

# THE CITY AT EYE LEVEL

SECOND AND EXTENDED VERSION

# LESSONS FOR STREET PLINTHS



Edited by Hans Karssenbergh, Jeroen Laven, Meredith Glaser & Mattijs van 't Hoff



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**AT EYE LEVEL**

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# FOREWORD

Joan Clos

The character of a city is defined by its streets and public spaces. From squares and boulevards to neighbourhood gardens and children's playgrounds, public space frames the city image. In the history of cities, successful urban development has not been possible without an organized physical layout and a system of public spaces and street connectivity within cities. Streets play a critical role in cities, connecting spaces, people and goods, and thereby facilitating commerce, social interaction and mobility. Streets and public spaces have also contributed to define the cultural, social, economic and political functions of cities and towns.

Nowadays, when planning a city, the inter-play and multi-functionality between streets, public spaces and ground floor building façades (plinths) has often been overlooked or neglected. Streets are usually regarded as mere links in a road network, enabling travel, and this has often defined how the streets are used. Where public space is inadequate, poorly designed, or privatized, the city becomes increasingly segregated. Where the ground floor of a building and its relationship with the street and public space has been ignored, their use and design make the space un-attractive and sometimes unsafe.



In this light, UN-Habitat emphasizes the role of streets and public spaces as a connective matrix on which healthy and prosperous cities must grow, embracing the essential requirements of being inclusive, connected, safe, accessible, multi-functional and liveable. Therefore, the quality of the ground floor façades we pass close by at eye level is particularly important to enhance environmental sustainability, enrich the quality of life and promote equity and social inclusion. Tools and regulations to strengthen the relationship between the ground floor and the street will improve the interaction between private, semi-private, semi-public and public spaces.

Attractive public spaces and well-connected street networks encourage more people to walk and cycle, improving their health while reducing motor traffic, energy use and pollution. When designing buildings, building façades and public spaces, attention needs to be placed not only on the space itself, but the inter-play between form, function and connectivity between the buildings, the street and the open public spaces. These spaces need to be flexible enough to serve a variety of users and uses, ranging from the informal to formal.

This publication on “The City at Eye Level – lessons for street plinths” provides valuable lessons, approaches and inspiring practices on how well-designed building façades and properly designed and managed streets and public spaces not only contribute to improve the overall visual character of a city, but also stimulates economic activities and enhances the functionality of the city.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Joan Clos". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a single blue line.

Dr. Joan Clos,  
Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Director, UN-Habitat

# ABOUT THIS BOOK

Hans Karssenbergh, Jeroen Laven,  
Meredith Glaser & Mattijs van 't Hoff

In early 2012, we started the project that would become *The City at Eye Level: Lessons for Street Plinths*, a book that was published by the end of that year. The word “plinth” was new to many readers. In Dutch the “plint” means baseboard, but also describes the ground floor of a building. We sought collective answers to the question: How can we create a user-friendly ground-level that is flexible for years to come, adaptive for multiple uses, pleasing to the eye, and all with little financial resources? Using our own expertise on the topic, and that of our network, it quickly became an open-source project with more than 40 contributing authors and many international examples. After publishing the book and launching the website ([www.thecityateyelevel.com](http://www.thecityateyelevel.com)) we received many positive reactions. But the story continues.

That first book focused on plinths in the city: the ground floors that negotiate between the inside and the outside, between the public and the private. After conducting “plinth games” in Stockholm and Amsterdam, and further “public development” projects like ZOHO Rotterdam, we continued to refine the story. It’s now very clear that plinths are only one part of the story. What we now prioritize is the *human scale*: the true city at eye level. Moving beyond the plinths, we include not only physical components like the façade, building, sidewalk, street, bikeways, trees—but also the emotional and social aspects. What makes a space a place to be and a place to linger? And

more importantly, *who*? This updated and revised edition makes a better attempt at telling the whole story.

As the city evolves, so does the field of urban planning. In all of our current projects, we rely very little on our formal training in planning. After all, we are no longer planning cities—we are reinventing, reusing, and living within them. Our most meaningful, high-impact projects are founded on the principles of co-creation and depend on experimental, bottom-up initiatives, temporary use, user- and place-based strategies, and DIY urbanism. For us, co-creation is at the heart of generating long-term effects. Who is at the table, what networks are we using, what assets do we have to share, what tools can we use? As partnership patterns are changing and local/regional municipalities no longer have a stronghold, around the table we see various user groups, community members, property owners, developers, entrepreneurs and public/private industries. Often, like many co-authors in the book, we operate as "public developer": we then take the initiative ourselves, in a collaborative spirit, to develop public space qualities in our cities. This book tries to capture the various groups and share their stories as well.

The target group of this book is everyone involved in improving cities: urban planners, local municipalities, architects, politicians, developers, entrepreneurs, and the list goes on. It even extends to the 'new investors' in the city—an increasingly important group that includes public and private organizations and companies in sectors such as education and health care.

We are very grateful for the hard work and dedicated time our contributors provided.

*November 2015*



# THE BASICS

# THE CITY AT EYE LEVEL

Hans Karssenbergh & Jeroen Laven (public developers)

A plinth is the ground floor of a building. It is a building's most crucial part for the city at eye level. What do you as a pedestrian experience when you look around? Do the buildings, their use, and their design make an attractive urban environment where you feel at home? Do the plinths connect with pedestrian flows in the urban area? What are good functions for plinths? Which set of actions and partnerships are needed to transform dysfunctional plinths? The last few years, Stipo has worked on all kinds of plinth strategies: from the CityLounge programme in Rotterdam's inner city to the transformation of Amsterdam's ugliest street into a welcoming street; from fashion in Arnhem's Klarendal to better plinths in regeneration and residential areas.

## WHY PLINTHS?

The city is not only a functional environment, but also an environment of experience. Function has been fairly dominant in the past few decades, due to the combination



The Haarlemmerdijk in Amsterdam



Antwerp



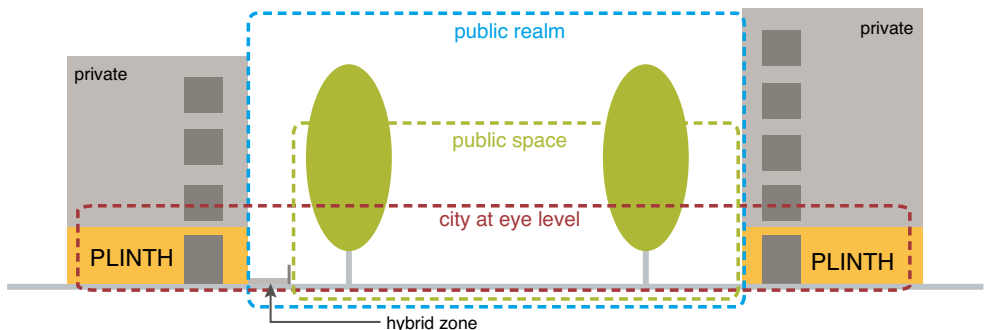
of a large post-war building production and the industrialisation of the construction process. However, now we experience, in western economies at least, the shift from 'making the city' to 'being the city'. New construction and areas of growth will persist, but the reinvention of existing urban structures will become more dominant.

After the decades of functionalism, perhaps now a correction is necessary: more attention on the urban experience, or urban warmth as we call it from an urban psychological point of view. Besides, the knowledge economy, the ever larger interconnectivity on a global level, co-working, the increasing competition between shopping and residential areas, the growth of urban-oriented people with a higher education, and the growing number of single and double households not only cause a massive reevaluation of the city as a whole, but also make the experience of that city ever more important. The squares, parks and terraces are the places where knowledge workers exchange their ideas. Places with retail and culture attract more people, and so do residential areas with an urban feel. It is all part of the larger movement of the urban renaissance caused by new interest in cities with mixed urban areas and great public spaces.

## PLINTHS AND THE PUBLIC REALM

Urbanites experience their cities in what we call the 'public realm'. It has a broader meaning than just 'public space'; it includes façades of buildings and everything that can be seen at eye level. Plinths are therefore a very important part of buildings: the ground floor, the city at eye level. A building may be ugly, but with a vibrant plinth, the experience can be positive. The other way around is possible as well: a building can be very beautiful, but if the ground floor is a blind wall, the experience on the street level is hardly positive.

Plinths are crucial for the experience and attractiveness of the urban space, both in residential and commercial areas. Research shows that if the destination is safe, clean, relaxed and easily understood, and if visitors can wander around with their expectations met or exceeded,





The square Mr. Visserplein in the inner city of Amsterdam: no doors, a closed façade. Good plinths are not self-evident.

these visitors will remain three times longer and spend more money than in an unfriendly and confusing structure. Good plinths are in the interest of the urban economy, and not only because of consumer spending.

A balanced labour market with enough people with a higher education demands a functional urban environment for living, shopping and playing. The knowledge and experience economy requires spaces with character, a good atmosphere, a place to meet and to interact. The entire urban environment shapes this atmosphere, but plinths play a key role. The ground floor may be only 10% of a building, but it determines 90% of the building's contribution to the experience of the environment.

## **GOOD PLINTHS ARE NOT INHERENT**

However logical this all may seem, we do not experience good plinths everywhere in cities. Why is that? In the projects we have worked on, we have found all kinds of reasons why the combination of interventions by government and market parties do not necessarily lead to good plinths.

Many buildings of the past have been designed from a different design perspective and their plinths are simply not suitable for attractive public functions. Also the development of 'drawing functions inside' directs the attention more to the inside world rather than the urban environment: shopping malls, multifunctional complexes for leisure, care clusters and



Primary school in the child rich newly built neighbourhood Ypenburg (The Hague) that over twenty years easily can be transformed for other purposes

campuses often are bad examples of these. Monofunctional layouts and primary attention for car use worsen the situation, as do single-use office areas.

## **PLINTHS AND THE NEW ECONOMY**

When a plinth is successfully created, retail, cafés and restaurants often provide the highest profits. As a result of this, attention is directed at commercial functions for most (re)development projects. But is this sustainable? The last ten years the Netherlands saw a 50% increase in surface space dedicated to retail, while turnover in the sector remained the same. In the coming years the retail sector expects an additional 30% to disappear as a consequence of internet shopping. These trends require a new perspective for programming plinths with different functions, such as properly designed housing on the ground floor. We should stop clustering social functions such as primary schools in new multifunctional (and introvert) buildings, but start to create spaces in flexible plinths that can change to new uses every decade or so.

Many streets are under pressure; they have lost foot traffic and vacancy is increasing. Streets leading towards the city centres, streets around (public) transport junctions, streets in working areas and streets in residential areas are faced with vacancy or discrepancy (no suitable uses



Weesperstraat Amsterdam, offices often don't have attractive plinths

and/or a poor image). This trend can partly be seen as a natural urban life cycle, and partly as a consequence of other influential causes, such as the focus of shifting inner cities, poor rental policies, or design failures.

As residential functions, co-working, shopping and leisure are more and more footloose, experience is becoming more and more important. New trends can improve the quality of plinths, such as small-scale shopping, the need for new co-working cafes, temporary creative functions, and pop-up stores. In any case, a good plinth strategy will have to embrace a wide range of functions, including social functions and houses on the ground floor.

## **KEY PLINTH PLAYERS**

Besides these trends it is useful to look into some of the most important players' positions: developers, owners, entrepreneurs, and renters. For project developers, the plinth is most of all part of their building, rather than part of a street. On top of that, plinths are financially of secondary importance: when there is enough support for the offices or apartments on the higher floors, construction can start. A plinth in use is then a bonus but not a breakpoint for the investment decision.

Office owners are satisfied when they can rent 90% of their buildings. For them, the plinth is often an entirely different, difficult and fragmented market. In most single-user office buildings the ground floor is merely an entry or security point. From the user's viewpoint, as we can see in many office streets, these plinths contribute very little to the quality and attractiveness of the urban public realm.

Unfortunately, also many designs fail. Not all but many architects are focused more on designing buildings rather than creating good streets. And also in the design of the adjacent public realm all kinds of interests play a role, such as traffic, and experience and residential quality do not necessarily come first. And there are private users who sometimes prefer (and are allowed) to have closed shutters towards the street.

Although we all realize their importance, good plinths are not in the least self-evident. The coming decades will add more economic pressure to plinths, and local authorities and property owners will have to collaborate if they want good streets. To put it differently: attaining good plinths and a good urban experience requires an active government and an active market. A strategy is needed in which governments, developers, designers, owners, and renters each play their own parts. And because each neighbourhood and each street is different, they each require a different strategy.



Coolsingel Rotterdam, before and after the plinth strategy

## PLINTH TRENDS

In practice we not only see a new interest from both the users and the designers point of view, but we are also faced with massive changes on the programme side. Functions as retail, residential, commercial, and social functions face recent developments that provide threats and opportunities for plinths. The table on the left shows some of the most important plinth trends we encounter.



Haarlem, simply good houses in the plinth

# Plinth trends

Function	Plinth Threats	Plinth Opportunities
<b>Retail</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Online shopping, (far) less retail space needed</li> <li>– Oversupply in retail in general</li> <li>– Larger scale shops, chains, caring less about plinths and causing uniformity</li> <li>– Introvert indoor shopping malls that draw all plinth functions to the inside</li> <li>– Scattered building ownership in shopping streets causing every owner to aim for the highest paying renter in each building</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Experience as the crucial factor for competition between urban and internet shopping</li> <li>– New specialised shop formulas such as oil and olive and authentic bread shops</li> <li>– New cultural entrepreneurs</li> <li>– Cultural industries</li> <li>– Temporary popup stores</li> <li>– Street management shifting from building logic to a street logic</li> </ul>
<b>Commercial</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Co-working: less office space needed, new vacancy, up to 35% fewer square meters needed</li> <li>– Car-oriented complexes with a ‘dead’ ground floor</li> <li>– Monofunctional working areas on one-sided office and business areas</li> <li>– Office functions on ground floor level with shut blinds and closed character after office hours</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Co-working: interaction and meeting in the plinth</li> <li>– Flexible work- and meeting-space near public transport junctions</li> <li>– Shared use of libraries, museums, government buildings, theatre foyers, sports</li> <li>– Temporary use of empty plinths</li> <li>– Crafts, studios and creative sector with service functions</li> <li>– Commercial functions that need a plinth: health, beauty care, food, construction, repair</li> </ul>
<b>Social</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Clusters of social functions in multifunctional accommodations and multifunctional schools that draw all functions to the inside</li> <li>– Clustering of education in introvert campuses</li> <li>– Introvert health complexes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Social functions such as elementary schools in the plinth</li> <li>– Services in neighbourhoods for care, local police, housing providers, etc.</li> <li>– New broker organisations between users and vacant social property</li> <li>– Public parts of academies and high schools such as work experience spaces, incubators for starting businesses of students</li> </ul>
<b>Leisure</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Introvert leisure complexes</li> <li>– Too high levels of desirability in planning restaurants and cafés in urban development projects</li> <li>– Single focus on leisure in inner city areas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Restaurants and cafés as traditionally good plinth functions</li> <li>– Temporary cafes and restaurants in vacant plinths</li> <li>– More public oriented design of museums, placing museum cafés and shops before the ticket gates with a street orientation</li> <li>– Temporary exhibitions in plinths</li> </ul>
<b>Residential</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Residential buildings and complexes withdrawing from the outside world, gated communities and measures caused by feelings of unsafety</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Urban living: a more plinth-oriented population, eyes on the street</li> <li>– New combinations of working and living</li> <li>– Revival of the urban perimeter block with flexible plinths</li> </ul>

Seeing these trends, we find that good plinths cannot be made by retail only. According to some estimates, due to the combination of the oversupply created in the last ten years and the rise of internet shopping, half the current shops will disappear from our streets. Of course, new formulas will come up, but it is clear that we cannot solely rely on shops to create a better public realm. Therefore, in setting up plinth strategies, we also look at new economic functions such as co-working places, restaurants and cafés, social functions such as schools, and most of all residential space on the ground floor.

