

Laboratorio di progettazione urbanistica - Urban Planning Workshop
Wednesday, 08.04.02

Pratiche d'uso - Ways of use

Approfondimenti dalla lezione di Venerdì 08.03.28 - Deepenings from the lecture of Friday 08.03.28

L'abitare prevede la *presenza attiva* dell'uomo nel territorio.

Essa si esplica attraverso lo svolgimento di *attività* che implicano l'*uso delle cose/degli spazi*.

A questo ci riferiamo quando parliamo di *pratiche d'uso*.

Spazi, oggetti, territorio possono essere utilizzati in maniere diverse, da diverse popolazioni, in momenti diversi.

Esiste un legame fra *spazio/luoghi, temporalità, società/popolazioni*.

Le pratiche d'uso testimoniano di come un posto, un territorio venga abitato.

Osservare, descrivere, interpretare le pratiche d'uso può costituire una operazione interessante e fertile per *riconoscere e tematizzare "ambienti"* descrivendo *ciò che in essi avviene*, ovvero le *attività* che in esso *hanno effettivamente luogo*.

Guardare alle pratiche d'uso costituisce il solo modo per considerare insieme *spazio e società*: i due termini della relazione secondo cui avviene l'abitare.

Come operare?

I. Considerare gli usi effettivi (e non gli usi previsti).

II. Osservare i comportamenti in atto e/o le tracce prodotte dai comportamenti nello spazio.

III. Considerare le pratiche d'uso come reazione a progetti (nel senso di definizioni spaziali, funzionali, simboliche dei luoghi) precostituiti o come espressione di progetti impliciti alternativi.

IV. Considerare le pratiche d'uso come indicatore del livello di soddisfazione (dei diversi abitanti) nell'uso dei luoghi.

V. Attribuire importanza alle pratiche d'uso meno usuali e orientate alla modificazione dei luoghi (spazio, funzioni, senso).

In conclusione:

- Individuare ambienti dell'abitare (situazioni insediative) descrivendone i tratti salienti e mettendo in evidenza in primo luogo le differenze.
- Individuare le pratiche d'uso che (ripetendosi) accomunano i diversi ambienti e quelle che invece costituiscono un connotato particolare della situazione (ambiente) e contribuiscono a differenziarla dalle altre.
- Osservare le pratiche assumendo un punto di vista tecnicamente pertinente, ovvero in relazione agli spazi in cui si esplicano al fine di trarre elementi utili per lavorare sugli spazi (questo il centro di interesse).
- Predisporre ed utilizzare tecniche di conduzione e di restituzione delle osservazioni efficaci.

Quali *attenzioni* e quali *tecniche* attivare...
in relazione a quali *fenomeni*?

Jan Gehl

Works and researches about public space and public life

Who is Jan Gehl?

Jan Gehl is an architect and professor of urban design, Director of the Center for Public Space Research at the Architecture School of the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts in Copenhagen and founding member of Gehl Architects - Urban Quality Consultants.

For more than thirty years he has carried out his educational, research and professional activity in the field of urban design.

He has worked in many major cities throughout the world, including Copenhagen, Stockholm, Riga, Cape Town, Zurich, Amman, Wellington, Dublin, London, Edinburgh and Melbourne.

He has won many awards for his work in the field of urban design.

Research activity.

His research activity concentrates on public life. Gehl observes the activities that people carry out in the urban public space, reflecting specifically on the influence of environmental characteristics in enabling certain fundamental activities to be performed.

Three books.

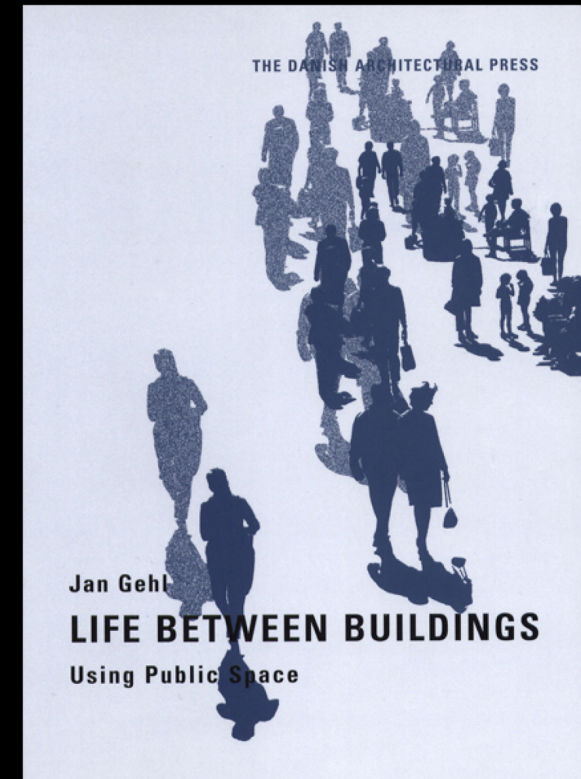
The research work of Jan Gehl over a period of thirty years is marked by three books.

- Gehl J. (2001), *Life Between Buildings. Using Public Space*, The Danish Architectural Press, Copenhagen (ed. or. 1980).
- Gehl J., Gemzøe L. (1996), *Public Spaces Public Life*, The Danish Architectural Press, Copenhagen.
- Gehl J., Gemzøe L. (2000), *New City Spaces*, The Danish Architectural Press, Copenhagen.

