street safely.”

But in cities there is so much more to walking than walking! There is direct contact between people and the surrounding community, fresh air, time outdoors, the free pleasures of life, experiences and information. And at its core walking is a special form of communion between people who share public space as a platform and framework.

it is also — and most particularly about — the city as meeting place

If we take a closer look at the city life studies mentioned earlier, we can see that in city after city where conditions for life on foot are improved, the extent of walking activities increases significantly. We also see even more extensive growth in social and recreational activities.

As mentioned earlier, more roads invite more traffic. Better conditions for bicyclists invite more people to ride bikes, but by improving the conditions for pedestrians, we not only strengthen pedestrian traffic, we also — and most importantly — strengthen city life.

Thus we can elevate the discussion from traffic issues into a far broader, more wide-ranging and important discussion concerning living conditions and human options in the city.

multifaceted city life

A common characteristic of life in city space is the versatility and complexity of the activities, with much overlapping and frequent shifts be-

a multifaceted city life



tween purposeful walking, stopping, resting, staying and conversing. Unpredictability and unplanned, spontaneous actions are very much part of what makes moving and staying in city space such a special attraction. We are on our way, watching people and events, inspired to stop to look more closely or even to stay or join in.

necessary activities
— under all conditions

A clear core pattern emerges from the great diversity of activities in city space. One simple way to look at them is to put the most important categories on a scale according to their degree of necessity. At one end of the scale are the purposeful necessary activities, that is, activities that people generally have to undertake: going to work or school, waiting for the bus, bringing goods to customers. These activities take place under all conditions.

optional activities
— under good conditions

At the other end of this scale are the largely recreational, optional activities that people might like: walking down the promenade, standing up to get a good look at the city, sitting down to enjoy the view or the good weather.

The great majority of the most attractive and popular city activities belong to this group of optional activities, for which good city quality is a prerequisite.

If outdoor conditions make walking and recreating impossible, such as during a snowstorm, just about nothing happens. If conditions are tolerable, the extent of necessary activities grows. If conditions for being outdoors are good, people engage in many necessary activities and also an increasing number of optional ones. Walkers are tempted to stop to enjoy the weather, places and life in the city, or people emerge from their buildings to stay in city space. Chairs are dragged out in front of houses, and children come out to play.

versatile city life depends largely on invitation

For good reason, climate is mentioned as an important factor for the extent and character of outdoor activities. If it is too cold, too hot or too wet, outdoor activities are reduced or rendered impossible.

Another very important factor is the physical quality of city space. Planning and design can be used to influence the extent and character of outdoor activities. Invitations to do something outdoors other than just walking should include protection, security, reasonable space, furniture and visual quality.

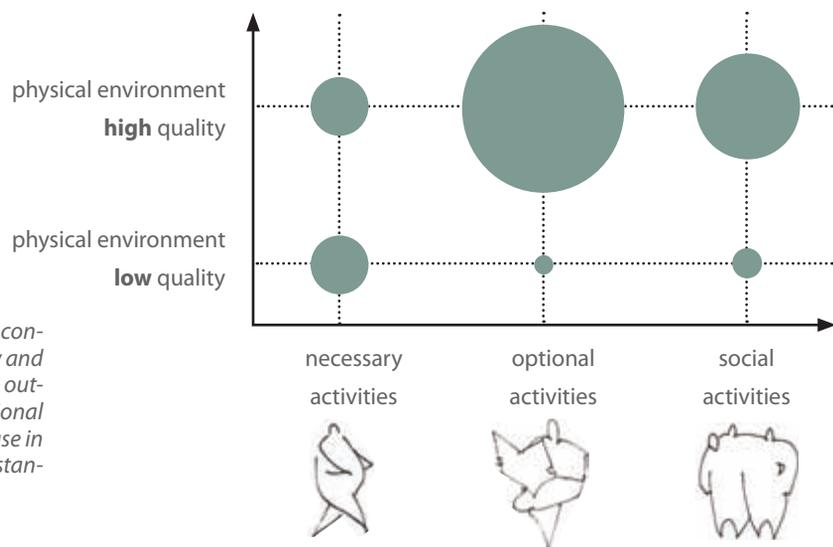
The city life studies mentioned also document the great opportunities for actively inviting people not only to walk but to participate in a versatile and varied city life.