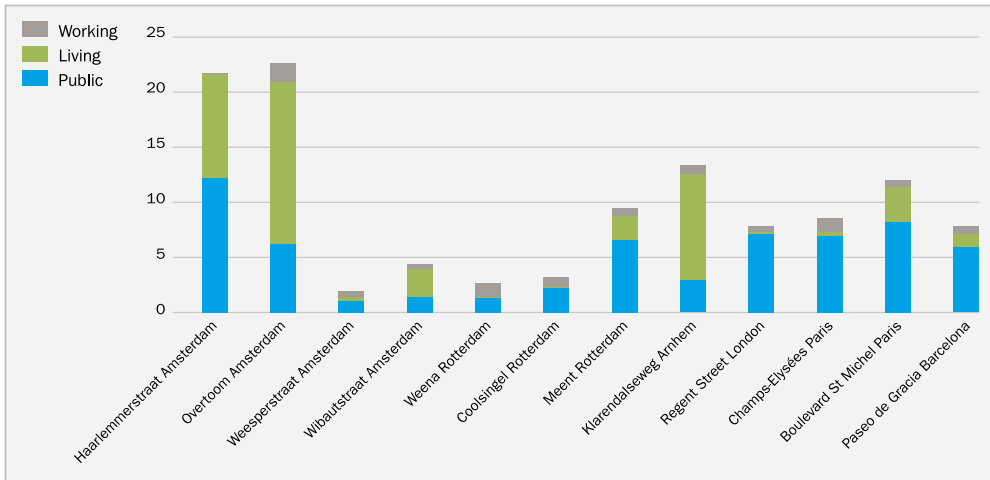
## ROTTERDAM'S PLINTH STRATEGY

Rotterdam is a good example of what a plinth strategy can mean for a city. Rotterdam is looking for contemporary ways to improve the residential qualities of its inner city with methods that suit the post-war reconstruction character, realizing that the image of the city as a whole largely depends on the image of the inner city.

After a pilot on three streets, the urban planning department, the inner city project team, the economic department and Stipo analysed the situation



Paris, a vibrant plinth



Number of ground floor units on each side of the street per 100 meters, accumulative



Plan South of Berlage in Amsterdam, well designed residential functions in the plinths



Inviting plinths at Botersloot Rotterdam



in the city centre. This led to a new analytic language examining pedestrian flows at different moments of the day, the increase of property values and mapping places of “let’s meet at...”. We also made a function map for the city at eye level only. The map made clear how the inner city ground floors are made up of monofunctional islands of living, working, culture and shopping. By combining the layers of the analyses, we identified ten areas where intervention is needed, with distinct approaches on the short-, mid- and long-term.

## **INTERNATIONAL COMPARISON**

One aspect of good and varied streets is to have compact concentrations of different functions in the plinth. For Amsterdam's Weesperstraat we compared which kind of units are found at which distance. We compared some of the internationally renowned ‘Great Streets’ (Allan Jacobs): Regent Street in London, Les Champs-Élysées and Boulevard St. Michel in Paris, and Paseo de Gracia in Barcelona. In The Netherlands we analysed vibrant streets such as Amsterdam’s Haarlemmerdijk and Overtoom and Rotterdam’s Meent, and less lively streets such as Rotterdam’s Weena, and Amsterdam’s Wibautstraat and Weesperstraat.

Our main conclusions are:

- Great Streets have an average of a new unit every 10 meters with a house, a public function or an office (this means 8-10 units every 100 meters)
- Great Streets have a minimum of a new public function in every 15 meters (6-8 public functions every 100 meters)
- Offices are not important for Great Streets, living is possible if not too dominant as a single function. Mostly public functions create Great Streets: shops, cafés, restaurants, education.

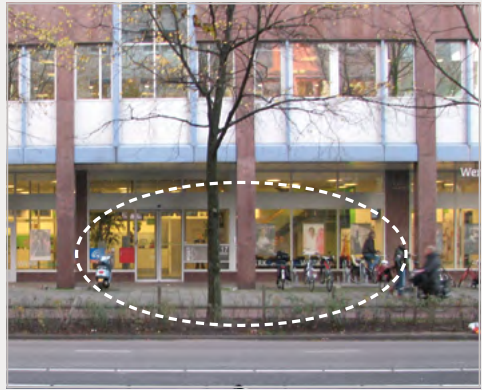
Weesperstraat in Amsterdam has an average of one public function every 103 meters. Haarlemmerdijk, on the other side of the spectrum, has a public function every 8 meters. However, the Weesperstraat analysis showed that it is possible to adapt the existing buildings’ ground floors in such a way that the street would approach the Great Streets average. Combined with its good location in the city of Amsterdam, Weesperstraat could become a better street for pedestrians. This is a strategy we currently work on in close collaboration with the local authority and the property owners, creating a vision and a coalition to transform this car-oriented office street into a metropolitan street that combines traffic and space for pedestrians.

## CRITERIA FOR GOOD PLINTHS

What then are good and bad plinths? In cooperation with the City of Rotterdam, and referring to previous research and articles such as 'Close encounters with buildings' (Jan Gehl, 2006), 'Towards a Fine City for People' (Jan Gehl, 2004) and 'Great Streets' (Allan Jacobs, 1995), and using our own experience in practice, Stipo has developed a three-layer set of criteria that should be part of each analysis and strategy for plinths: building, street, and context.

Each of these levels provides 'buttons' to push for a plinth strategy. The levels cannot be separate from each other, they interact; without enough people living in the area, for instance, or lack of purchasing power, a shop can have a fantastic plinth, but still will find it hard to survive. A single building may be well-designed (from a street perspective), but if the rest of the street has blind façades it will not function on its own. A street may look great, but if it is not connected to the main streams of pedestrians in the city centre, it will be difficult.

By analysing the plinths along these levels Stipo built a joint vision, supported by the partners (owners, renters, government) and helped implement it, including temporary and new street concepts.



Criterion Building



Criterion Street



Criterion Context

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## **1 The building**

- enough small scale units
- variety of functions
- façades with a ‘veranda feeling’
- special character of the architecture
- richness in material, architecture that embodies 5 km/h details
- not too large glass surfaces as they mirror light and amplify noise
- vertical orientation of the façade
- a well-functioning ‘hybrid zone’ (the transition from private to public)
- appropriate signing on façades, no neon
- flexibility in height (> 4m)
- flexibility in the land use plan (zoning)

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## **2 The street**

- pleasant to walk and cycle
- physical comfort (wind, sound, sun, shadow, maintenance)
- definition (the building height should at least be half the street width)
- variation in buildings
- quality that catches the eye
- minimum 10 doorways per 100 m of façade
- clear beginning and ending of the street
- good tree canopy
- possibilities to sit, also on planters, staircases along the water, etc
- avoid car dominance and traffic noise
- parking facilities, in balance with pedestrian space
- accentuate elements such as entrances, exits, paths and junctions
- a good place has at least 10 good reasons or activities to be there
- a good street, plinths and/or place management.

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## **3 The context**

- pedestrian streams day and night, 5-20 passers-by per width meter per minute is ideal
- socio-economic capital in the surrounding neighbourhoods
- the presence of functions with a meaning for the whole of the city or even the region
- the position in the urban fabric and in the city’s walking and cycling routes
- the grain of the street pattern; a finer grain allows pedestrians to make many choices walking
- connections to squares and parks
- coherent and yet varied urban design
- density
- clear and intuitive wayfinding
- the presence of a long term strategy
- partners who take initiative; allow for the community to take ownership.

# STREETS AS PLACES

a conversation with Fred Kent & Kathy Madden  
(placemakers)

## **ART OF THE PATH**

Practically speaking, placemaking is turning physical public spaces into places that support human interaction, economic exchange and well-being. It is a continuously dynamic process, not a static set of amenities, objects or activities. It comes from the people and involved everything we experience at eye level. Placemakers are the instrument to mobilize the community. It's not about design, but about personalities, destinations, activities, and connections between people. The process empowers everyone including residents, businesses and local government as co-creators and modifiers of place.

It's not only about one place, like a park or a square or a building. Placemaking aims to transition the street back to a series of places, a series of activities. This used to be normal, daily living: we walked down the street to our local post office, then to the hardware store, cheese shop, baker, deli, etc. We call it the art of the path. These are all places that attract people in different ways. Continuity of these activities and the frontages existed in a way that is now foreign to us. With modern development models, we've lost the ability to create places or nodes of activities along the street. We have to be much more engaging about understanding street life and life on the sidewalk.



## **THE COMMUNITY IS THE CORE OF THE PLACEMAKING PROCESS**

Placemaking comes from the community, in the broadest sense of the word. Initiating the placemaking process only makes sense if it is supported by various communities in the immediate surrounding the area. The key is to get different stakeholders present, from local residents, children, schools to businesses and institutions, entrepreneurs, and all kinds of initiators to share their dreams for a place and then actually put it into practice. The (unofficial) leaders of placemaking are the “zealous nuts”, the visionaries with a poorly developed sense of fear and no concept of the odds against them. They make the impossible happen.

## **THE OTHERS: DESIGNERS, DEVELOPERS AND CORPORATIONS**

Besides the community, designers (and architects) can be a part of the approach, but they are by far not the most important. Only designers who can think about the organic and natural craft of shaping the place should be involved. We are hesitant to include designers because oftentimes they are focused on creating visual experiences rather than emotional experiences. When designers talk about their designs, we often miss the deep attachment that we talked about earlier.

Developers are another group. There’s something to be said about the scale and type of development we’re doing today. The scale is too big, and the wrong people are making the decisions based on the wrong

reasons. We need a new type of development that's smaller, more concerned with the street. One big building is not a strategy. If big projects are broken up into smaller projects, then there can be a strategy. People are beginning to understand what we've lost. People don't just want a physical place, they want a place. Placemaking is the operative word. We don't think developers have ever been asked or given the chance to think about placemaking or how their projects are impacting the public realm; they've relied too much on the architects. Developers want something new. The concept of placemaking is easy to explain to developers because it will attract more people and more money. Developers relate to that message. Placemaking is not about using more money, it's about getting more return for the money. In the end, we're all interested in the same thing: to create street life and new types of public spaces.

Corporations are also investing in new types of public spaces. We see using corporations as part of the solution as an important step. Southwest Airlines for example, is a major partner. They're really looking for the heart of cities, and they want to create reasons for people to travel to these destinations. Since they're not planning professionals they see it from a totally different perspective. True, it's a business perspective, but they're seeing it more holistically than the professionals working on the projects, stuck in their silos. Detroit is a fantastic example. Just as the city was hitting bottom and filing bankruptcy, it was coming up: we put a beach in the heart of the city! Now that was a bold statement, made possible with the help of Southwest Airlines.

The solutions we're talking about are programs that are lighter, quicker cheaper. They're temporary. People can relate to that. Both developers and corporations are less afraid of temporary solutions because it's not a lot of money. If an intervention doesn't work, we can experiment and try again. It allows for experimentation.

## **PLACEMAKING IS A MOVEMENT, A WAY OF LIFE**

In Italian everyone knows what a piazza is. It's the gathering place where people come together. It's a way of life. People are deeply attached to their local piazza. That's the feeling we're trying to create. Placemaking is about that deep attachment. It's more emotional. Just as the piazza is the place to gather in Italian neighbourhood, placemaking has become a way of life. People want to live in a place and cherish it. They want to participate and connect with other people.

We're seeing a major shift from physically creating a place to living in it. This transition takes the process out of the hands of designers and into the communities. We see communities becoming far more engaged in this process. It's something that people own; it's their process and their outcomes. Also, the audience is younger, more adventurous and understands the need for socialization. They are ready and get it. They want accessible services and amenities. Placemaking preserves those needs and also cultivates it. It's not design-based. The process can include local designers, but it's more about people than place. The creative energy is palpable. It's a whole paradigm shift and it's a big deal.

# CLOSE ENCOUNTERS WITH BUILDINGS

Jan Gehl, Lotte Johansen Kaefer & Solvejg Reigstad  
(architects and urban design consultants)

*This article first has been published in URBAN DESIGN International (2006) 11, 29–47, and was summarized with permission of Jan Gehl.*

Historically, towns emerged as a result of the exchange between travellers on pathways and vendors selling their wares from booths. The booths later became buildings and the pathways became streets, but the exchange between those who came and went and those who stayed, continued to be the key element. Urban buildings were oriented towards urban spaces by necessity. Since then, many urban functions moved indoors, and shops, institutions and organisations have grown larger. In the process, urban buildings have become bigger and correspondingly introspective and self-sufficient.

However, pedestrians must be able to walk around cities, urban structures continue to form the walls of public space, and people continue to have close encounters with buildings. What we want from the ground floor of urban buildings is vastly different from what we want from the other storeys. The ground floor is where building and town meet, where we urbanites have our close encounters with buildings, where we can touch and be touched by them.

## **GROUND FLOORS AND CLOSE ENCOUNTER ARCHITECTURE**

In this context, the ground floors of all buildings are important and serve many purposes, depending on the location of the building, its functions and the surrounding space. The front or entrance façade, particularly in buildings where the façade faces the street and sidewalk, is especially significant. Generally

speaking, close encounters with buildings can be divided into a few main groups.

*Walking alongside buildings.* Movement can be parallel with buildings: people walk past or alongside. Movement can also be at right angles to the façade. People go to and from, approach, enter and leave.

*Standing, sitting or engaged in activities next to buildings.* Residents and users go outside or stand in the doorway for a break. Chairs and tables are placed along the façade where access is easy, sitters' backs are protected and local climate is best. Ground-floor façades are also an attractive place for urban users who don't live in the buildings. The edge effect refers to people's preference for staying at the edges of space, where their presence is more discreet and they command a particularly good view of the space. Edges and transition zones between buildings and city spaces become the natural place for a wide variety of potential activities that link inside functions with outside street life.

*Seeing in and out of buildings visually connect activities.* Visual contact is close up and personal for pedestrians on city sidewalks, thus the rhythm of the opportunities offered is crucial to the richness of the pedestrian experience. The number of doors, windows, niches, columns, shop windows, display details, signs and decorations is significant (Jacobs, 1995).