Life Between Buildings. Using Public Space.
(1980-1987)

It is a work of a methodical nature on his observations of social activities in the urban public space, developed through research conducted during the 1970s.

The book puts forward *an ordered series of observations on the urban environment and on environmental factors that have an influence upon the use of public spaces*, using forms of public life and the spatial characteristics of places as a starting point for reflection.



Public Spaces Public Life.
(1996 with Lars Gemzøe)

Describes research upon the centre of Copenhagen which has as its subject the effects of the pedestrianisation policy and projects for restructuring the public space which were carried out in the Danish city from the early 1960s.

Today these effects have increased the vitality of social practices and improved the habitability of the public space.



New City Spaces.

(2000 with Lars Gemzøe)

It is a review of case studies on recent policies and projects in relation to urban mobility and public space in nine cities throughout the world - Barcelona, Lyon, Strasburg, Freiberg, Copenhagen, Portland, Curitiba, Cordoba and Melbourne.

The second part of the book has a methodical collection of 39 examples of public pedestrian spaces or spaces with pedestrian priority, described by way of a unified grid.



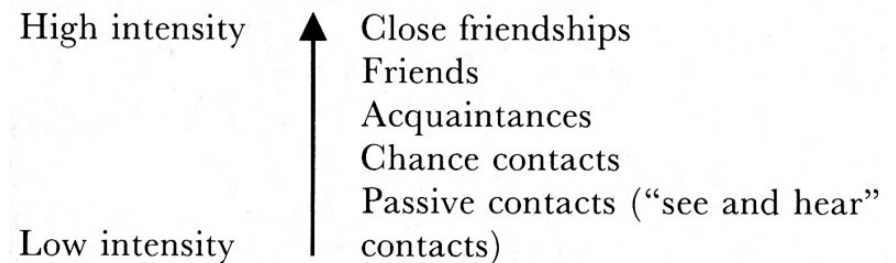
Some issues...

Intensity of the social relations

Five degrees of intensity in the social relations: passive contact, chance contacts, acquaintance, friendship, close friendship.

With increasing intensities of social relations the importance and the conditioning practised by the environment decrease.

If the environmental conditions are unfavorable and they don't let the startup of the first level of social relationship also the subsequent levels are not possible.

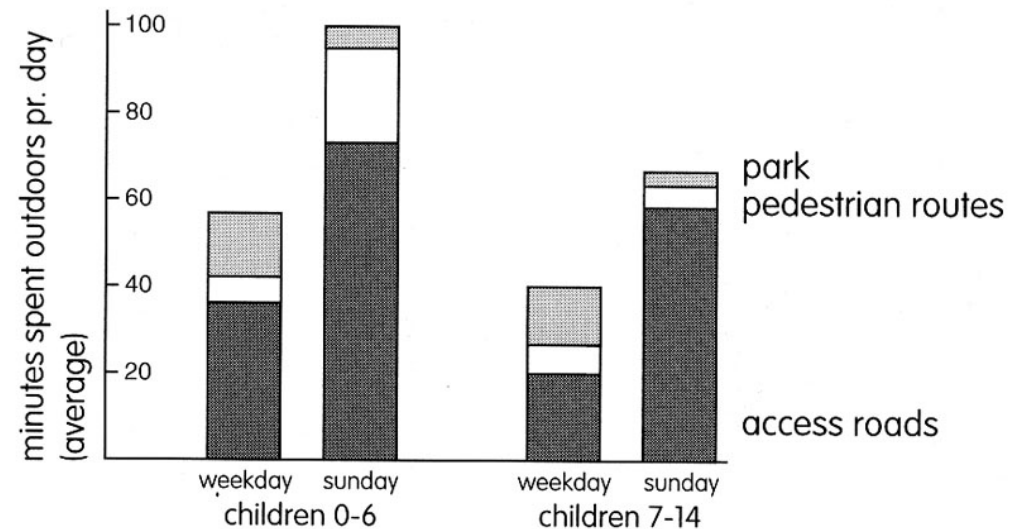


“People come where people are”

The presence of persons on the public scene like an attractive element that facilitates the development of the optional activities.

The quality of the public space does not coincide with the architectonic quality, but it consist in the ability to host human activities: «...life between buildings is more rich, more interesting and more attractive than any other combination of architectural ideas...».

See the ideas of Jane Jacobs about variety (zoning for diversity) and the role of urban streets as a place for social interaction.



“People come where people are”

This remark suggest four considerations:

- to integrate functions, persons and flows of the city,
- to make dense space and activities,
- to avoid the formation of marginalized urban public spaces,
- to restore the connections (see zoning and relatives critiques).

Three kind of activities in public spaces

Necessary activities:

necessary activities tied to the job, the study, the movement... are expressed mostly through the movement.

Optional activities:

chosen activities, carried out with availability of time and favorable atmosphere... are expressed mostly through the stops.

Social activities (“resultant” activities):

are the consequence of the previous activities, it depends on the presence of more persons in the space (little important, abandoned in *Public Spaces Public Life* 1996, all activities are social activities).