diverse city life – as an old tradition and contemporary city policy

Cities and urban areas can set the stage for specific activities. In the inner city streets of Tokyo, London, Sydney and New York people walk: there isn't room for anything else. In vacation and tourist areas, where passing the time, consumption and pleasure are top priorities, people are invited to stroll and stay a while. In traditional cities such as Venice, people are invited to a versatile and complex city life where there are good conditions for both pedestrian traffic and staying. Corresponding patterns of activity can be found in Copenhagen, Lyon, Melbourne and in other cities, large and small, that have significantly improved conditions for life in city space in recent decades. Pedestrian traffic has grown, and the number of recreational, optional activities has swelled.

interplay between city life and the quality of city space.
Example: New York

Although pedestrian traffic has traditionally dominated the streets of Manhattan in New York City, in 2007 an extensive program was launched to encourage greater versatility in city life.²⁰ The idea was to provide better options for recreation and leisure as a supplement to the extensive purposeful pedestrian traffic. For example, on Broadway expanded



Graphic representation of the connection between outdoor quality and outdoor activities. An increase in outdoor quality gives a boost to optional activities in particular. The increase in activity level then invites a substantial increase in social activities.

interplay between city space and city life: example New York City



In 2009 Broadway in New York City was closed to traffic at Times Square and Herald Square, which brought quiet, dignity and 7,000 more square meters/75,000 square feet to city life. The activity level in the new spaces has been impressive from day one.²¹ Left: Times Square before and right after the redesign.



sidewalks have provided room for café chairs and places to stay, while a number of new car-free areas with many opportunities to stay have been established at Madison Square, Herald Square and Times Square. In all these cases the new opportunities were adopted at once. Almost day-by-day the new invitations have enriched city life and made it far more multifaceted. Even in New York City there is obviously a need for city space and great interest in participating more in city life now that there are more opportunities and solid invitations.

necessary and optional activities as prerequisite for social city activities

That both the character and the extent of city life are influenced dramatically by the quality of city space is in itself an important connection. The connection becomes even more interesting if we look at the relationships between necessary, optional and the important group of social activities. If city life is reinforced, it creates the preconditions for strengthening all forms of social activity in city space.

social activities

— the city as meeting place

Social activities include all types of communication between people in city space and require the presence of other people. If there is life and activity in city space, there are also many social exchanges. If city space is desolate and empty, nothing happens.

Social activities include a wide spectrum of diverse activities. There are many passive see and hear contacts: watching people and what is happening. This modest, unpretentious form of contact is the most widespread social city activity anywhere.

There are more active contacts. People exchange greetings and talk to acquaintances they meet. There are chance meetings and small talk at market booths, on benches and wherever people wait. People ask for directions and exchange brief remarks about the weather or when the next bus is due. More extensive contact can sometimes grow from these short

greetings. New topics and common interests can be discussed. Acquaintanceships can sprout. Unpredictability and spontaneity are key words. Among the more extensive contacts are children's play or the young people who "hang out" and use city space as a meeting place.

Finally, there is a large group of more or less planned common activities: markets, street parties, meetings, parades and demonstrations.

much to look at and important information

As mentioned earlier, see and hear activities are the largest category of social contact. This is also the form of contact that can most directly be influenced by urban planning. Invitations largely determine whether city spaces have the life that gives people the opportunity to meet. The issue is important because these passive see and hear contacts provide the background and springboard for the other forms of contact. By watching, listening and experiencing others, we gather information about people and the society around us. It is a start.

Experiencing life in the city is also diverting and stimulating entertainment. The scene changes by the minute. There is much to see: behavior, faces, colors and feelings. And these experiences are related to one of the most important themes in human life: people.