## **EXPERIENCING BUILDINGS**

Exterior architecture is inextricably tied to the vantage points for viewing. With respect to building architecture, what we see depends on the angles at which we see it. As pedestrians, we have to stand quite far away to see a building in its entirety. When we come closer, we have to stretch our necks and lean our heads far back to take in the whole building. Few structures are designed for viewing from that angle. As we move closer the upper storeys gradually disappear from view, until we can only see the ground floor, or when we are really close, only a section, like the details on doors and façades.

Closer up, our other senses are activated. Here, at close range, we can see, hear, smell and feel all the details, not only of the ground floor, but often of the display window and shop interior as well. Our senses of smell, touch and taste are closely connected to our emotions. Ground-floor façades emotionally impact us more than the rest of the building or the street, which we sense from a much greater distance and with correspondingly lower intensity. Short distances provide intense and emotionally powerful experiences. We transfer the perceptions of intimacy, meaning and emotional impact from our meetings with people to our meetings with buildings.

While our perception of public space depends on viewpoint and distance, the speed at which we move is crucial. Our senses are designed to



perceive and process sensory impressions while moving at about 5 km/h: walking pace. Architecture that embodies 5 km/h details combines the best of two worlds: a glimpse of the town hall tower or distant hills at the end of the street and the close-up contact of ground-floor façades.

Contrasting with 'slow' architecture is the 60 km/h architecture along roads dominated by vehicles, where large spaces and signs are necessary since drivers and passengers cannot perceive detail when moving at this speed. These two scales pose conflict in modern cities. Pedestrians are often forced to walk in 60 km/h urban landscapes, while new urban buildings are designed as boring and sterile 60 km/h buildings in traditional 5 km/h streets.



Scale & Rythm: 5 km/h architecture



Small units, many doors



Street life: chatting by the door



Closed façades with uniform functions: passive and boring

## THE IMPACT OF GROUND FLOORS ON CITY LIFE

The closer we get to buildings, the more we perceive and remember the content of our field of vision. If the ground floors are interesting and varied, the urban environment is inviting and enriching. If the ground floors are closed or lack detail, the urban experience is correspondingly flat and impersonal.

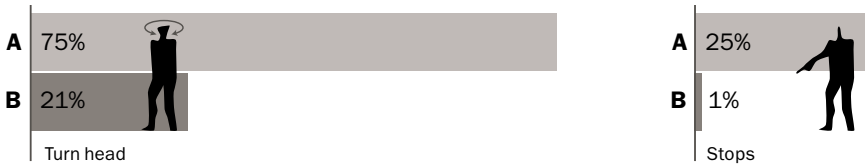
Studies provide information about many different aspects of city streets. Ground-floor façades clearly impact public life. In front of active façades, pedestrians move slower, more people stop, and more activities take place on the friendlier, more populated street segments. When we add it all up, we see that the number of stops and other activities is seven times greater in front of active rather than passive façades.

One main conclusion, then, is that lifeless, closed façades pacify while open and interesting façades activate urban users. It is important to note that the activity level of a street is quantitative in principle—a measure of how many people and how much life and activity available. However, a higher activity level does not necessarily indicate a better urban quality. We cannot only focus on how many people walk, stop, sit and stand; it is also important to look at quality content, wealth of experiences, and yes, the simple delight in being in cities.

Knowledge about the factors that positively influence urban life is an important instrument for planning better cities. Included in this type of knowledge are the most compelling arguments for promoting well-conceived ground-floor and façade policies: the variety of experiences and the sheer pleasure of journeying through the city. What we need to do is encourage and insist on freedom of movement for pedestrians in their own city. And ground-floor architecture plays a key role in this context.

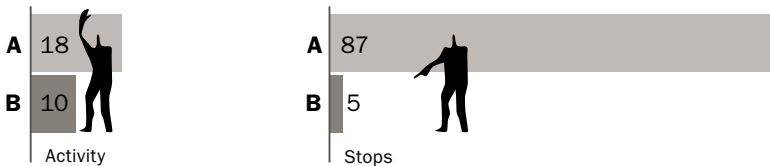
### Pedestrian behaviour in front of ground floors in main streets

Average of all people who walk by the 2x10-metre façade segments in the seven areas studied.



### Activities per hour in front of ground floors in main streets

Average in front of each of the 10-metre façades in the seven areas studied.



In total there is 7 times as much activity and time spent in front of interesting façades.

**A** = area with varied façades, many doors, visual contact, many functions

**B** = area with uniform façades, few doors, no windows, few or no functions



Transparency: open windows and façades



Appeal to senses, also at night

## GROUND FLOOR ARCHITECTURE

It is important to analyse functions in new urban areas and establish where close encounter architecture can play a role. Where are the most important pedestrian routes? Which façades are the most important? Where will people in the new urban area come in close contact with buildings? Where and how can the design of new buildings contribute to life and vitality in new urban areas? The question is not what the new urban context can do for your building, but what your new building can do for the context.

The overriding planning principle has to be: first life, then space, then buildings. Thus the first step of a design plan must be to establish the location and quality criteria for the city's most prominent public spaces, based on specific preferences about the character and extent of public life in the new part of town. Urban design guidelines can then be drawn up for new buildings (Gehl Architects 1998 & 2000). Sample guidelines that can be used for project development:

- To respect façade lines
- To establish ground-floor functions that invite the public (shops, cafes, restaurants and other active components)
- To ensure a minimum of 10 doorways per 100 m of façade in order to create life and variation at eye height
- To ensure a minimum ground-floor height of 4 m to provide room for public activities
- To set design requirements for façades such as variation, niches, details and verticality
- To sharply reduce ground-floor rent in order to secure small units, many doors and an attractive mix of units facing the most important pedestrian spaces and routes.

## DIALOGUE BETWEEN CITY AND BUILDING

It can occasionally be refreshing when a building does not insist on a friendly conversation with the people entering and leaving or passing by. However, it can also be a problem when a lack of dialogue becomes ordinary practice in designing new buildings. When new buildings are planted in places people frequently use, the buildings must learn to make meaningful conversation with city spaces and the people in them. Buildings and city spaces must be seen and treated as a unified being that breathes as one. And ground floors, in keeping with tradition and good sensory arguments, must have a uniquely detailed and welcoming design.

Good close encounter architecture is vital for good cities.

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# HISTORY OF THE CITY, STREET AND PLINTH

Jouke van der Werf, Kim Zweerink & Jan van Teeffelen  
(architectural historians and urbanist)

Cities are hubs for the exchange of goods, culture, knowledge and ideas. The city street is the stage where this exchange takes place: it is the access to the home and the company, and the passage to other places within and outside of the city. For centuries city streets had a natural vibrancy and dynamic, where various functions came together. Until mid 20th century the street was an integrated system of movement and social and economic life. This changed in the 1960s and 1970s when large-scale interventions in the urban fabric emphasized traffic, and put the importance for exchange in second place.

Precisely at that time of traffic breakthroughs, people like Jane Jacobs, Kevin Lynch and Gordon Cullen pointed out the importance of the human-scale of the street. They indicated that the city has to be considered from how people experience the city: at eye level. Their publications now seem more relevant than ever. Since the early 1980s we see a growing awareness that the viability of the city can be improved by linking the different scales of the city. The location of a street or square in the city as a whole, the connection with the various networks, and their social and economic characteristics, are crucial. And so is the plinth where the interaction between the street and the building takes place.

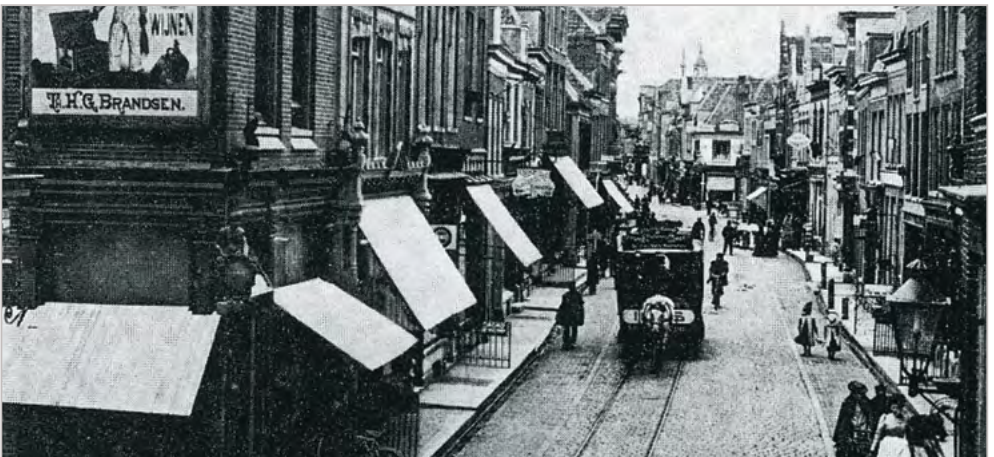
Every city street endures a process of rise and fall, and time leaves its traces on the city and the plinths. Technical innovations, traffic concepts, the economy, and public opinions change over time and influence the urban form and the public space. This article gives a general overview for each period of city transition from three perspectives: the city form, the street, and the plinth.



Shops and traffic in London, Cheapside (1831)



Paris, a strong connection between buildings, plinth and street creates an attractive city



Langestraat Amersfoort, streets used to have a dynamic of living, working and transport

## THE CITY OF INTERWOVEN LIFE AND WORK (UNTIL 1850)

### City

Many cities were founded at intersections of roads or waterways, for example Berlin, Hamburg, Valencia, Seville, New York, London or Amsterdam. At these crossroads exchange of goods and ideas took place and an urban core was established with main urban functions as a harbour, market, bourse, weigh house, church, and town hall - often with a central square. Fortifications formed a delineation from the countryside. Due to growth of trade, also crafts and population increased. Initially this led to growth within the city, but soon the urban area expanded around the main roads to the city. With these expansions, fortifications also shifted.

### Street

The main streets coincided with natural roads and waterways and were the connections to the hinterland. Social and economic life took place on the squares, streets, quays and bridges, where the markets were held. In the 16th century the markets specialized in different types such as fish and fruit markets. Street names still remind us of the goods that were once traded, e.g. Butterbridge, Haymarket, etc. Until the 19th century, the majority of freight transport took place on the water. With the flourishing of the cities and increase of traffic



Left: Antwerp Market, around 1600

Middle: Fabric Market in Bologna, 1411

Right: The Jansstraat in Haarlem, painted by Gerrit Berckheyde in 1680, shows the alignment of the façades



and activity, the number of streets and bridges grew and the busiest streets and squares were paved with cobblestones. Regulations for buildings increased: rules for façade alignment, bay windows and stalls allowed passage of traffic. Building height was also limited so sunlight can fall into the street.

### **Plinth**

Specialized shopping streets as we know them now didn't exist in the cities before the 19th century. Living, working and trading took place in the same building and street, where craftsmen displayed merchandise in front of their homes. There was no clear separation between private and public, and merchandise was exposed on the street. Later these stalls became permanent and were incorporated in the façades. From the late Middle Ages the passage zone between the street and the home was marked by a stoop or porch. The stoop (a raised plate) ensured that carts did not come too close to the house and displayed goods. A street consisted of series of individual stoops and landings, divided by benches and fences. In northern Italian cities like Bologna, arcades formed this passage between the house and the street and provided shadow. The doors were open all day in the 15th and 16th century - anyone could look and walk inside. In the next centuries, the streetscape of façades, plinths and public space was more united.



Left: Medieval streetscape: public space as an extension of the house  
Right: Street in London, 18th century: the houses follow a continuous line, the shop signs are back, and bollards separating the road from the sidewalks

## THE LURE OF MODERNITY (1850-1940)

### City

In the 19th century, new transportation modes arose. Railways became important next to waterways for the increasing transport of people and goods. Ports, industrial and residential areas were built outside the city or at the former fortifications. Also the new stations lay on the city boundary and became new core areas with a concentration of infrastructure, housing, industry and public space. More and more people moved out of the old inner city to this new areas and neighbouring municipalities, easily accessible by train or tram.

Characteristic of the city plans in this period were the monumental axes with a separation between the busy main streets with shops and businesses, and the more quiet residential streets behind. In residential areas shops only occurred on street corners, while in the inner-city a separation of functions took place: housing was less important and the number of (department) stores and offices increased, leading to a scaling in the block. Due to industrial production and stock storage, the first stores appeared in the 19th century, soon followed by department stores and grand bazaars. Skyscrapers were only constructed in US cities in this period, and in order to avoid dark streets New York adopted a zoning law for the height and the width of towers in 1916.

### Street

The separation of functions and new city areas and neighbourhoods led to increased traffic. In the city, circulation improved due to breakthroughs and new bridges. In Paris (under direction of Baron Haussmann) and in London (e.g. the construction of Regent Street) the modernization of the city is accompanied



Budapest East Station and Square, 1912



Chicago street view, 1920s



Boulevard des Champs Élysées in Paris, around 1880



Vienna Ringstrasse, developed in the second half of the 19th century

by new and wide boulevards through the historic city centre. From the 19th century onwards traffic flows are separated; since 1861 sidewalks were created important to give pedestrians their own place in the crowded streets. Also separate tramways and loading streets were installed, and trees were planted to provide a division. In Vienna the new tramlines on the former fortifications formed the Vienna Ring, connecting the main buildings of the city (town hall, parliament, royal palaces and theatres) to each other in a grandiose design.

Paris and New York were the prominent cities in the 19th and early 20th century. Department stores and shops were developed along the major routes and squares, around the stations, and on streets with trams running through. The Paris 'grands magasins' such as Le Bon Marché and Printemps, and New York office buildings were soon copied by other cities, creating new boulevards with shopping and office buildings.

### **Plinth**

The emergence of shops and offices led to an entirely different street. The façades were transformed into attractive storefronts to display the goods, with a purpose to entice the passerby. It was common to have the windows as full as possible. The carefully designed storefronts were constructed of a closed and decorated base with a large glass front. The entrance was set back, creating a small alcove. The street plinth thus existed as a series of different windows in shape, height, width and decorations. The shopping streets and façades were followed by a new phenomenon, first introduced in Paris, Brussels and Milan: the shopping galleria or passage, arcades with luxury shops, not only to shop but also to stroll.



New York, around 1900



Shop façades from ca. 1900 in The Hague



The first shopping mall in America: Cleveland, 1890

## LEAVING THE INNER-CITY (1945-1970)

### City

After World War II, the accessibility of the city centre for cars and the new urban expansions had a priority. The growth of car use in this period was enormous: the number of cars in the Netherlands for instance increased from 30,000 in 1945 to 4,000,000 in 1980. The main planning concept was a separation between living, working, amenities and traffic. The town centres developed into central locations for offices and amenities. The vacant areas in the during the war severely damaged cities, were now used to accommodate increased traffic. Other cities focused on traffic engineering to connect the inner-city with new ring roads, for example in Utrecht, the Netherlands. This development of breakthroughs for car traffic and large-scale urban renewal was also criticised, among others by Jane Jacobs with her plea for mixed-use human-scale neighbourhood streets.