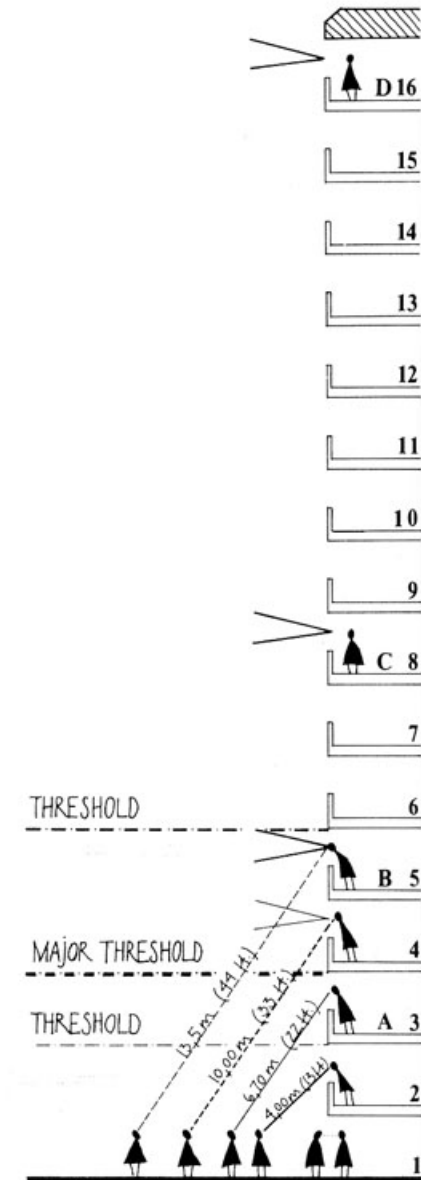
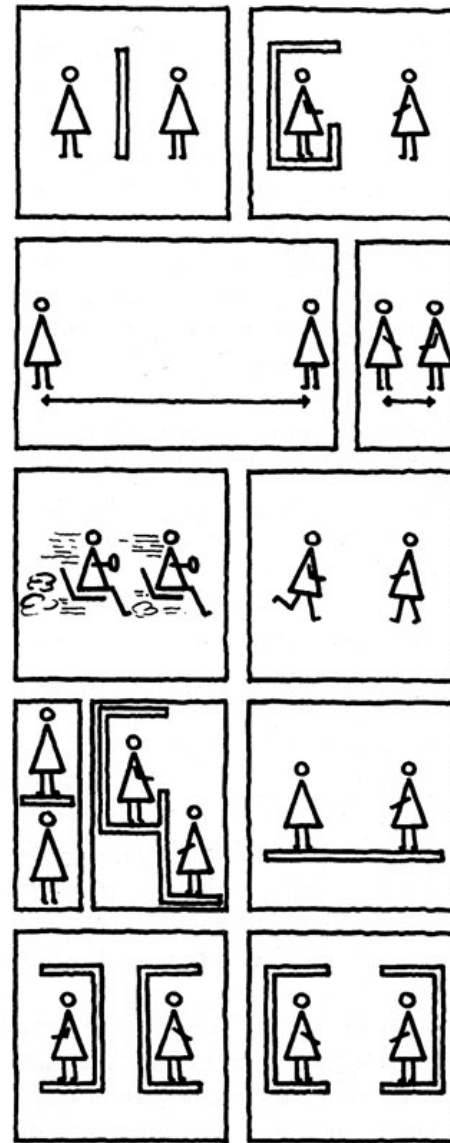
	Quality of the physical enviroment	
	Poor	Good
Necessary activities	●	●
Optional activities	●	●
“Resultant” activities (Social activities)	●	●

Physical environment and social relationship

Risk of spatial determinism: space does not determine activities, perhaps space suggests activities or simply it allows them.

Spatial characteristics affect mainly optional activities, but they are unimportant for necessary activities.

Five environmental conditions have an influence regarding the development of social relationship: walls, distances, speed, levels, orientation.



Soft edge

The edge of the public space as particularly important element regarding the quality of the same space.

The edge is the element that governs the transition from the private space to the public space.

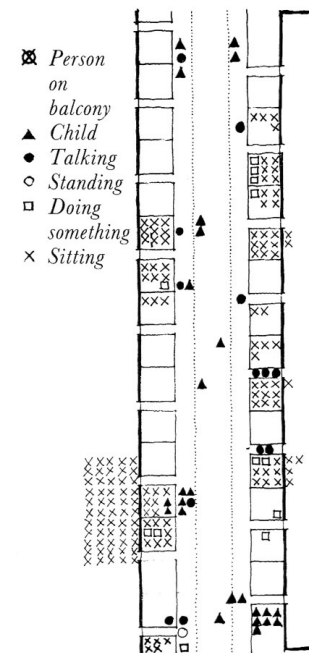
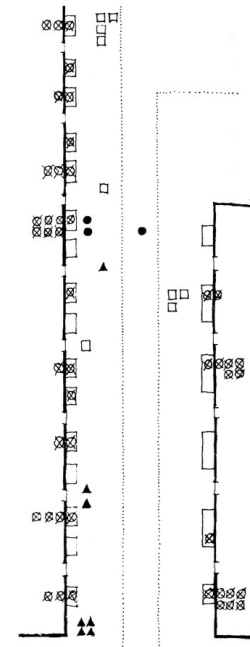
The edge governs the opportunities of exchange between the inside and the outside of the facades.

Role of the front-yard in the definition of the soft-edge: distance of emergency and stage on public scene.

Importance of the attack to earth of the buildings for the definition of a stimulating/interesting environment.