"man is man's greatest joy"

The statement that "man is man's greatest joy" comes from Hávamál, a more than 1,000-year-old Icelandic Eddic poem, which succinctly describes human delight and interest in other people. Nothing is more important or more compelling.²²

Even from their cradles babies strain to see as much as possible, and later they crawl all over their homes to follow the action. Older children bring their toys into the living room or kitchen to be where the action is. Outside play takes place not necessarily on playgrounds or in traffic-free areas, but more often on the street, in parking lots or in front of entrance doors, where the grown-ups are. Young people hang out by entrances and on street corners to follow along with — and perhaps join in — events.

All over the world, guests at sidewalk cafés turn toward the number one city attraction: city life (Strasbourg, France).



“man is man’s greatest joy“



Girls look at boys and vice versa — throughout their lives. Older people follow the life and activities of the neighborhood from their windows, balconies and benches.

Throughout life we have a constant need for new information about people, about life as it unfolds and about the surrounding society. New information is gathered wherever people are and therefore very much in common city space.

the city's greatest attraction:
people

Studies from cities all over the world illuminate the importance of life and activity as an urban attraction. People gather where things are happening and spontaneously seek the presence of other people.

Faced with the choice walking down a deserted or a lively street, most people would choose the street with life and activity. The walk will be more interesting and feel safer. Studies from inner-city shopping streets in Copenhagen show how happenings, events and building sites where we can watch people perform, play music or build houses attract far more people to linger and watch than shops along building façades. Studies of benches and chairs in city space show correspondingly that the seats with the best view of city life are used far more frequently than those that do not offer a view of other people.²³

The placement and use of café chairs tells a similar story. The most important attraction of a sidewalk café has always been the sidewalk and thus the view of life in the city, and the majority of café chairs are placed accordingly.

delight in life in the city
— in perspective drawings

Nothing speaks greater volumes about “life between buildings” as an attraction than the architect’s perspective drawings. Regardless of whether the human dimension is carefully treated or totally neglected in the projects, the drawings are full of cheerful, happy people. The many people depicted in the drawings give projects an aura of happiness and attractiveness, sending the signal that good human qualities are in abundance, whether or not this is the case. That people are people’s greatest delight is obvious — at least in the drawings!

the city as meeting place
— in an historic perspective

Throughout history city space has functioned as a meeting place on many levels for city dwellers. People met, exchanged news, made deals, arranged marriages — street artists entertained and goods were offered for sale. People attended city events large and small. Processions were held, power was manifested, parties and punishments held publicly — everything was carried out in full public view. The city was the meeting place.

under pressure from the car
invasion and modernistic
planning ideology

City space continued to function as an important social meeting place in the 20th century, until the planning ideals of modernism prevailed and coincided with the car invasion. The discussion of “death and life” in cities, raised defiantly by Jane Jacob’s book in 1961, dealt in large part with

the gradual breakdown of the opportunities of city space to function as a meeting place.²⁴ Even though the discussion has continued since then, city life has in many places continued to be squeezed out of city space.

Dominant planning ideologies have rejected city space and city life as untimely and unnecessary. Planning has been heavily dedicated to the ideal of developing a rational and streamlined setting for necessary activities. Increasing car traffic has swept city life off the stage or made travel by foot totally impossible. Trade and service functions have largely been concentrated in large indoor shopping malls.

the neglected cities
— and city life cancelled!

We can see the results of these trends in many cities, particularly in the southern USA. In many cases people have abandoned cities and it is largely impossible to get to the various facilities in the city without a car. Pedestrianism, city life and the city as meeting place have all been cancelled.

the city as meeting place
— in the 21st century

Access to indirect information and contacts has grown explosively in recent years. The TV, internet, e-mail and mobile telephone give us extensive and easily accessible contact to people all over the world. From time to time the question arises: can the function of city space as meeting place now be taken over by the host of electronic options?