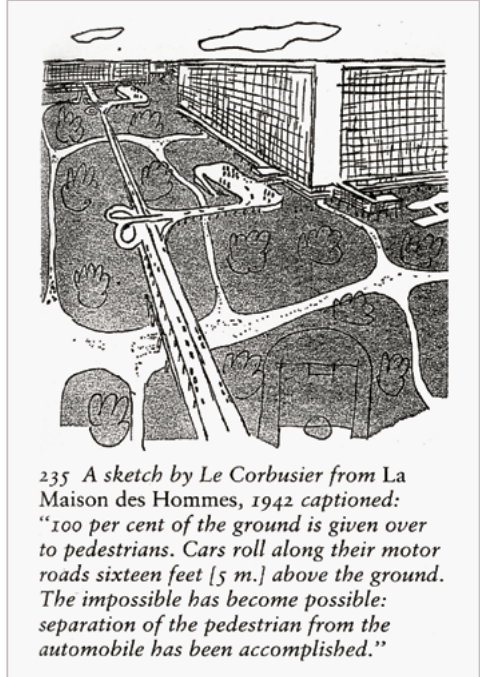
New neighbourhoods for living were developed outside the existing city in New Towns and Garden Cities, with in-between highways and railroad as major barriers. These plans were derived from the ideas of CIAM, such as the plan for the Ville Radieuse of Le Corbusier who had a great aversion to the 'rue corridor', the enclosed street. His ideas were implemented in many residential projects in Europe with elevated streets and high-rise buildings. Instead of closed urban blocks, the urban fabric consisted of an open allotment with a mix of low, medium and high-rise buildings in a green setting. In accordance with the prevailing planning concept in Europe, districts were divided into small neighbourhoods with small shopping areas and a central shopping centre in the district. In the 1960s and 1970s a deterioration of city centres occurred due



The muted Catharijnesingel-canal in Utrecht, built in the sixties



Large-scale new developments in New York



La Ville Radieuse: Le Corbusier's portrayal of his ideal for free-standing housing in green spaces

to the move of residents to the suburbs, especially in the US where new shopping centres with large parking lots became the standard for the shopping.

### Street

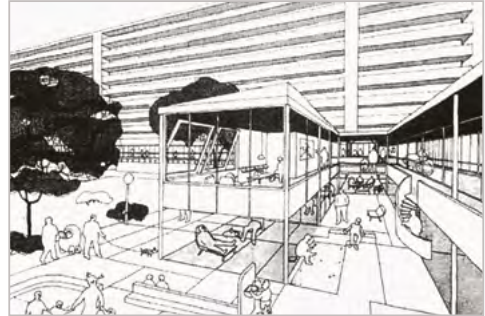
To improve traffic safety new means were invented for the separation of traffic flows and control: zebra crossings, traffic lights, traffic hills, and roundabouts. The streets were further divided and the cohesive space disappears. In the suburbs appeared a strong hierarchy between main access roads, neighbourhood roads, and residential streets, often with an independent network of footpaths and cycle paths on a different level. The separation between traffic road and shopping street was complete when all functions were incorporated into a superstructure or, as in Minneapolis, when the pedestrian was led from one inner world to the other via 'skyways'.

### Plinth

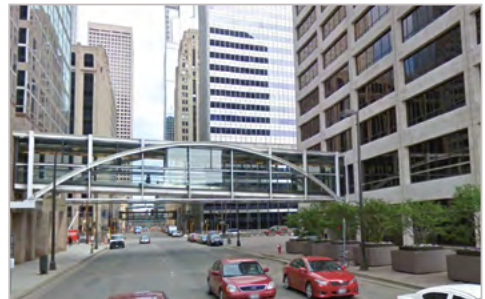
The new urban concept of open building allotments allowed a new design for stores with windows in the front, supply and storage via back streets, and separated entrances for the dwellings above. This allowed continuous shopping façades along the street, as can be seen on the Lijnbaan in Rotterdam, the first pedestrian shopping street in Europe. The transparent storefronts with lots of glass and showcases, and the glass kiosks give a strong interaction between interior and public space. Also historic city streets were modernized with display cases and new store fronts. The plinths had an open design to entice passersby to step inside whether in newly structured or in historic inner cities. In contrast, suburbia plinths were closed off and most shopping centres turned their back to the surroundings.



Northgate Mall in Seattle, 1950



The Bijlmer-district Amsterdam, as originally intended with internal pedestrian streets and green living



Skyways in Minneapolis dating from the 1960s and 1970s provide pedestrian connections between buildings



Lijnbaan Rotterdam, 1954: new pedestrian shopping street for renewal of the bombed city centre

## IN SEARCH OF SMALL SCALE URBANITY (1970-1990)

### City

After the decades of modernism, we see a departure from the separation of functions, especially in traffic. The Buchanan Report '*Traffic in Towns*' in 1963 and the 1973 oil crisis questioned the dominance of car traffic. Cities started to ward off cars and improved the 'hospitality' of the city: instead of traffic breakthroughs, the historic urban fabric is used for urban renewal. Architects from the international Team X (among others Aldo van Eyck, Alison and Peter Smithson) emphasized human-scale buildings and streets, and a transition (or hybrid) zone between private and public spaces. Terms like 'hospitality' were used within the architectural debate. In many inner cities old structures from the 19th century were demolished and replaced by new buildings characterised by human-scale



Small scale urban renewal in Zwolle (architects Aldo van Eyck and Theo Bosch)



Forum Les Halles, Paris: constructed in 1977, demolished in 2010 and to be replaced by a new Forum

architecture. Even the larger projects were small-scale oriented such as the Forum Les Halles in Paris, a new shopping centre that replaced the historic marketplace of Les Halles. Most new shops and supermarkets were developed in centrally located shopping malls close to the new residential areas, as already had been done in the US in the previous decade.

### Street

With a new focus on human-scale cities, public space was rediscovered as an area to walk, meet and gather. People again visited the inner-city to stroll, go to the theatre and meet each other. An important milestone was the closure of shopping streets for car access, becoming pedestrian zones: in 1966 Germany had 63 pedestrian streets and in 1977 up to 370. In the inner-city of Utrecht a pedestrian area was developed and the wharves along the canals opened for cafés in the 1970s. The design of new residential streets was also influenced by the 'hospitality' concept, where pedestrians are favoured. This concept started as 'Woonerf' (home zone street) in the Netherlands, where the car is a guest and pedestrians are favoured. This idea was followed in other countries such as the 'Wohnstrasse' in Austria.

### Plinth

Although the re-evaluation of the historical city halted large scale demolishing of old buildings and city fabric, inner city areas still were replaced with new but small-scale housing developments. Most new buildings were internal-oriented and the relationship between house and public space was part of the architectural form. The plinths however are mostly focused on housing and living and not on shops, services and restaurants - only few streets were designated as new shopping streets. In many urban renewal areas, the plinths were not designed with shops or public functions but instead with closed façades.



Stroget in Copenhagen was already partly closed for cars in 1962, at present being the longest pedestrian shopping street in Europe



Wohnstrasse in Austria: residential areas in the city



Urban renewal street: plinths lack public functions

## THE CITY AS A MAGNET (1990 – PRESENT)

### City

Renewed interest in inner cities in the 1980s carried on in the 1990s and the beginning of the 21st century with a focus on public space. The rise of sidewalk bars and cafés and specialized retail signified the rediscovery of the centre as a place for meeting, amusement, and shopping as leisure activity. Barcelona was the first city stimulating the renewal of the cityscape by the redevelopment of public space in relation to the Olympic Games of 1992. Public realm was regarded as an important outdoor space for citizens, such as green parks and squares. The revitalisation of the existing inner-city acquires lots of attention. Also in other cities beautification started with the improvement of the quality and coherence of the public space. An important motivation to city leaders for the renewal of the public space was the city's economy. The city was rigged to attract people with festivals and events in this postmodern age: a visit turned into an experience for which the city is the decor, sometimes focussed on a historical period. Also new cities try to adapt the look and feel of historical towns, with small shops and individual façades.

Besides the public realm, many new projects were developed in and around european city centres. Important key projects were the station areas as entrances to the city, due to a new High Speed Rail network in Europe. New stations and hubs were developed, and gave an economic boost to the city centres such as Euralille. Abandoned harbours and old industrial areas, close to the inner-cities, were redeveloped for housing, offices, leisure and places of culture. Large area developments included property, new infrastructure, public space and new landmarks. Well-known examples are Hafencity in Hamburg, the Eastern



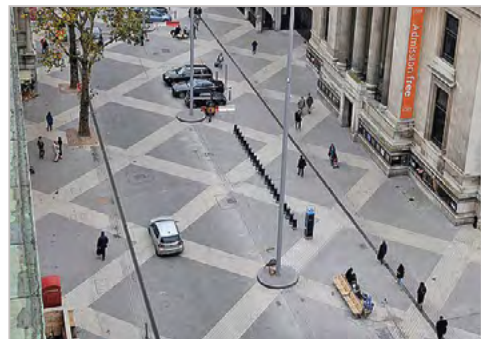
In Barcelona the revitalisation of the city is boosted by the investments in public space



New town Poundbury in England, designed by architect Krier according to principles of Prince Charles



Amsterdam Eastern Docklands, old harbours transformed in a new urban area



Shared space Exhibition Road, London





Shopping centre Beurstraverse in Rotterdam

Docklands in Amsterdam, the Kop van Zuid with the Erasmus-bridge in Rotterdam, the renewal of Bilbao and the new Guggenheim, and in London the banks of the Thames around the Tate Modern, housed in an old power station.

### Street

The reconquest of public space created more space for pedestrians and reduces the car in the city centre. In Lyon new underground parking spaces were built for a total of 12 000 cars. Paris redesigned the Boulevard des Champs Elysées without parking strips and widened the sidewalks so people can once again stroll along the shops and restaurants. As an alternative for separating traffic, the "Shared Space" approach creates a common street for everyone without separation between car, bicycle and pedestrian. Exhibition Road in London has been redeveloped according to this concept, giving it a more people-oriented look and feel.



Paris, Promenade Plantée / Viaduc des Arts: abandoned elevated train line is transformed into an attractive walk with ateliers underneath and a new park on top (1990)

### Plinth

The interaction between the street and the adjacent houses, shops and restaurants became stronger. Plinth and public space were designed as related and coherent spaces within the city shopping experience. New coffee bars and cafes scattered throughout the city centre and the 19th-century neighbourhoods where creative professionals can work and do business. Internet and social media increased the need of physical places where you can meet.

Today there's still a need to connect buildings to the street with a vibrant façade and plinth. This not only applies to new buildings and their ground floors, but also to the redevelopment of existing buildings and infrastructure. The transformation of many historic structures shows that the city always changes. In this the need to adapt and design good and attractive plinths is necessary for the city dweller and the city at eye level.

# ICONIC THINKERS

Meredith Glaser & Mattijs van 't Hoff (urbanists)

Prior to the advent of the automobile, active 'main streets' were the centre of many towns and neighbourhoods. These main streets were filled with human-scale sensory experiences. The invention of the car in the 20th century and new ways of transporting goods altered the design and lay-out of cities. Many cities underwent massive infrastructure changes, transformations of downtowns, and proliferation of single-function land use. Modern building design and changes in the way we shop (e.g. the emergence of the supermarket) has weakened urban shopping streets and their plinths. "The City at Eye Level" is a plea for the return of human-scale streets and for diverse and active plinths of the buildings, in order to create a dynamic and safe urban realm.

The idea of "The City at Eye Level" however is not new: many iconic urban planning thinkers have been instrumental in influencing the development of a human-scale urban planning and design in our (inner) cities. Long-time principles set forth by Kevin Lynch, Gordon Cullen, Jane Jacobs, Jan Gehl, William H. Whyte and Allan Jacobs (among many others) are relevant to today's planning. We want to give due credit to those iconic thinkers.

## KEVIN LYNCH

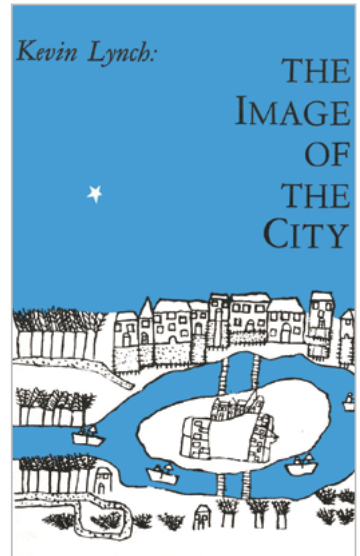
Kevin Lynch (1918–1984) was an American urban planner who studied at Yale and at MIT, later teaching at MIT for 15 years. His most well-known works are *The Image of the City* (1960) and *Good City Form* (1984). The first book was a 5-year research project studying the ways in which people use, perceive, and absorb the city. This book organized the city into five image elements he called paths, edges, districts, nodes, and landmarks. He also invented the word “way finding” and many other vocabulary regularly used in planning today.

*“..., this study will look for physical qualities which relate to the attributes of identity and structure in the mental image. This leads to the definition of what might be called imageability: that quality in a physical object which gives it a high probability of evoking a strong image in any given observer. [...]*

*A highly imageable (apparent, legible, or visible) city in this peculiar sense would seem well formed, distinct, remarkable; it would invite the eye and the ear to greater attention and participation. The sensuous grasp upon such surroundings would not merely be simplified, but also extended and deepened.*

*Such a city would be one that could be apprehended over time as a pattern of high continuity with many distinctive parts clearly interconnected. The perceptive and familiar observer could absorb new sensuous impacts without disruption of his basic image, and each new impact would touch upon many previous elements. He would be well oriented, and he could move easily. He would be highly aware of his environment.”*

– *The Image of the City*, pp. 9–10



Kevin Lynch,  
*The Image of the City*

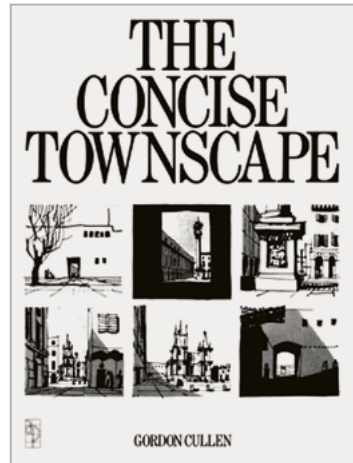
## GORDON CULLEN

Gordon Cullen (1914–1994) was an English architect and urban designer. He developed an eye for seeing the obvious qualities in British towns. He saw that places of great beauty and strong character have been created over the centuries and are developed from the point of view of a person. He started identifying and analysing these essences of the British town and developed them into lessons for architects and planners. Gordon Cullen is best known for his book *Townscape*, first published in 1961; later editions published under the title *The Concise Townscape* (1971).