Gehl focuses five important factors regarding the definition of the attack to earth of the buildings:

- amplitude of lots and frequency of the openings
- variety of the functions
- opacity of the facades
- monotony of the facades
- interest and detail elements.



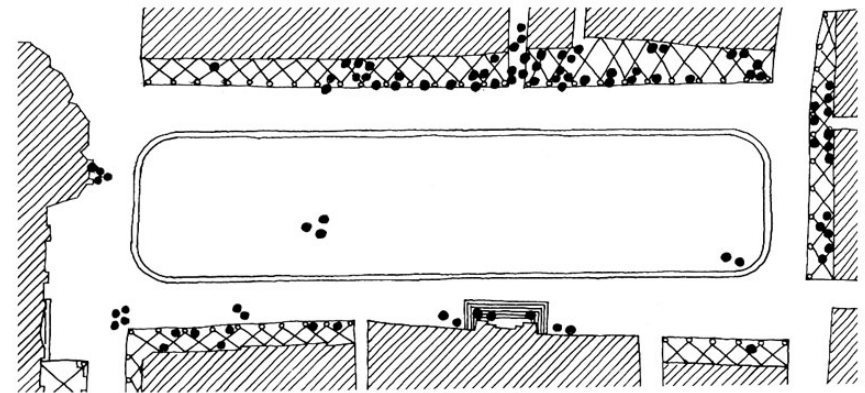
Soft edge

The “edge effect” is particularly evident for optional and social activities.

The edge reassures: it guarantees a better control of the space, regulates the exposure of the subject in the public space, delimits one frontal region on which it’s possible to exercise control.

(see also study about the distances between peoples by Edward T. Hall “The Hidden Dimensions”).

According to Gehl the events in the public space happen in centripetal direction from the outside towards the inside.



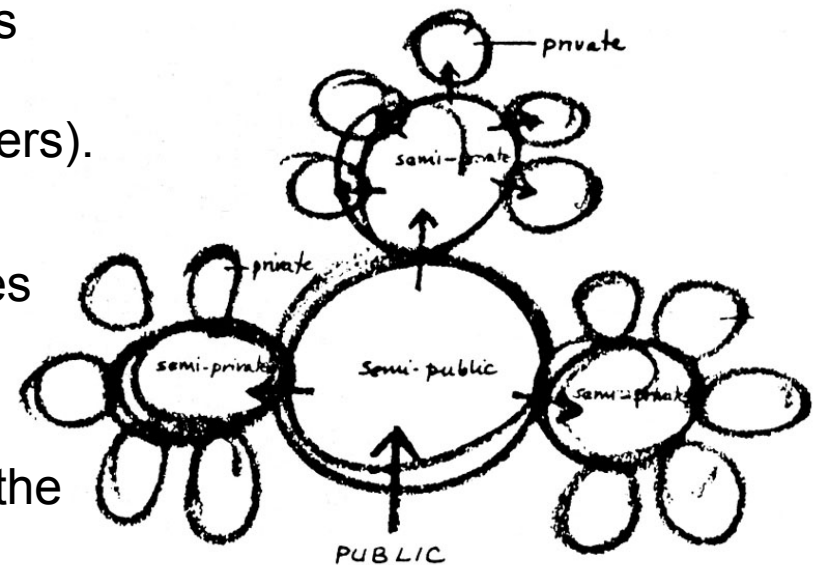
Private space and public space

To guarantee the coherence between physical structure of the space and processes of living... the mild passage from the private space of the family, to the neighborhood, to the community and to the public space of the city.

The mild structure of the urban spaces (private spaces, semi-private, semi-publics, publics) allows the formation of appropriation processes (identification and orientation) which are fundamental in order to live (eg. historical centers).

To avoid the presence of architectural obstacles to the formation of appropriation processes.

As outcome the spontaneous social control of the space.



(see also “defensible space” by Oscar Newman and “eyes on the street” by Jane Jacobs).

Primary and secondary sittings

Primary sittings are devices designed for...
(parks benches, seats, chairs...)

Secondary sittings are basements used
for... (water fountain edges, steps,
curbstones, walls...)

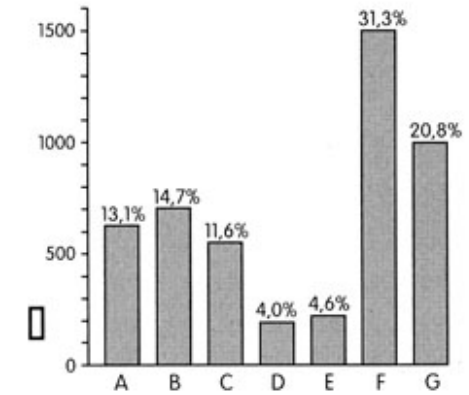
Spontaneous tendency to be seating on
the edge of the spaces publics (edge
effect), oriented towards the alive and
more attractive parts of the public scene,
exposed to the sun, repaired from the
atmospheric events...

Duration vs. number of the activities

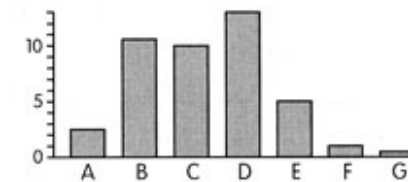
The amount of activity in the space can be measured.

It is more interesting to find the amount of time spend from people in the public space rather than only the number of present persons. In this way more meaningful indications are had on the degree of obtainable satisfaction from the frequentation of a public space... considering first of all activity tied to the permanence, typically optional activities.