The development of life in cities in recent years suggests a completely different picture. Here the indirect contacts and stream of images depicting what others have experienced in other places does not out compete life in public spaces, but rather stimulates people to join in and play an active personal role. Opportunities to be there in person, face-to-face meetings and the surprising and unpredictable character of experiences are qualities tied to city space as meeting place.

Towns devoid of people are a widespread phenomenon in the southern United States. Pedestrians and city life have given up and everything must be done by car (Clarksdale, Mississippi).





New indirect forms of communication are on the march. They can supplement but not replace direct meetings between people.



It is interesting to note that in these very same decades in which city life has undergone a remarkable renaissance, electronic means of contact have been introduced. We need both options.

Many social changes, particularly in the wealthiest parts of the world, can explain the increased interest in getting about and staying in the city's common space. Longevity, plentiful free time and better economy in general have left more time and more resources for recreation and pleasure.

By 2009, half of Copenhagen's households were inhabited by only one person.²⁵ Shrinking households increase the need for social contacts outside the home. As a result of the numerous changes in the way society and the economy are organized, many people now live an in-



Walking in the city invites direct experiences for all senses as well as attractive extra opportunities to exchange smiles and glances (Robson Street, Vancouver, Canada).



Public space has significant social importance as a forum for the exchange of ideas and opinions.

city as meeting place
— in a societal perspective



creasingly more privatized life with private residence, private car, private household machines and private offices. In this situation we see steadily growing interest in strengthening contacts to the civil society at large.

These new opportunities and needs can largely explain the dramatic increase in the use of the city's common space that is evident in all the cities that have worked in recent years with reviving invitations to city life.

To a far greater extent than private commercial arenas, public democratically managed city space provides access and opportunities for all groups of society to express themselves and latitude for non-mainstream activities.

The spectrum of activities and actors demonstrates the opportunities for public city space generally to strengthen social sustainability. It is a significant quality that all groups of society, regardless of age, income, status, religion or ethnic background, can meet face to face in city space as they go about their daily business. This is a good way to provide general information to everyone about the composition and universality of society. It also makes people feel more secure and confident about experiencing the common human values played out in many different contexts.

Newspapers and TV represent the opposite of this obvious opportunity for people to experience firsthand the daily life of the city. The information these media communicate focuses mainly on reports of accidents and attacks, and presents a distorted picture of what actually goes on in society. Fear and gross generalizations abound in this kind of atmosphere.

It is interesting to note that crime prevention strategies emphasize strengthening common space so that meeting people from various groups of society is a routine part of everyday life. We can think of close-

ness, trust and mutual consideration as the direct opposites of walls, gates and more police presence on the street.

the democratic dimension

Public interests determine the playing rules in the common space of the city and thus help to ensure people's opportunities to exchange personal, cultural and political messages.

The importance of city space is underlined in the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States, which sets out freedom of speech and the right of assembly for its citizens. This importance is also underscored by the frequent bans on assembly in city space decreed by totalitarian regimes.

As an open and accessible interface between people, city space provides an important arena for large political meetings, demonstrations and protests, as well as for more modest activities such as collecting signatures, handing out flyers or staging happenings or protests.

the city as meeting place
— small events and large perspectives

Social sustainability, security, confidence, democracy and freedom of speech are key concepts for describing societal perspectives tied to the city as meeting place.

Life in city space is all-encompassing: from momentary glances to minor events to the largest collective manifestations. Walking through common city space can be a goal in itself – but also a beginning.

cities by people and for people

Unlike the city space of Venice, the reconquered city space in Copenhagen, Melbourne and New York does not represent a nostalgic traditional idyll. These are contemporary cities with solid economies, large populations and versatile city functions. What is remarkable about them is that they reflect a growing understanding that cities must be designed to invite pedestrian traffic and city life. These cities recognize the importance of pedestrian traffic and bicyclists for sustainability and health in society, and they acknowledge the importance of city life as an attractive, informal and democratic meeting place for their residents in the 21st century.

After almost 50 years of neglect of the human dimension, here at the beginning of the 21st century we have an urgent need and growing willingness to once again create cities for people.



RESTAURANT

Danielsen
& SØLV