*“The significance of all this is that although the pedestrian walks through the town at a uniform speed, the scenery of towns is often revealed in a series of jerks or revelations. This we call SERIAL VISION. [...] The human mind reacts to a contrast, to the difference between things, and when two pictures [...] are in the mind at the same time, a vivid contrast is felt and the town becomes visible in a deeper sense. It comes alive through the drama of juxtaposition. Unless this happens the town will slip past us featureless and inert.”*

*“In this [...] category we turn to an examination of the fabric of towns: colour, texture, scale, style, character, personality and uniqueness. Accepting the fact that most towns are of old foundation, their fabric will show evidence of differing periods in its architectural styles and also in the various accidents of layout. Many towns do so display this mixture of styles, materials and scales.”*

– *The Concise Townscape*, pp. 9–12



Gordon Cullen,  
*The Concise Townscape*

## JANE JACOBS

Probably one of the most famous American writers on urban planning and city economy, Jane Jacobs (1916–2006) is best known for her contributions and harsh critiques of urban renewal policies and development in the 1950s and 60s and her book *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961). During a time when American suburbanization reigned, she was one of the few promoters of the city and city life. She fervently opposed urban renewal and many planning models of her time. Jacobs is renowned for her concepts ‘eyes on the street,’ mixed use development, and bottom-up planning. Her detailed observations of city life and function influenced urban planning in many ways.

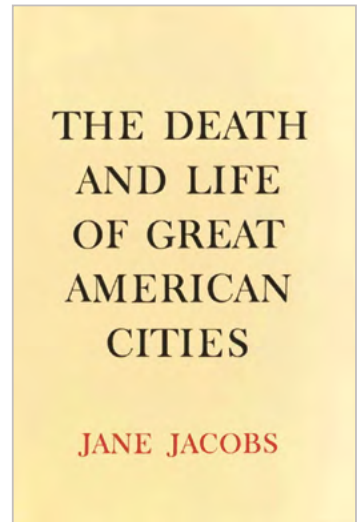
*“A city street equipped to handle strangers, and to make a safety asset, in itself, our of the presence of strangers, as the streets of successful city neighborhoods always do, must have three main qualities:*

*First, there must be a clear demarcation between what is public space and what is private space. Public and private spaces cannot ooze into each other as they do typically in suburban settings or in projects.*

*Second, there must be eyes upon the street, eyes belonging to those we might call the natural proprietors of the street. The buildings on a street equipped to handle strangers and to insure the safety of both residents and strangers, must be oriented to the street. They cannot turn their backs or blank sides on it and leave it blind.*

*And third, the sidewalk must have users on it fairly continuously, both to add to the number of effective eyes on the street and to induce the people in buildings along the street to watch the sidewalks in sufficient numbers. Nobody enjoys sitting on a stoop or looking out a window at an empty street. Almost nobody does such a thing. Large numbers of people entertain themselves, off and on, by watching street activity.”*

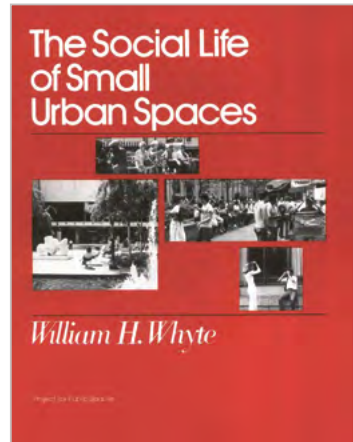
– *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, p. 35



Jane Jacobs,  
*The Death and Life of Great American Cities*

## WILLIAM H. WHYTE

Educated as an sociologist, William Whyte (1917-1999) began working as an organizational analyst. While working with the New York City Planning Commission in 1969, he began to wonder how city spaces were actually working out and used direct observation to describe behaviour in urban settings. With use of cameras, movie cameras and notebooks, he introduced new ways of urban research and described the substance of urban public life in an objective and measurable way. These observations were developed into the “Street Life Project”, an on-going study of pedestrian behaviour and city dynamics, leading eventually to the book and companioning movie *The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces* (1980). Whyte believed in public spaces as places where people and traffic come together. Whyte’s observations and ideas are still relevant for the way we use our cities and streets..



William H. Whyte,  
*The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces*

*“What attracts people most, it would appear, is other people. If I belabor the point, it is because many urban spaces are being designed as though the opposite were true, and that what people liked best were the places that they stay away from. People often do talk along such lines; this is why their responses to questionnaires can be so misleading. How many people would say they like to sit in the middle of a crowd? Instead, they speak of getting away from it all, and use terms like ‘escape’, ‘oasis’, ‘retreat’. What people do, however, reveals a different priority.”*

– *The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces*, p. 19

*“Another key feature of the street is retailing - stores, windows with displays, signs to attract your attention, doorways, people going in and out of them. Big new office buildings have been eliminating stores. What they have been replacing them with is a frontage of plate glass through which you can behold bank officers sitting at desks. One of these stretches is dull enough. Block after block of them creates overpowering dullness.”*

– *The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces*, p. 57

## ALLAN JACOBS

Allan Jacobs is an American urban planner and professor emeritus of the University of California, Berkeley. He is well-known for publications and research on urban design, as well as his contribution to the urban design manual for the City of San Francisco. He is an avid proponent of multi-modal streets that do not separate users. His comprehensive resource book, *Great Streets* (1995), illustrates the dynamic interaction between people and streets, and analyzes the specific attributes of these great streets.

*“Great streets require physical characteristics that help the eyes do what they want to do, must do: move. [...] Generally, it is many different surfaces over which light constantly moves that keeps the eyes engaged: separate buildings, many separate windows or doors, or surface changes. [...] Visual complexity is what is required, but it must not be so complex as to become chaotic or disorienting. [...] Beyond helping to define a street, separating the pedestrian realm from vehicles, and providing shade, what makes trees so special is their movement; the constant movement of their branches and leaves, and the ever-changing light that plays on, thorough, and around them.”*

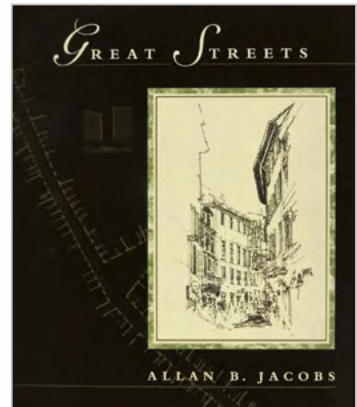
– *Great Streets*, p. 282

*“Generally, more buildings along a given length of street contribute more than do fewer buildings. [...] With more buildings there are likely to be more architects, and they will not all design alike. There are more contributors to the street, more and different participants, all of whom add interest. [...] The different buildings can [...] be designed for a mix of uses and destinations that attract mixes of people from all over a city or neighborhood, which therefore helps build community: movies, different-sized stores, libraries.”*

– *Great Streets*, pp. 297–298

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Allan Jacobs,  
*Great Streets*





# EXPERIENCE OF PLACES

# ECONOMIC VALUES OF A WALKABLE CITY

Alexander Stähle (public space researcher)

Stockholm has been identified as one of the fastest growing cities in Europe and recently ranked as the world's fifth most promising metropolitan region, mainly because of the power of innovation and the welfare system, but also for its attractive environment. The city's decision makers and public authorities are well aware of this growth pressure and are constantly analysing it. In 2011-2012, Stockholm County Council and six municipalities financed the largest study ever analysing housing and office markets in



Sweden, possibly in Europe. The goal was to explore how spatial variables from regional to local level affect the demand for housing and offices.

The price study, conducted by our urban design studio Spacescape and the real estate analyst Evidens, shows with almost 90% accuracy what drives demand for apartments, houses and offices in Stockholm. We analysed 14,000 house sales and rents in 86 office areas with over 1000 different spatial measures in a GIS-system at a detailed level of address points, land uses, pedestrian street network, among others. The results have been an eye-opener for policy makers, planners, construction and real estate developers in the Stockholm region and in Sweden.

## URBAN QUALITIES THAT THE MARKET DEMANDS

The study identifies a number of qualities that drives the demand for housing and offices. The common entity of these qualities is basically walkability. Below we have summarized below the most pertinent qualities.

*Regional accessibility*, by means of public transport (subway, commuter train and tram) is highly correlated with housing prices and office rents. For example, there is a 73% correlation with public transport accessibility (within 30 min walk) and office rents. Access to public transport affects apartment and housing prices and also office rents, qualifying the increase of transit-oriented developments and new subways and commuter lines. Surprisingly, car accessibility does not affect apartment and office values, and it has only a marginal impact on house prices.

*Density of amenities*—shops, restaurants, culture and services—within walking distance affects both housing and office values and are also highly correlated to density: when density increases, the number of services within walking distance also increases. Statistical GIS-analysis shows that urban activities also require ground floor space and active frontages as well as a connected street network. This means that a neighbourhood with a high density of amenities also has a high population density, a connected streets grid framed by entrances and active frontages with the commercial spaces that create a diverse city environment at eye level.

*Street connectivity* is another urban quality that contributes to spatial integration between neighbourhoods. Connectivity is measured by the space syntax-measure of 'spatial integration', capturing how well street spaces as lines of sight are visually connected. The more connections a street has to other streets, the more integrated, or central, it is in the network. Tons of research shows that more integrated streets tend to have more people, activity and shops for people to experience at eye level. Hence, Stockholm residents prefer to live spatially integrated, not isolated in gated communities. This means that city districts with high connectivity where you can see and meet strangers in your neighbourhood streets are in demand. This is good news for those who think that connected public spaces are important to social integration of communities.

*Proximity to large green areas* and water bodies are valuable for housing, but not for offices. In particular, large high quality parks create value for apartments. This means that people enjoy not only green but active green spaces where you can see and do things with other people. Parks are vital to a people-city at eye level.

*Building design* is obviously important, but hard to measure. We conclude that the perimeter block with an enclosed courtyard is more attractive than the modernist open block typology (towers in a park), however it is important that block entrances face outward, towards the street. We interpret these findings that a city block that has a high density of entrances facing the street is more active and controlled and therefore creates a safer street at eye level, hence not only for visitors but also for residents. There is a demand to live by a street with active frontages at eye-level. Surprisingly there was no relationship between building height and housing or office value.

## WALKABILITY IN PLANNING POLITICS

At its heart, the urban quality study defines urban design factors crucial to walkability, i.e. being able to live your life in an area where it is safe and convenient to walk, where urban space is friendly and active at eye-level, but also where you are car-independent. The results are also similar to what other research projects have found to be significant for walking and car-free lifestyles. The Swedish Association of



Architects and the Swedish Society for Nature Conservation have both listed 'sustainable urban development' and urban walkability (including these qualities) as key agenda items. Furthermore, the Stockholm regional development plan and Stockholm City Plan both focus on the development of a dense green walkable city close to public transport nodes. The City Plan for Stockholm is in fact named "The Walkable City".

Our study confirms that a walkable city—one that works for people walking—and that is attractive at eye level, is a city where people want to live and work. It is not surprising. Cities basically are, as Harvard-economist Edward Glaeser says, places for interaction, and when a city is designed for making that interaction meaningful and comfortable then the quality of life is enhanced, which in turn, supports prosperity and increased social welfare. Stockholm is paving the way as one of the world's most liveable cities. Will it keep up to the global competition of walkable cities? It is up to the politicians. The market clearly indicates its direction for the future.



# RESULTS

The study "Evaluation of urban qualities" in Stockholm consists of three sub-studies. The first two were on housing, prices of apartments and prices of houses, the third about office rents. In general the qualities identified in the statistical regression analysis can explain 85-90% of the differences in prices or rents. This means that only 10-15% can be explained by other factors such as interior design or architecture.

## Apartment qualities

Seven qualities that explain the prices of apartments in Stockholm refer to the design public walking space, sidewalks, active frontages, etc. Only one of eight refers to the socio-economic profile of the neighbourhood. Note that car accessibility did not affect apartment prices, even when only looking at suburbia as a separate market.

- Distance to CBD (*street network distance*)
- Walking distance to public transport station (*less than 500 m*)
- Close to walkable street network (*space syntax integration value*)
- Walking distance to shops, restaurants, culture at ground floor (*number within 1 km*)
- Walking distance to parks (*sqm within 1 km*)
- Walking distance to water (*street network distance*)
- Perimeter block with a courtyard (*closed block and entrances towards street*)
- Socioeconomic index (*income + education*)

## House qualities

Nine qualities that explain the prices of houses in Stockholm refer to the design of public walking space, sidewalks, active frontages, etc. Only one of ten refers to the socio-economic profile of the neighbourhood.

- Public transport accessibility (*workplaces within 30 min*)
- Car accessibility (*workplaces within 30 min*)
- Walking distance to public transport station (*700 m*)
- Walking distance to shops, restaurants, culture, daily service at ground floor (*number within 0,5 km*)
- Walking distance to green space (*sqm within 0,5 km*)
- Walking distance to water (*sqm within 3 km*)
- Straight-line distance to water commute station
- House with private beach
- Detached house (*not row house*)
- Socioeconomic index (*income + education*)

## Office qualities

Four qualities that explain the prices of offices in Stockholm refer to the design public walking space, sidewalks, active frontages etc. Only one of five refers to the vacancy rate. Car accessibility was not statistically significant for office rents, even when only looking at suburbia as one market.

- Public transport accessibility (*residents within 30 min*)
- Walking distance to shops, restaurants at ground floor (*number within 1 km*)
- Office cluster (*office businesses within 3km*)
- Office modernity (*building year*)
- Vacancies (*non-occupied office space*)

# BASIC INGREDIENTS FOR SUCCESSFUL WAYFINDING IN OUR CITIES

Wouter Tooren & Camilla Meijer  
(environmental psychologists)

Why is wayfinding important in a city? Why do we feel uncomfortable when we don't know where to go? Why do pedestrians and cyclists prefer certain routes over others? And how can we seduce them to take other routes, or go a little further? To answer these questions, we have to look at the interaction between the physical environment and the people moving in it—their behaviour and sense of wellbeing. Environmental psychologists study these relationships, and underlying motivation and perception, in trying to explain behaviour in public space.

Wayfinding is probably one of the most effective ways to enhance the user experience in the urban environment. With proper design, we can help people reach their destinations in the easiest and most effective ways possible. Wayfinding design can also help prevent behaviour by guiding people away from unsafe locations, promote behaviour by stimulating people to walk a specific route, and support the local economy by attracting people to destinations that need more visitors. Two main categories of design help us reach these goals: shaping the urban environment and effective use of signage and graphic information systems. Here we look at the first. As environmental psychologists we ask: how can a pedestrian find her way in the city based on an intuitive sense of her urban surroundings?