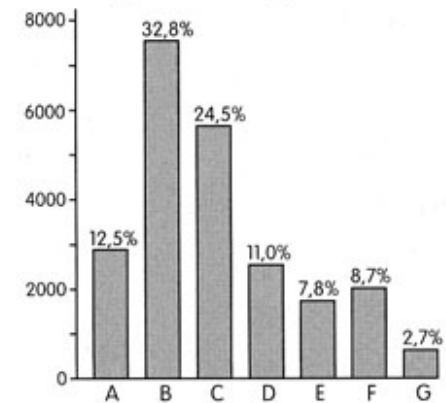
The overall time spend in the public space can be considered like the product of the time spend for the number of present persons.



1. Number of outdoor activities. □



2. Average duration of activities.



3. Total number of minutes spent □ on the twelve streets.

- A. Interacting □
- B. Staying □
- C. Doing something □
- D. Playing □
- E. Strolls inside area □
- F. Coming and going on foot □
- G. Coming and going by car

Three scales of the plan

To guarantee density and integration of the social activities in the city public space it is necessary to consider with particular attention:

- to a large scale, the mix of functions
- to a medium scale, the settlement principle
- to a small scale, the plan and the composition of the single materials

The public space must carry out one structural function to all the scales.

The public space must represent an interesting possibility for a large number of persons and not only for a little group of specialized customers.

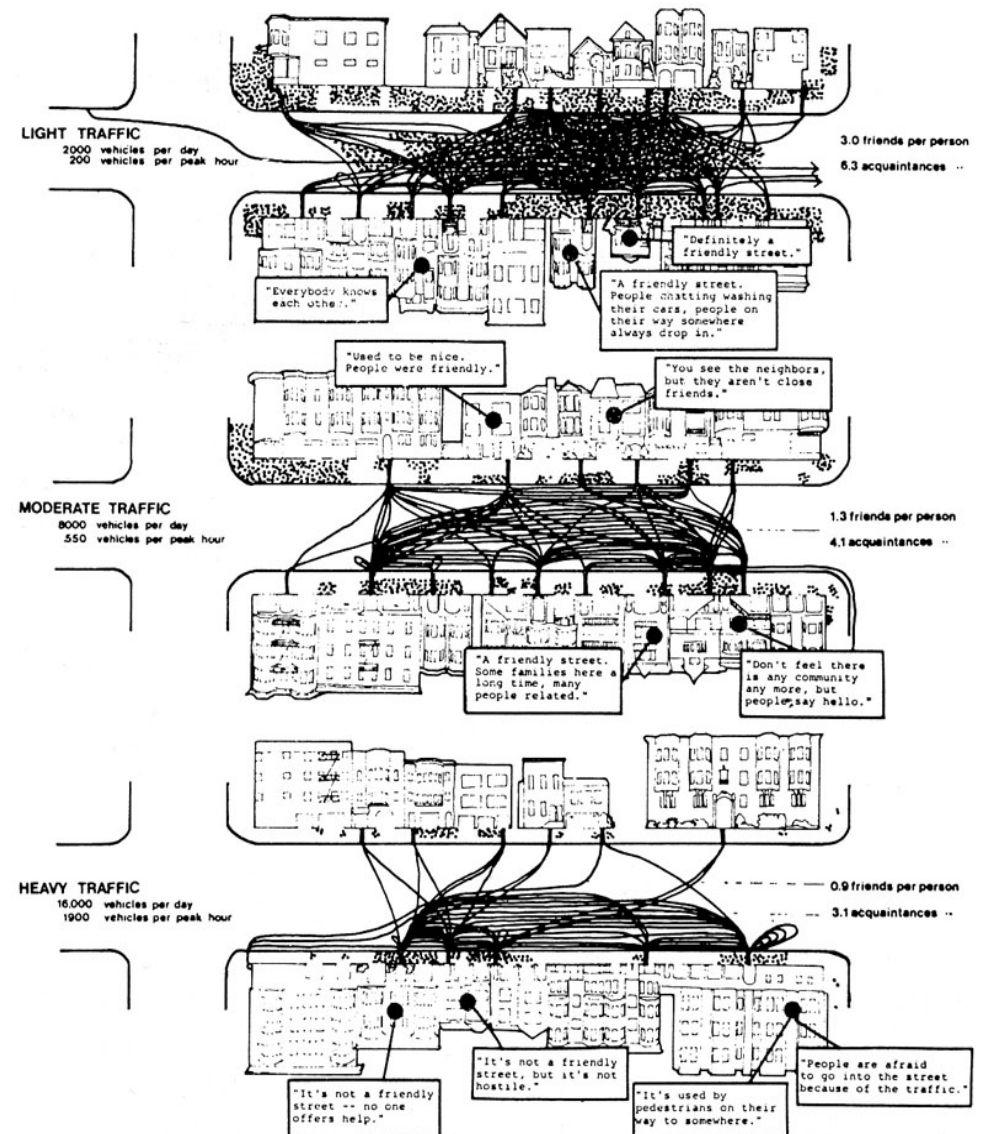
(see also “variety” in Jane Jacobs).

Also the roads must have the larger variety and vitality as possible... also to the detriment of the specialization respect to prevailing users that potentially guarantees the greater conditions of emergency: Gehl supports the model of integration of users and flows previewed from the woonerf.

