

The Gehl Ideology

Jan Gehl undertook an analysis of the public realm in Mayfair and Belgravia and highlighted that both estates experience high levels of domination by traffic and parked vehicles. In carrying out this study Jan brought his international expertise of this issue and experience in addressing it to Grosvenor. A summary of his philosophy and understanding of this issue, as well as other cities approaches to addressing, it are presented below.

Life, Spaces and Buildings

Turning the traditional planning process upside down

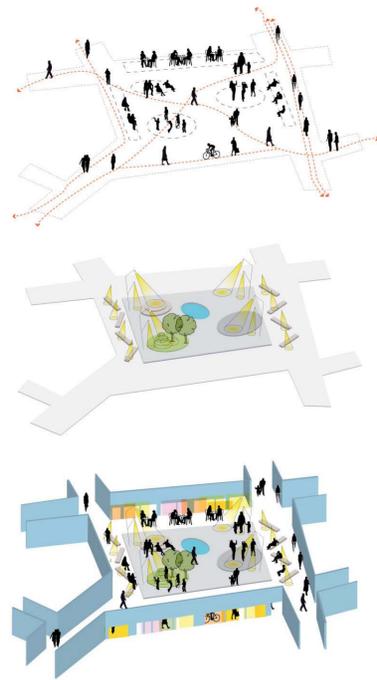
People, life and vitality are the biggest attractions in a city. We see it in the choice of people's seating, where the most populated benches are located, how people choose to sit on outdoor cafes facing the people walking by rather than the buildings behind them. The biggest quality of an outdoor cafe is simply the interaction with other people.

Life in cities is a great quality not only when it comes to the discussion of a single street but also when discussing neighbourhoods and cities as a whole. Life issues are related to the urban environment and the quality of the urban environment depends on the life and vitality of a place.

When developing a successful city area whether it is existing or new, life needs to be in focus from the beginning of the design process.

The conventional way of planning by focusing more on traffic and buildings needs to be turned upside down, to make people as city users more visible in the planning process.

There is more focus than ever before on the human dimension in city planning and the need for quality in the public realm of cities. Cities all over the world are rediscovering their public spaces and a general awareness has been awakened regarding the need for dignified, high quality city environments for people. People are invited to repossess their cities and restrictions are being made to reduce parking and traffic in central city areas in order to make room for more people oriented activities.



New Activities in the Public Spaces

New Interest for physical activity

Because of a lifestyle dominated by vehicular movement and office work, the interest for walking, cycling and other ways of being physically active has dramatically increased. Jogging, various sports, roller skating or simple walks during breaks have increased in numbers.

Enjoying fresh air and nature

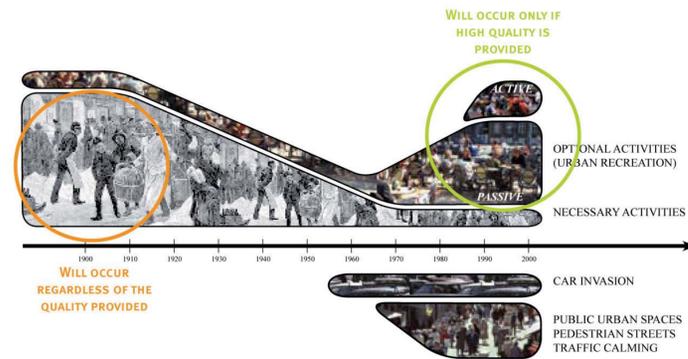
Working in air-conditioned buildings increases the need for being outdoors.

New Interest in participating in cultural events

Public spaces have turned into our meeting places and living rooms as a result of a new city culture — chess, playing, concerts, theatre and street-performances are part of this culture.

Transient and temporary elements and events

New tendencies point towards the perception of the city as a frame not only for permanent installations and events but also for more seasonal elements and activities.



London: Public Spaces and Public Life Study

'Towards a Fine City for People': a study by Jan Gehl

With the introduction of the Congestion Charge, London has entered a new era where car dominance is to be substituted by a better balance between vehicular traffic, public transport, cycling and pedestrian traffic. 'Towards a fine city for people' describes the present walking conditions in London and pinpoints the types of barriers and obstacles pedestrians have to fight when walking in London.

The present problems are of low pedestrian priority shown in numerous ways but what is yet to be developed is the leisure side of the city where the recreational activities - which at present are carried out in the parks- are also part of the city's squares and streets.

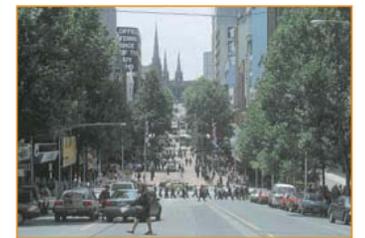
On the basis of the findings a set of overall recommendations has been put forward. The recommendations describe the change of mindset that needs to take place in London where the overall emphasis on vehicular traffic needs to be refocused to encompass other transport nodes.



Reconquering the City: International Experience

Melbourne, Australia

With 3.3 million inhabitants, Melbourne is Australia's second largest city. Its history, street pattern and mix of high and low buildings in the city centre are reminiscent of many other large cities. However, whereas other cities have surrendered their streets to the automobile and developed indoor shopping malls, Melbourne decided to keep its streets as the city's most important public spaces. The city undertook extensive renovation of pavements and street furniture, reinforced its status as a green city and developed a policy for active facades along the footways. As a consequence, Melbourne has ensured that its streets invite people to walk.



Lyon, France

In order to put a human face on the city, the traffic policy is aimed at putting car parking underground. Many of the renovated spaces in the centre of the city have 4 to 6 stories of parking under the car free surface of the public space. A partly public and partly private firm has been established to build and run the new car parks. Most of the renovated public spaces in the inner city were existing "classical rooms" in the historic city fabric.



A "Lyon vocabulary" of materials to be used in the spaces has been developed, particularly to underline the identity of the city but also to limit the number of materials to be maintained. To stress the equality between different districts, the same street furniture can be found in suburban housing projects in central city spaces.

Barcelona, Spain

For the past two decades, Barcelona has been the most important source of inspiration for architects, landscape architects, urban planners and politicians who work with public spaces. Nowhere else in the world can the viewer see in one and the same city so many different examples of new parks and squares and so much exuberance and experimentation in their design.



Barcelona has been both radical and imaginative in implementing its public space policy. In only a decade, several hundred new parks, squares and promenades were created by tearing down dilapidated apartment buildings, warehouses and factories, as well as by renovating existing squares and regulating traffic to the benefit of pedestrians.