## HOW DO PEOPLE ACTUALLY FIND THEIR WAY?

Wayfinding is all about making *decisions*. When walking around we continuously decide which path to take or what direction to follow. We base our own wayfinding decisions, for the most part, on two strategies: route and survey<sup>(1)</sup>. *Route strategies* consist of a sequence of instructions to arrive at a destination. Each instruction contains a direction to take at a specific junction or orientation point. This strategy is efficient but rather inflexible because it depends on a specific route. *Survey strategies* integrate a bird's eye view of the cityscape. Knowledge about relationships between locations (e.g. distance and orientation) is used to make decision on what general direction to go and thus requires less detailed local knowledge.<sup>(2)</sup>

### **BASIC INGREDIENTS FOR SUCCESSFUL WAYFINDING: STRUCTURE AND DIFFERENTIATION**

Since people navigate with either specific routes or a global sense of direction, the logical solution is to enhance the urban environment to support both strategies. The two basic methods at our disposal are interventions that offer more *structure* in the urban environment and interventions that offer more *differentiation*. We can offer more structure by simplifying urban morphology, aligning streets and intersections so they can be understood as part of an overall shape (e.g. a grid) or concept (e.g. the shape of a bird). Through association or perception the average person needs to be able to comprehend the overall structure of the city as they move about at eye level.

Urban environments with a recognizable structure make it easy to generate an integrated bird's eye view. But if everything looks the same, we essentially have constructed a hedge maze! So some things need to be different. Differentiation interventions promote intuitive wayfinding. Creating zones with distinct, easily recognizable identities help us figure out where we are in the city. Two other main strategies are increasing visual access (i.e., views) so we perceive linkages between different local zones and the placement of landmarks at key decision points throughout the urban landscape. In general, more differentiation can balance out a lack of structure. Vice versa is not possible.

### **STRENGTHENING DIFFERENTIATION IN THE URBAN FABRIC**

Differentiation makes us understand where we are, locally. It embeds our understanding of place, making us feel safer and in control. The key for proper differentiation is creating *local spatial identities*. In general it requires a three-part course of action.<sup>(3)</sup> First, we group space into destination zones based on either form or functional similarities, for example a zone where the cultural heritage of a place is accentuated or a zone where you can find your everyday grocery

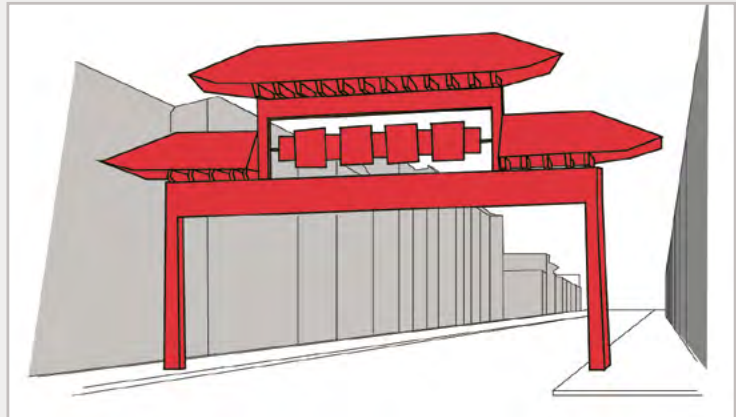


When we use route strategies, we tend to walk using directional instructions. The sequence of instructions is serial and connected to junctions stored in our memory.

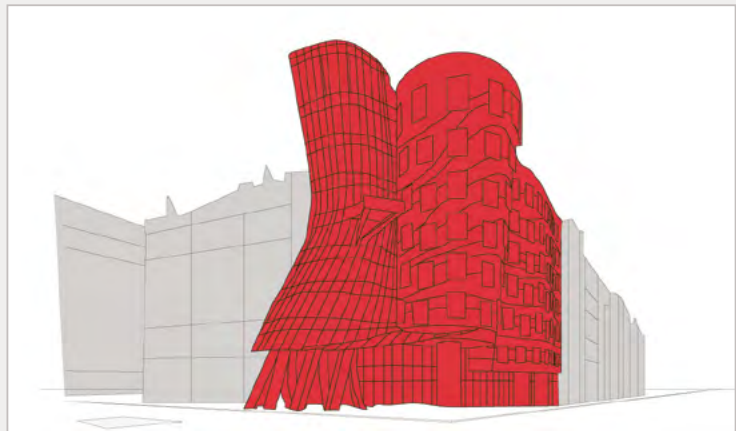


When we use survey strategies we navigate based on key reference points in the environment, for example the orientation and distance of a church or city hall.

An more pronounced feature in the environment can be used to signal to people that they enter or exit a different region or zone.



We can use architecture to add more differentiation in the environment. The dancing house in Prague act as an easily recognizable landmark that helps to know where you are in the city.





shopping. Second, in each zone we identify local spatial units and enhance them further until they can be sufficiently recognized by the average person as a separate spatial identity. This could mean for example that a typical feature in the local architecture is made more to stand out by accentuating its colour or shape. Third we enhance the legibility of functional wayfinding elements in the environment: identification of entrances, exits, paths and junctions. For example we make the entrance of an area stand out by giving it some different trees, or we place a statue to accentuate it is a gate.

## **TOWARDS INTUITIVE WAYFINDING**

Recognizing the need for structure and differentiation is the basic step to enhance wayfinding. At a higher level, it requires the designer to make an engagement with the user to instil a form of *intuitive meaning*. Getting there involves exploring what symbols hold special meaning for the users of the environment. It requires insight into ergonomics, local rituals, personalities, cultural heritage and characteristics of place to let the identity of space resonate with the local use and culture. More resonating structures and identities are better recognizable and in turn easier to navigate. To make this a reality, effective wayfinding design cannot be ad hoc installed. But with thoughtful, meaningful research and deliberate application of interventions, every city with all its destinations could be a pleasure to walk and find your way.

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# STREET EXPERIENCES IN A CAR-DOMINANT CITY

Tine van Langelaar & Stefan van der Spek (researchers)

## **A STUDY ABOUT ROTTERDAM'S WALKING EXPERIENCE**

There are basically two kinds of city centres: historic and modern. Historic city centres, built in an era when no cars existed, tend to be very walkable environments. Modern cities, however, are much more car-dominated, leading to a less attractive walking environment. Rotterdam is one of the four main cities in the Netherlands and its historic city centre was destroyed during the Second World War. The post-war reconstruction mainly caters to cars, like many other cities throughout the world, resulting in a somewhat pedestrian-unfriendly walking environment. We set out to analyse this environment and its users, and hopefully with our results, make recommendations for car-dominated cities worldwide. We wanted to find out which paths people really took and to gain insight about personal preferences in a modern, car-dominated city. We wanted to extract lessons for improving the city centre based on both real experiences and objectively measured behaviour.

Our results illustrated the routes users frequently walked and the destinations they visited. Participants not only produced hundreds of trajectories representing their walking behaviour, but also actively participated in building a rich experience map; a map based on their user experience at eye-level. By adding up this information, it was clear which streets were frequently used yet showed poor quality, or the other way around: high quality public space but hardly used. Based on the results, the Municipality of Rotterdam could strategically focus which places needed investment to stimulate warm streets, good plinths and a great city at eye level.

## THE STUDY AREA

The field research lasted four days in the beginning of May 2012. Researchers were located in four parking garages in the city centre of Rotterdam: Westblaak (BK), Lijnbaan (LB), V&D (VD) and Schouwburgplein (SP). Visitors who arrived by car and continued their journey on foot were asked to volunteer in the field research. The participants carried a GPS-device with them for a couple of hours (max one day). The device registered their whereabouts every 5 seconds. A total of 674 visitors participated in the research, leading to 585 valid trajectories. Additionally, the participants were interviewed and delivered feedback on their experiences.

To understand walking behaviour, we made a distinction between 'moving' and 'staying'. Moving represented active movement, while staying represented lingering at a 'destination' or performing an activity (shopping, eating, etc). Participants tended to park their car at a garage as close as possible to their destination and often walked as direct as possible. The highest concentration of movement was located on the main pedestrianised shopping street (Lijnbaan) and barriers in the network were two large, 4-lane boulevards (Coolingsingel and Westblaak). Staying was mostly concentrated near the department stores.

## ANALYSING THE STREET EXPERIENCE

We also assessed the quality of public space as experienced by the participants. After spending the day in the city centre, the participants were asked to map their experience. Which places did they enjoy and why? Which streets felt uncomfortable and why? This data offered qualitative information about the street experience of visitors.

The visitors marked several spots as nice places, usually characterized by activities on the streets, cafés, seeing the skyline, good atmosphere, retail range, diversity of small specialty shops and cleanliness of the areas. Unfortunately, the city centre is not entirely a positive experience. The visitors marked several spots as unattractive streets or negative places, generally characterized by a lot of motorised traffic, a lack of greenery, empty and



Walking streams from the four garages collected by GPS: high use (red dots) and low use (green dots)



Witte de Withstraat: unique shops and a good atmosphere



Meent: clean, friendly and diverse activities



Westblaak: Dangerous crossing - cars blocking the crosswalk, even on a green light

boring areas, no public toilets, dangerous crossings (traffic), unsafe due to no eyes on the streets (social), little commercial diversity and lacking hospitality.

## **FIXING THE BROKEN LINKS**

While the city centre of Rotterdam offers many well-used, attractive public spaces, other areas are under-used or impart negative experiences. Upgrading public space quality by adding new green areas or implementing car-free streets to reduce motorized traffic and increase safety are two “quick” fixes. Moreover, adding new functions like speciality shops, playgrounds and co-working spaces could diversify the commercial activities in the area. Finally, repairing missing or broken links, creating better circuits and improving accessibility to under-used places could also enhance the public realm.

Essentially, streets with high-quality public space contain four elements:

- **programme** along the street, with **attractive façades** and **activities** behind the façade
- **accessibility** from the access points and high **connectivity** to the surrounding streets
- **human scale**: size and measurements of the street profile in relation to people
- **public space decor**: street furniture, public art and greenery

The routes people chose were based on their existing knowledge of the city and the desire to create new knowledge of the city which requires surprising its users, tempting them to stop and take a look on impulse. This is exactly what’s lacking in Rotterdam’s city centre. The main shopping area is too predictable and uniform. Improvements in public space should not only focus on the street or profile of a building, but especially the space between buildings. That’s where city life exists and continues.

*This research was carried out in spring 2012 within the elective course ‘Urbanism on Track’ (AR0068) at Delft University of Technology, commissioned by the Municipality of Rotterdam, Department of City Development, and coordinated and supervised by Stefan van der Spek.*

# THE PLINTHS OF THE WARM CITY

Thaddeus Muller (urban sociologist)

The Warm City exists at the intersection of observable physical and social aspects of city life. Our perceptions of people who use public space are one of the cornerstones of the warm city. For some people, the crowd in the inner city is just a nuisance because it blocks their way going from A to B. For these people, the city should be functional, a means of transport, from their office to their homes. For many others, the people in public space form a huge reservoir of diverse cognitive, tactile, emotional, esthetic, sensational, erotic, and relational experiences. In my book, *The Warm City*, I mainly focus on interactions between strangers (Goffman 1963, Lofland 1973), and what they experience, feel, and think during a diverse range of encounters, including fleeting interactions – quick eye-contact and the exchange of a few words or sentences – as well as more enduring interactions, such as intense discussions about sports, politics and flirting. In urban sociology, public city life generally tends to be described as cold, anonymous, and impersonal (Wirth 1938). With my research, I show a radically different perspective on urban public life. I listen to the voices of those who feel at home among strangers in the streets and squares of the city and analyze how this is related to a diverse range of interactions in the public realm.

I am especially inspired by Whyte's work of public space in Manhattan (1988) and Lofland's second book on the public realm (1998), where she states that mega-structures destroy vibrant





public life and turn it into a bleak, sanitized version. In both studies, the plinths are considered to be an essential quality of a vibrant public space. Streets with accessible, transparent plinths, mostly related to the open façade of small stores, attract more people than streets without plinths with those qualities. To give a typical Dutch example from my book: in biking through the city, my respondents usually choose the busiest streets, because that was more fun. They wanted to watch the people walking and biking, and/or were just attracted to the lively atmosphere. They wanted to escape the dullness of streets with mega-structures. Even on their bike they would engulf themselves in the diversions of urban life.

Cityscape matters, especially through small shops with an open character. One can see people shop, sit, drink, eat, argue, try on clothes, show off, be together as bored and frustrated couples, or as happy as one can be with one another. Because of the plinths, we have access to people and their presentation of self. It is not only the human comedy one can experience in these places. Seeing others is seeing oneself and thus becomes part of our ongoing identity-project (Giddens 1996). We compare ourselves to others, reject others with disdain, admire their impression, and even feel inspired to reproduce parts of the way others look, behave, and relate to another. One urbanite told me that she saw a couple



walking hand in hand in such an intimate way that she thought of her own relationship and wondered if she could walk like that – so close – with her partner. It is not that we experience urban life from outside, but we are also part of it. People look at us, see us, talk to us, touch us, and smell us. It goes both ways. We are objects and subjects at the same time. We are connecting, interacting, sometimes strategically and sometimes without any conscious effort.

Plinths not only create a distinctive social experience but also a unique physical one. For instance because of open plinths we are penetrated by the smell of products that are sold, such as fresh bread, vegetables, flowers, coffee, and food from all corners of the world. And we also have the sensation of touching tomatoes, apples, shoes, clothes, books and so on. Another typical aspect of the physical experience of plinths is locomotion. In a street with small shops and open façades one can wander out of a shop into the street and vice versa. This goes with the sensation of choice, freedom, and individuality. One can follow the attraction one feels when passing a store. And there is also the autonomy of the quick escape; it is just a few steps away. A small shop with an open façade makes one feel connected to the city, the street, where one can experience the freedom of diversity, breathe fresh air and feel the sunshine.

Public life is also about observing objects. It is the joy of looking at products we desire – beautiful, delicious, funny, remarkable, exotic goods. Looking at products through the window of a plinth can also become a collective experience; we want to share our findings with our friends. We talk about the music we like, the movies we want to see, people advice us, sometime strangers. In the interviews for *The Warm City*, and in related studies of semi-public places (such as corner shops, hairdressers, cafes and laundromats), another important aspect of these places comes to the foreground. These places are the breeding grounds of small transient communities, which connect us to the city and make us feel at home.

The fundamental quality which is added to urban public life by small shops with open façades is its permeability, the partial integration of public (street) and private (shop). Small shops with open façades not only create the context for the *warm* city, but allow for movement between the public and private. Public life makes it possible to traverse these borders and go from one experience into the other. This oscillation, this movement, creates an experience opposite of the cold, fixed, and static urban situation, where one feels stuck in non-involvement and estrangement. This movement creates interaction, meaning, histories, and narratives through which we become attached to the city, its possibilities, and its transformations.

# THE CITY AT EAR LEVEL

Kees Went (sound designer)

Although the looks of a city are important for its appreciation, sound is more often responsible for how we feel at a particular location. The properties of hearing are noticeably different from those of sight. Sight is perceived through a frame, while sound is experienced in a sphere, covering 360 degrees from all directions around us. The acoustic space that individuals and objects occupy is in most cases much larger than their physical space. We can choose what to look at, but not necessarily what we hear.