Pedestrianisation and pedestrian priority

Gehl characterizes three consequences of the traffic on the vitality of the urban space:

- removal of persons from the public space: the system of parking with annexed garages to the house destroys to the vitality of the road... it is better the long parking road or the realization of collective garages at a brief distance,
- inhibition of the human activities: reduction of the freedom degrees, above all for the customers more weak people,
- modification of the landscape: the city seen from the car produces homologation and banalization of landscape and architectures.



Why Jan Gehl's approach is interesting and useful?

Urban space quality and its influence on behaviour.

Jan Gehl's research focuses upon the quality of the urban public space which is a necessary condition for habitability and guaranteeing the vitality of environments.

The aim is to design in a manner that corresponds with recognised social needs, translating the variety of suggestions produced by research in terms that are technically pertinent.

Project scales and living activities.

Large, medium and small scales identify different fields of social practices and levels of interaction with the territory and the city. According to these conditions the projects will explore different scales.

Surveying techniques.

Gehl shows a wide and interesting set of techniques that are useful in comparison with the "non expert" knowledge of the inhabitants and users of the public space.

Representation criteria.

Particular attention is given to the way in which the observations carried out and the relative data are represented. Simple and elaborate examples describing phenomena in progress and objectives followed.

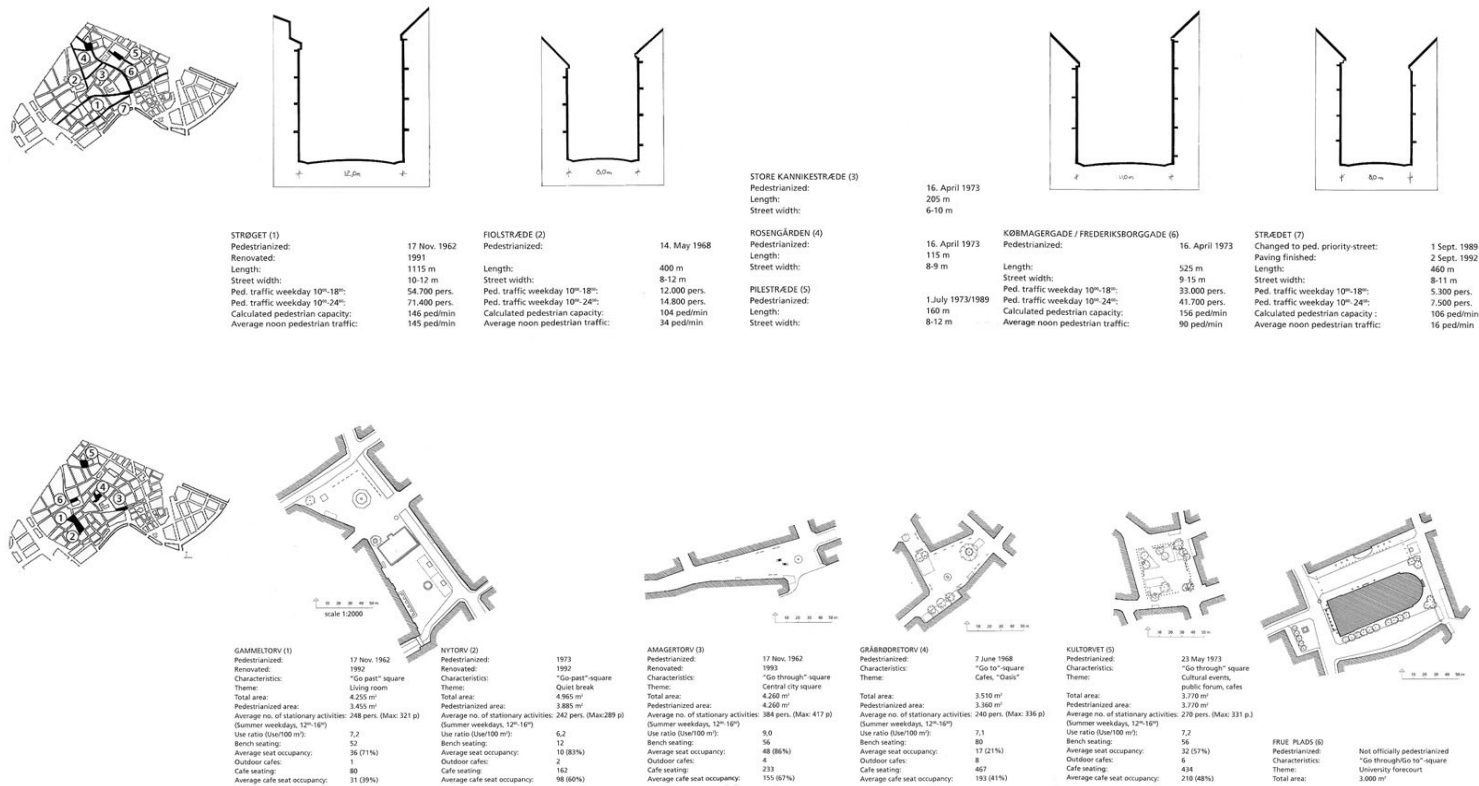
Performance approach.

The performance approach distinguishes all of Gehl's research.

Some topics...

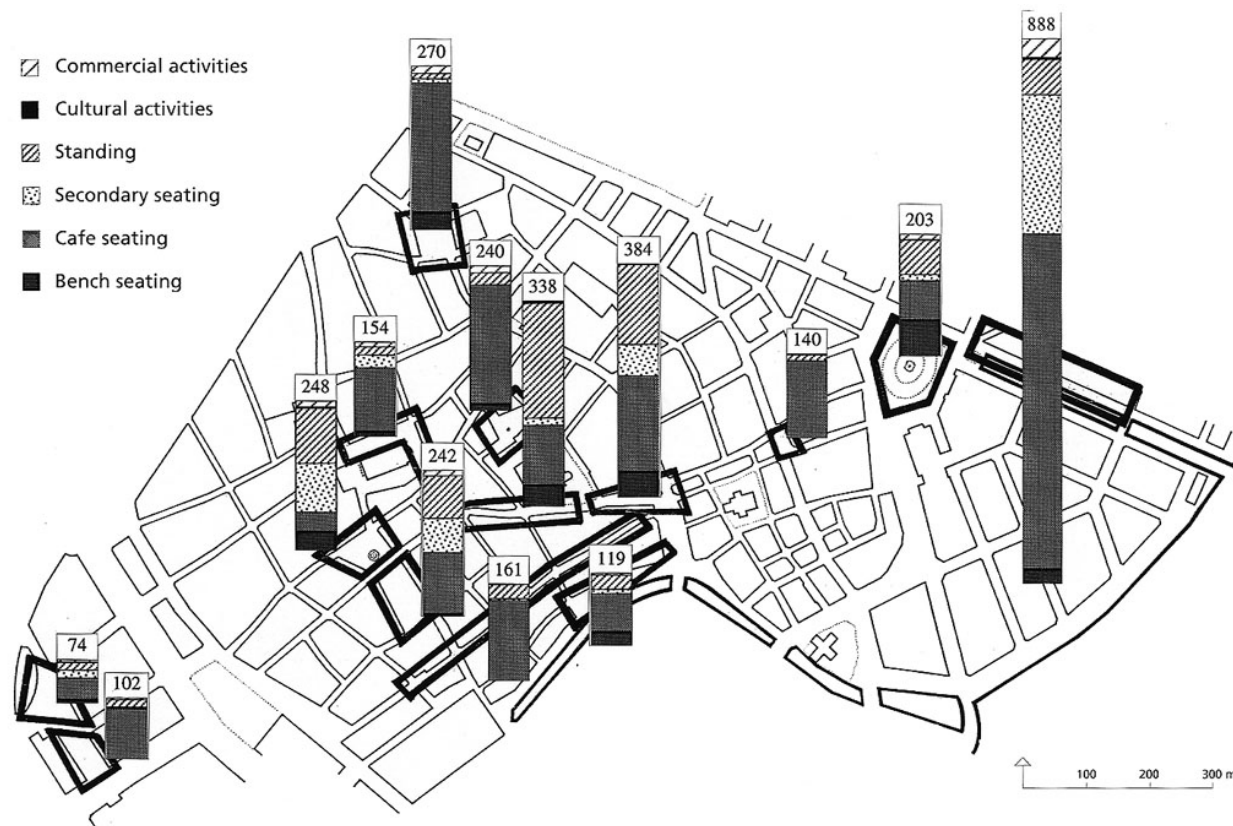
Quality and vitality

Jan Gehl's research focuses upon *the quality of the urban public space* which, according to the author *is a necessary condition for guaranteeing the vitality of environments.*



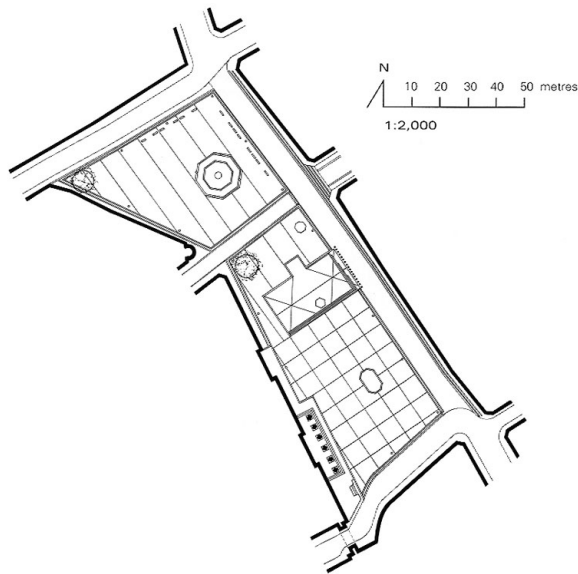
Public space

Gehl provides a point of view that is particularly relevant, which gives *central importance to the public space and its adequacy in relation to contemporary social practices*, in which the author observes constant evolution as well as variability in relation to contexts and seasons.



To design

The aim is *to design in a manner that corresponds with recognised social needs*, translating the variety of suggestions and viewpoints produced by research in terms that are *technically pertinent*. Gehl never investigates individual mental processes but concentrates his attention on *the role of physical environments in permitting or generally stimulating particular collective conduct*.



Different scales of living

A second technically relevant aspect concerns the need, according to Gehl, to explore through the project the *multiplicity of scales through which the dynamics of living can be seen*. Large, medium and small scales identify *different fields of social practices* and levels of interaction with the territory and the city.