This book is about the experience of the city at eye level. I argue that a good strategy for the city at eye level must also take into account urban acoustics, the city at ear level. The sounds we experience can vary greatly from street to street and can influence the way we feel or perceive a location, a street, neighbourhood, or plinth. Adequate auditory conditions make it possible to communicate and interact with the city and with each other.

## **SOUND IN PUBLIC SPACE**

The term *soundscape* is the acoustic equivalent of the word 'landscape' and involves everything we can hear at a specific location. The sound of the city is the result of the interplay between architecture and city planning, the design of technology, and the behaviour of citizens. The urban soundscape is predominantly characterised by traffic sounds and the technology we use in public space. Whenever a problem with sound arises, we call it 'noise'. Noise can be defined as 'unwanted sound,' and when it's a problem, 'noise pollution' is officially the government's responsibility.

## QUANTITY OR QUALITY

It is a common misconception that people prefer silence most of the time. People living in cities accept noise. The appreciation for sound does not, however, exclusively depend on its level. In many cases a quantitative approach to sound is not very helpful because problems with sound are predominantly qualitative. It is not the level, but the *meaning* or context of sound that is most important. It depends on the context whether we consider sounds as an annoyance. So yes, too much traffic noise, while we are trying to sleep, is annoying. But if we like our neighbours, we are probably less irritated by their sounds.

## ACOUSTIC COMMUNICATION

Sounds are meaningful as long as they fit the context. Composer and soundscape researcher Barry Truax studied the soundscape from the concept of *acoustic communication*. Sounds are meaningful for a location as long as they are part of (or permit) communication. Sounds that are not functional within the acoustic communication are marked as noise. Good design enables good acoustic communication.

According to Truax a satisfactory soundscape meets the following three requirements. First there is *variation*. A high-quality soundscape has a lot of different sounds. Second, *complexity* within the sounds is also essential. Monotonous, repetitive sounds do not lead to an interesting soundscape. Third, there must be *functional acoustic balance* exists between the spatial, temporal, social and cultural context of the environment. The space you are in should not sound bigger or smaller than you see it. The sound should vary with time and should fit the social context. A hotel has thick carpets and a peaceful soundscape, which makes you feel relaxed. A beautiful building or neighbourhood can be spoiled by a bad soundscape, because it cannot fulfil its objective. It creates an unattractive or even unbearable environment.

## DESIGNING FOR SOUND IN PUBLIC SPACES

Sound design in public space starts with creating awareness of how we interact on an acoustic level. We suggest three ways to reduce the impact of meaningless sounds: by absorbance, diffusion, or masking. Both are common techniques to improve the acoustic properties of sound studios and concert halls. *Absorbance* involves introducing objects with a soft and open texture. Trees, shrubs and hedges, and also certain sculptures, can absorb (and reduce) the levels of unwanted sounds. Smooth and hard surfaces directly reflect sound waves, while irregular surfaces result in *diffusion* or spreading of sound in all directions, also diminishing their impact. Façades with uneven surfaces or with an irregular arrangement of objects can act as diffusers. Another technique is *masking*. Irritating sounds can be masked by less intrusive ones, such as water fountains or water sculptures that are used to mask traffic noise.



Glass façades reflect noise



Sidewalk cafes generate a rich texture of sound

A plinth with interesting activities often sounds good. The soundscape of the sidewalk mixes the sounds of the outside (like traffic), with sounds from the inside, coming from houses and shops. Many modern office buildings have a hard glass façade on the ground level (or even two floors). These are an acoustic nightmare, because they reflect (and amplify!) sounds, including traffic noise. Just as much as they are visual mirrors, passers-by are acoustically thrown back on themselves and this precludes the possibility to connect with the environment. On the other hand, sidewalk cafes, workshops, open plinths, and stores provide a variety of activities that also generate rich textures of sound. Personalised hybrid spaces, like small front gardens and hedges, are also great diffusers. As long as there is a clear relation of the sounds to the concurrent events, they are part of meaningful acoustic communication.



Fountains to mask noise

## **LISTENING FOR LESSONS**

Perception theory tells us that our brains cannot process all incoming information with the same alertness—also known as *selective attention*. Our perception divides information into foreground and background. Whenever one signal is more complex than another one, the complex one will dominate as foreground. For instance, when we hear two melodies at once, we perceive the more complex one as foreground. In the same way, rich sound textures, generated by constantly changing activities at plinths, will banish traffic sounds to our perceptual background.

The urban soundscape is determined by three elements: urban design, technology (sounds from cars, tools, phones) and the user's behaviour and perception. Design will always be only one facet. The soundscape is not a fixed condition but a reciprocal process. Within the acoustic community the listener, as a perceptual mediator, is as much responsible for the meaning of sound as its source. Yet, the urban design hardly ever involves the influence of sound on the experience. Designers should look more carefully at Truax's requirements for a satisfactory soundscape, to add to a better street experience.

# PEOPLE POWER MARKETS

Peter Groenendaal (placemaker)

I believe in markets. From neighbourhood street markets to markets in buildings, markets bring people together to trade, to meet, or even to play a game of chess. At the heart of markets are the people. It's people who power markets. The three street markets in this chapter are truly powerful places and each is a credit to their thriving community. With low maintenance costs for merchants, produce and products are affordable to most customers in their communities.

Three places where people have always been, and are fully immersed in their local markets are described below. From Crete to Amsterdam and Buenos Aires. Markets pure and simple for more than 2500 years. Going to these markets is truly a personal experience.

## **CRYSTALLO FROM MIRES, CRETE, GREECE**

The oldest markets recorded are those from Agora's in Knossos, Crete and Athens. The word Agora is Greek for 'open place of assembly' and designated as the area in the city where citizens gathered for announcements, joined military campaigns or discusses politics. Open-air, or tented, markets later redefined the Agora as places where merchants and craftsmen made and sold their products. In 2013, I visited the weekly market in the town of Mires, Crete, with my travel companion. As we turned the corner to the market's entrance, an older, tiny lady stood with two empty fruit crates. She was making and selling cup holders. We bought a few and she gave us a muffin and a glass of water. The next afternoon we ran into her on the street. Her name was Crystallo; she was in her sixties and had been working in the markets of southern Crete for many years. At the end of

Crete's tourist season, Crystallo takes the ferry to Athens to work the markets there. She asked us to guard her merchandise for a while. Of course we did, and when she came back she gave us another muffin and glass of water.

To us Crystallo represents Greek market merchants from a 2600-year history. In artist renderings of the ancient Agora Markets the stalls were just as simple as the Greek street markets of today, with merchants selling homemade products and home grown produce, just like Crystallo.



Crystallo from Mires, Crete

## **FERIA DE MATADEROS, BUENOS AIRES, ARGENTINA**

Every Sunday, the Feria de Mataderos takes place in the Barrio with the same name. Mataderos is a large barrio in the southwest of Buenos Aires, and totally different from European-styled neighbourhoods like Palermo, Belgrano and Puerto Madero. The name Mataderos stems from the livestock market and slaughterhouses. The area has always been a hub for rural commerce as it was the first stop for gauchos in the city.



Feria de Mataderos, Buenos Aires

Since 1986, the community celebrates every Sunday with the Feria de Mataderos, an exuberant celebration of Argentina's gaucho culture, cuisine, and crafts. The weekly Sunday market stretches out two kilometers along the major street, La Defensa. It is an incredible weekly event.

Flexible parking lots and garages become market stalls, places to eat, and later the stage for musicians, street artists—and lots of Tango. The City does not charge the locals to sell their goods nor for the space to sell, enabling local people to earn a living. From homemade pies and cakes to leather goods, jewellery and used clothing—everything is on offer. Around mealtimes the whole area becomes one giant barbecue pit. And everywhere music plays and people spontaneously dance. Late into the afternoon this market booms with people and energy.

I was there in 2014. The strength of the Feria as a place to meet and conduct business is evident. When speaking with locals, a common theme is safety and security once the Feria ends and buses usher out the visitors. During the Sunday Feria, Mataderos is idyllic but as evening falls they say it becomes unsafe. This weekly happening in Mataderos is pure magic: space turns into place, a delightful destination where people shine.

## **DAPPER MARKET, AMSTERDAM, THE NETHERLANDS**

Amsterdam features more than 175 of the world's nationalities. The Dapper Market seems to attract them all, either as merchants or customers. Like most of the more than 25 markets in Amsterdam, the Dapper Market, is a street market. Six days a week, the street transforms from public space into a bustling market place. About 15,000 people attend the market each day, which amounts to 4.8 million a year, more than the number of visitors to the Empire State Building in New York.



Dapper Market, Amsterdam

Amsterdam East's Dapper neighbourhood is a truly diverse neighbourhood and it's no surprise the market reflects this diversity. Many of the nationalities that have come to Amsterdam have trading in their genes so the Market always gets new blood. In Amsterdam, the City manages most markets. Compared to shops, the rules and regulations for markets are far more rigid. These rules were established more than a hundred years ago to prevent violence at the start of markets in the mornings. People nearly killed each other for a better place at a corner or at the centre of the market on Dapper Square.

## **LESSONS FROM THE MARKETS**

Lately there is some movement towards merchants and entrepreneurs running markets, as Governments don't see this as their core business. There are successes to report, as well as failures. A good mix in management groups is definitely the key. It is crucial to include citizens/consumers with an advisory role in market management. A good market has a mix of products and people, and above all it is a great place to be. Successful markets need to communicate their success effectively. Programming and communication to the community is also important, using an up-to-date web page in various languages, Facebook, and other Social Media.

Mataderos proves that if the city is willing and able to offer space, the people will respond and seize this opportunity to develop their entrepreneurship, a first step on the social mobility ladder. The Dapper Market proves on a daily basis that more than hundred nationalities with a common goal to earn a living can succeed. The market has far-reaching positive effects on those who work and use the market as well as the City of Amsterdam as a whole. Here the City manages the market and charges market fees. At night, the Dapper Street is a paid parking street--double income for the City.

Markets can provide a great, human experience for the city at eye level. Markets have been the ultimate way for people to meet and conduct business. Cities have grown from Markets. People truly power markets all over the world. With and/or without rules. Pure and simple.



## **THREE BY-PRODUCTS OF GOOD MARKETS**

Local economies were built around markets, which offered affordable opportunities for people looking to start a small business and represented vital lifelines connecting consumers and producers. In no other public space is the multi-purpose extent of place so thoroughly represented. Markets act as catalysts for creating centres in neighbourhoods that have lost their sense of place. With the help of Project for Public Spaces (PPS), we've developed a list of three by-products of good markets.

We need to preserve these very special, multi-functional places and the role that they play in the long-term health of local economies. We need to support the creation and management of markets of all sizes around the world in order to reconnect local economies and communities.

### **Vibrant Markets Strengthen Local Identity**

Not only are markets a vital source of community engagement, markets can serve to amplify cherished aspects of local culture. The idea of a market is pretty open to the region's talents and interests. Along with industry, many cities have lost their sense of identity. Food will always be the core of markets, but everything else depends on local needs. For example, the city of Detroit is well known for the automobile industry. A weekly market for classic cars could enhance the city's identity and provide a vibrant venue for community gathering. Every Saturday food trucks could set up in a parking lot with a line-up of classic cars for sale along the edges. If local community leaders are open to it, a market can be anything.

### **Clustering of Activity Turns Markets into Community Hubs**

When food and agriculture play an important role in local culture, a market becomes an easier sell. But with many cities disconnected from the greater food systems that serve them, ancillary uses become important for longevity. This bodes well for places. Great markets are created by clustering activity. They require the intentional aggregation of local food production, but also of other services and functions. The food is the central reason for why people gather, and that gathering creates a hub for community life.

### **Markets Catalyse Neighbourhood Development**

A major strength of markets in today's economy is that public markets are a substantial economic driver in many cities around the globe. Markets create plenty of room for small businesses and fine-grained economic development by offering a "Lighter, Quicker, Cheaper" way to support, promote, and increase economic activity. Every city has the resources to locally produce food—and if a place as dense as New York can become an urban agriculture leader, any city can. Moreover, the gather of people, the social production aspect of markets, is an essential contribution to economic resilience for both urban and rural communities.

# BY THE POWER OF 10

a conversation with Norman Mintz (placemaker)

## **IT'S IN THE LANGUAGE**

The Power of 10 is a simple idea. The foundation of the concept is that a good place has many activities and good reasons to be there, maybe 10 or more. Everybody sees a place in a different perspective, based on his or her own experiences, culture, and personality. The Power of 10 offers an easy, understandable framework that motivates residents and stakeholders to revitalise urban life. It shows that by starting efforts at a small scale, they can accomplish big things. The concept also provides people something tangible to strive for and helps them visualize what it takes to make their community great.

People and spaces come together to form the notion of place. Because people are at the heart of placemaking, creating a language for place is important. The average every day person, someone who lives in the area, should be able to easily understand these concepts. The Power of 10 provides this common language. People relate to this approach because it's part of their life. It's something they see as making sense; something they can fit in to. They are not handing over the process to someone else, another "expert". They want to be involved and when they hear about the Power of 10 they get excited right away.

## **ACTIVITIES ARE KEY**

In order to continue building vibrant communities with prosperous streets, activities are the key. Going to town is a thing people enjoy doing. The activities will keep them coming for more. Unfortunately, in many communities, public gathering places like post-offices



The carousel in Bryant Park: a good example of the Power of Ten. It also serves as an excellent example to illustrate the principle of “Triangulation”. Notice that the Carousel has other activities attached to it, such as a playful and engaging ticket booth and a “reading room” in scale for children. Just beside it (out of the picture) is a “game area” for children and a special area for children’s parties.

and libraries are moving outside of towns and off the main street in search of larger offices and more space. Keeping these public services—or what we call “community anchors”—in the city centre is key. The more functions that take place in town, the more lively and vibrant it will be.

In revitalisation projects, we assess how many and the type of activities available for people. There’s usually one nice thing to do. But then we ask: can we expand that into two, four, six other activities. How many quality places are located nearby, and how are they connected? Are there places that should be more meaningful but aren’t? Answering these questions will determine where residents and stakeholders should focus their energy.

A huge success story is Bryant Park, in New York City. In the 1970s the park, at that time over-crowded with unkempt shrubbery and walled in with a high fence, was filled with squalor and drug dealers. The ordinary passer-by had no desire to enter the park. But by the 1990s, that had changed. The work of William “Holly” Whyte greatly contributed to the park’s turn-around. He encouraged the redesign of the entrances, the lowering of shrubs that blocked the view into the park, the placement of small-scale cafés and kiosks, and the establishment of a privately funded management entity for security and maintenance headed by one large business improvement district (BID), Bryant Park Corporation. It was also his idea to place about 2,500 moveable chairs on the park grounds. The effect: people came to sit, to watch, to enjoy others’ company.