Copenhagen
1:100,000



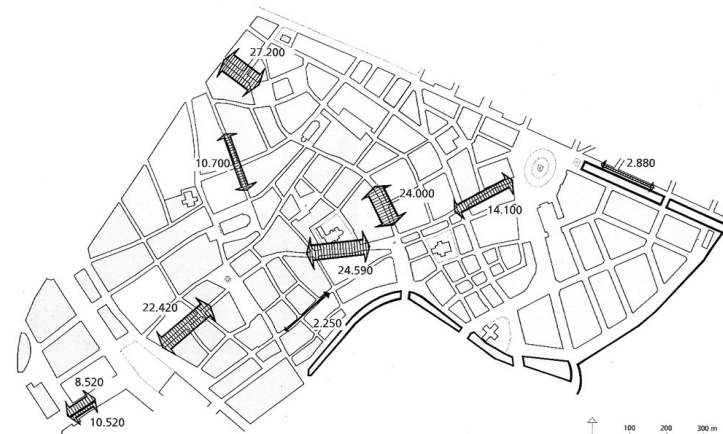
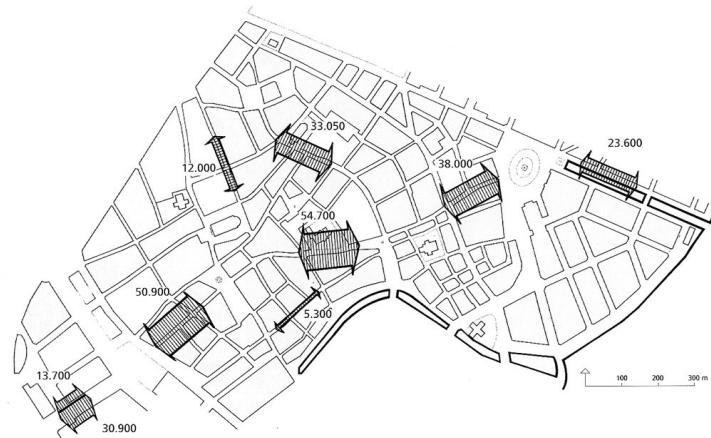
Gammeltorv/Nytorv
1:5,000



Pedestrian zone: 7,300 m²
1:5,000

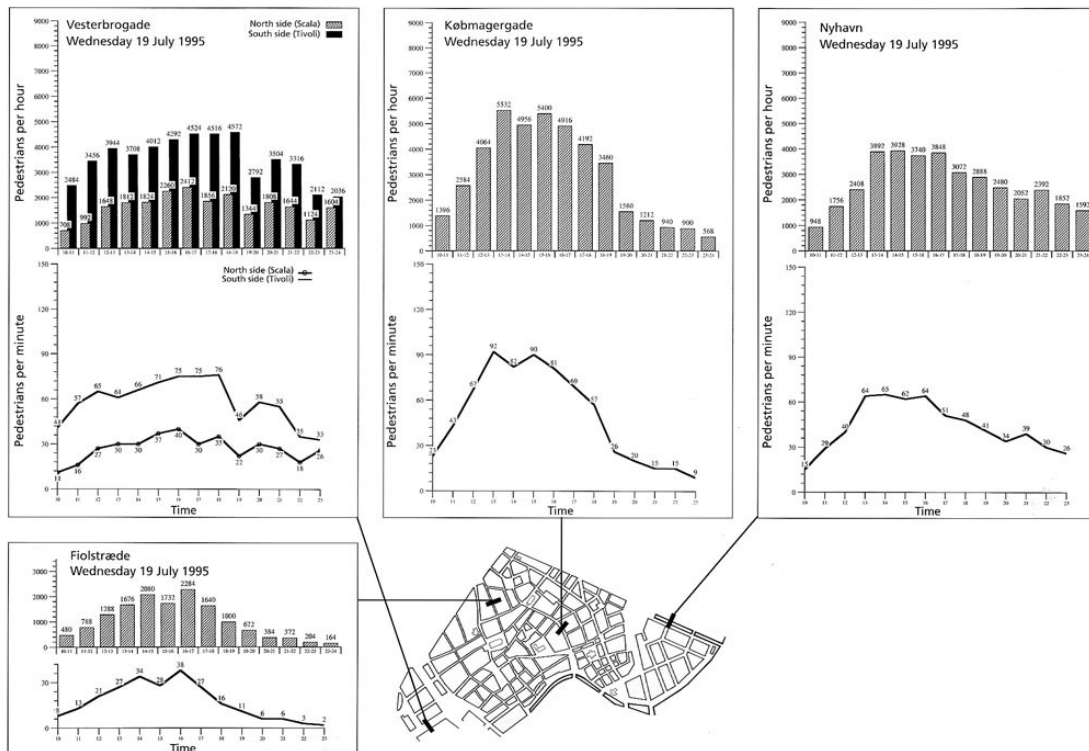
Techniques and knowledge

In the same way, the author organises and puts to work a wide and interesting set of *techniques that are useful in comparison with the “non expert” knowledge of the inhabitants and users of the public space*, which Gehl regards as essential.



Representation

Particular attention is given to *the way in which the observations carried out and the relative data are represented*. Simple and elaborate examples describing phenomena in progress and objectives followed demonstrate the performance approach that distinguishes all of Gehl's research.



Projects and policies

These are objectives that the author considers feasible only through an integrated action of projects and urban policies.

<http://www.gehlarchitects.dk/>