## **STOREFRONTS AND THE SIDEWALK**

The Power of 10 can be a base for starting any placemaking process. By definition, placemaking occurs on the ground floor, the city at eye level. The sidewalk is often a starting point. There’s something nice about the sidewalk. This is where the principle



Bryant Park, New York



The "Reading Room" in Bryant Park: one of the more successful activities in the park and a good example of the Power of Ten

of “Triangulation” comes in, whereby additional elements are added to a particular activity, giving the activity more interest. What do we need on the sidewalk to keep people walking and to keep their interest? There must be *something* to look at or to engage with; the idea is to encourage the pedestrian throughout their walking experience.

In our work on main streets, that something is storefronts, and in this book they are called plinths. Creating continuity on the sidewalk and with storefronts is essential to the city at eye level. Storefronts must come up to property line—that is what encourages people to walk, to shop, to remain interested. Anything that takes attention away from the storefronts is problematic. For example, sudden set-backs in the property line, large-scaled columns or pillars, and “dead zones” all interrupt the walking route and vision line, creating difficulty for the shops to carry out their goal: inviting people in.

Vacant walls, which are ever-present in our cities today, are also dead zones. As soon as a pedestrian arrives in a dead zone, they become uninterested in walking or shopping or anything. The question then becomes: how can we fill up those dead zones with life and potential activity? Posters, displays, greenery, historic markers, anything can keep alive dead space. Dead zones are in fact a great opportunity for the community to get together and create something relevant and meaningful to the community. The goal is to provide interest in as much square-feet as possible.

In most cases, individual merchants can make small changes to their storefronts. Because the very nature of being a merchant is to think about the *inside*—the products they sell, the displays, store lay-out and flow, advertisements—it might be difficult for them to think about the *outside* of the building. Sometimes we take the merchant by the hand, walk outside, and show them their building. This is how they can become involved in triangulation. In most cases, small, inexpensive additions can be made that not only help the image of the business but also help engage the pedestrian, by providing more interest to the sidewalk. Such additions can include a new imaginative hanging sign, installing a colourful awning, providing creative window displays, adding a bench for sitting, or placing merchandise on the sidewalk.

## **THE PEOPLE OWN IT**

To bring about change, implementation is where it starts. It’s one thing to look to the city or planning department for guidance and leadership. But the real and best test to any revitalisation project is community involvement. The merchants or the city do not own the downtown, the people own it. The case of Bryant Park illustrates how business districts and urban commercial neighbourhoods can revitalise by using small scale, innovative approaches that encourage the prosperity of local businesses. It can be as simple as putting out chairs, planting flowers, and quickly repairing anything broken. By involving the community, no project is ever ‘done’. It will continue to be modified, improved, and adjusted. This is a defining quality of a vibrant urban place. It’s not enough to have just one great place in a neighbourhood, or one great neighbourhood in a city. A collection of interesting communities is the ultimate goal.

# THE EBB AND FLOW OF PUBLIC SPACE

Martin Knuijt (landscape architect)

## **CITY RHYTHM AND PUBLIC SPACE**

The dynamic pace and vibrant rhythm of city life trigger our imagination. Most city centres have spots where daily rhythm is active and where people meet at all hours of the day. The public realm offers a stage to perform and for users to express their message, whether it's economical, corporate, social, environmental or artistic. For each person, there's somewhere to go, something to do. However sometimes these city rhythms are largely interrupted. Auto-dominance, inactive plinths, and empty buildings contribute negatively to the city centre. Segregation of functions made things even worse. In the past 60 years, many cities chose to pedestrianise their city centres, reducing the variety of activities in their public spaces.

Citizens in many city centres do use public space in a very flexible manner – cars, trams, people, all mix. In spite of this flowing movement of people, current public space often does nothing to take advantage of this. In general most parts of the city centre are too monotonous. A large part has to do with its poor public realm.

Programming buildings and addressing inactive frontages along walkable public space are essential to improve the public realm. The challenge for public space is not just about well-designed space, but mostly about programming and activating space. To get there urban space has to be better defined and improvements to the network of public realm should result in a walking continuity, having perfect main street crossings



Public space is not just about well-designed space, but mostly about programming and activating space. Event market at Lansdowne Road, Croydon, London, UK

with both pedestrians, bikes and cars on the same level and having wide and comfortable sidewalks. Creating a well-functioning public realm is about generating places to meet, for exchange, and to watch or being watched.

## **SCENOGRAPHY**

'Space' must be turned into 'place', by creating inviting places to stay. People want places to sit, contemplate, debate, perform. To contribute to a vibrant streetscape it is important to have these places to stay and enjoy public space. The balance between 'place' and 'movement' in the city calls for directing the movement and changeability in the use of space. It is about improving the balance between fast and slow transport; between targeted exercise and recreational activity. Within the city a scenography of spaces should be orchestrated, allowing informal uses, rebalancing space and movement.

## **FLUX AND RELAX**

A recent trend in street design, that of shared surfaces, aims to mix different types of users and to provide access for all. Today's uses suggest something beyond that, which lead to the concept of 'shared space 2.0'. A main element of success is prioritizing pedestrians and slowing traffic in the city, without eliminating motorized traffic. The pillar of the program is making busy and quiet places. We have to make interplay between 'relax', the most harmonious form of 'place', with 'flux', the most proper way of movement. It goes beyond mere surface treatment and embraces the natural ebb and flow of public spaces –



Interplay between 'relax', the most harmonious form of 'place', with 'flux', the most proper way of movement – shared space 2.0, Inner city Plan Public Space, Basel, CH (OKRA i.c.w. Maxwan and Basler Hofmann)



those of flux and relax. At certain times spaces need to allow for more flows through, while at other times they want to allow for moments of pause and rest. The design and programming of a space can reflect and enhance this reality. These rhythms can vary throughout the day, weekly, monthly, and yearly.

Informal uses in public realm can be stimulated by introducing elements that are just as high as seating elements, but are not designed as





Shared Space in Exhibition Road, London, UK

such. These can be for example staircases along the water, high edges along planters, or just objects that can be positioned in different ways. Changing the components of the space can accommodate dynamic use of spaces. Switching on or switching off water elements makes these spaces suitable for organizing events whilst on quiet moments the joy and pleasure of the water element turns them into an inviting place to stay.

There are busy places and places that have less visitors, but still work perfect in the network of public realm. In residential areas, a sense of hierarchy in space typologies must be developed ranging from public, semi-public, collective neighbourhoods, and community accessible school grounds. Shared space 2.0 incorporates the characters of the city's diverse communities, allowing for moments of intensity in its bustling commercial spaces and for moments of respite in its more residential quarters via the definition of a hierarchy of spaces – front yards, courtyards, playgrounds, etc.

## **DIFFERENCE AND REPETITION**

Public space of tomorrow is the setting for situations that return. Daily life takes place in a pattern that repeats itself, but there are also differences. Deleuze's *Différence et répétition* applies to shared space 2.0. Public life in cities will have its daily routine of rush hour, lunchtime and moments of quietness, however it also has special peak moments.

# DUBLIN AFTER THE BOOM-AND-BUST

Ciarán Cuffe (architect and city councillor)

## THE CELTIC TIGER'S LEGACY

Dublin's development has been like a roller-coaster ride over the last few decades. In the 1980s, the city centre's urban fabric was damaged by old-fashioned thinking that promoted road schemes and the destruction of historic buildings. Back then it was feared that Dublin would become a doughnut city like so many in the United States and elsewhere. Then along came the '*Celtic Tiger*'. Cranes appeared on the city skyline, and the city was transformed into a building site. A 15-year construction frenzy took place. In 2008, the frenzy suddenly came to a halt and there was time to think again. Some good buildings and a lot of mediocre ones had been built. The inner-city population had increased 50% to around 130,000. The expanding metropolitan region also doubled driving time on new motorways to the North, West and South. Now, the region has a population of 1.8 million. Suburban sprawl has taken root but the city centre has experienced a renaissance.

As the dust settles from this boom-and-bust cycle it is time to consider what can be done to maximise the city's potential. Three questions can be posed about the city in its current state. How can the traffic be tamed?



Wellington Memorial in Dublin's Phoenix Park

What can be done to improve green infrastructure? What can be done to make better use of the small “leftover” sites? If these three issues can be tackled then urban areas can better face the unknown challenges of the rest of the twenty-first century.

## TAMING THE TRAFFIC

In some sense the traffic issue has a simple solution: make it easier to walk and cycle, and improve public transport. This is already happening: from 2004 to 2014 the number of cyclists travelling to and from the city centre during rush hour increased by over 150%. There was almost a 15% increase from 2013 to 2014 alone. There has also been a 35% increase in the numbers walking over the last five years. These numbers are encouraging, but they only relate to the inner city. Further away from the city centre, the more people are wedded to their cars. The trick is to make sure car traffic doesn't dominate the centre, calling for more 30 km/h zones, road narrowing, a gradual reduction in car parking spaces, and public transit improvements. Good news: a new light rail will link two existing lines that run through the city centre. Returning more road space to the pedestrian will be difficult, but footpath widening is the secret weapon of the urban planner, and it will happen.

A cultural shift is also occurring. With a growing urban sensibility, it may be easier to argue for urban realm improvements.

European initiatives to tackle urban noise, air pollution and carbon emissions allow civic leaders to argue the case for better pedestrians and cyclist infrastructure. A 2014 study showed that pedestrians spend more money than car users in the central shopping district, and this type of evidence boosts the case for such investments. Recently the city published plans for a '*Liffey Boulevard*' cycle route linking the extensive Phoenix Park to the west of the city centre with the coastline of Dublin Bay to the east. Retailers fear it may restrict car-users, but the benefits appear to outweigh any loss of road-space to car traffic.



Traffic Intersection in Dublin with poor quality pedestrian environment

## IMPROVING GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

Improving access to green areas is a crucial issue in improving the liveability of cities. It is often a make-or-break issue for families, and it has emerged as a factor that drives young families to the suburbs. Large swathes of the city centre have little or no outdoor recreational space. The existing green spaces require better management and investment. More amenities in existing parks such as new cafés are



Temporary Granby Park on lands awaiting redevelopment in Dublin City Centre



Empty site owned by Council on Dublin's Capel Street

being proposed. Extended opening hours can help, but so will making it easier to cross busy streets to get to these parks in the first place.

There are also many city centre sites that are unused and overgrown with vegetation. The State owns land without money to build, and other land lies idle and is owned by bankrupt developers. Perhaps parks can be a solution for the next few years. In summer 2013 the temporary 'Granby Park' successfully allowed many to experience nature and cultural events within the city limits.

## **OPPORTUNITIES FOR SMALL EMPTY SITES**

During the boom, development was concentrated on larger sites that could deliver greater returns, generally larger than 1000 square metres. Now is the time to think about the smaller sites that were overlooked or ignored when big sites were focused on exclusively. Smaller sites, particularly those that are less than 200 square metres are left to attract litter and anti-social activity. These small plots could be used for well-designed mixed-use developments. In some instances the developers have gone bust, in others the lands are owned by the city itself.

If economic growth continues the City could develop mixed-use development on these sites, or if not, consider selling them on with a design brief. This could allow housing associations or families to build affordable housing in the heart of the city. No-one really know what future lies hold in store for Dublin, but experimenting is good, and it seems that '*small is beautiful*' may be a motto to observe and follow over the next few years.



# STREETS AS PLACES

# A FINER GRAIN ON SYDNEY'S STREETS

Anna Robinson (urban designer)

Sydney, like all cities, is in transition. In the last two decades, Sydney's most significant transition was from an employment-focused Central Business District, or CBD, to a vibrant and truly mixed-use city where people live, work, learn, shop, recreate and just stay. Sydney benefits from its unique situation on a spectacular harbour. Its foreshore (waterfront) and the iconic architecture of the Sydney Opera House and Sydney Harbour Bridge have dominated the identity of the place.

Since hosting the 2000 Olympic Games, the planning of the city shifted its focus beyond the foreshore to extend into the streets, laneways or alleys/back streets, civic and open spaces that compose the public realm. The local government authority responsible for planning the city, the City of Sydney, has implemented a series of initiatives that move towards achieving a more human-scaled city. Several initiatives demonstrate the intersection between design and placemaking in Sydney and these initiatives represent a new tool to help discover its identity and personality.

## **THE FIRST EVOLUTION: PEDESTRIANISATION**

Historically, the first evolution of Sydney towards a people-focused city included the redesign and pedestrianisation of two major streets: Martin Place, a 20 metre wide pedestrian mall overlooked





Martin Place

by major financial institutions, and Pitt Street Mall, Sydney's premier retail street that collects the fifth highest retail rents in the world. Martin Place thrived with pedestrians when workers walked to work from a nearby train station or bus stop, from their office to get lunch, then back at the end of the day. However, it was vacant and sparse on weekday evenings and throughout the weekend. Programming was non-existent; there was no incentive to stay in these streets beyond regular work hours

### **THE SECOND EVOLUTION: A FINER GRAIN**

In 1996, 88,000 residents lived in Sydney's CBD. By 2011, that number had doubled and the trend continues. To complement this influx of residents, the City of Sydney introduced several place-based policies that deliver an additional layer of complexity to the public realm and experience of Sydney at eye level. At Martin Place, an events overlay was applied with concerts and festivals



Pitt Street



Angel Place

in the evenings and weekends, creating an extended vibrancy. At Pitt Street Mall, suspended illuminated artwork now draws pedestrians into and through the mall at night.

In addition to these large-scale interventions, a series of smaller scale interventions establishes a new framework for placemaking and the identity of Sydney. The City of Sydney set out to revitalise the CBD's hidden network of existing, underutilised narrow laneways (alleys). A public art policy and a "Fine Grain Matching Grant" specifically for the laneways have transformed them into shopping and dining destinations.

A complementary public art policy installed art to transform the once dark and uninviting thoroughfares into welcoming public spaces. Three temporary installations were award-winning and proved so popular that they became permanent installations.

The Fine Grain Matching Grant provides matched cash funding of up to \$30,000 to assist small businesses looking to relocate in laneways and other underused areas. The City of Sydney defines a fine grain business as a small scale, diverse and innovative business engaged in specialist retail, hospitality or entertainment and encouraging activation of underutilised spaces such as city laneways and basement spaces. The revitalisation of the laneways has been staged. Incremental improvements have been made, tested, reviewed, analysed, then further spending has been allocated to more laneway revitalisation projects based on the success of the earlier laneway revitalisation projects. The City of Sydney has identified a vast number of laneways within the CBD and only a handful have been revitalised to date.

These new fine grain policies have reoriented the public realm from the harbour's highly visible open space to the discrete and gritty laneways. The rejuvenation program brought together government departments, young entrepreneurs and large establishments and provided \$10 million in infrastructure upgrades to support local business.

The effect of these initiatives is clearly evident in the public realm – the visual experience of the city at eye level is more engaging and stimulating, the physical experience of the city is more diverse and pedestrian scaled. Strolling through the city, one can turn off the main street, stumble upon an intriguing laneway, discover an exquisite art installation or a flourishing



Ash Street

small bar tucked into a basement. The laneways create an element of surprise beyond the main streets of the CBD.

## **ACTIVATION THROUGH EVENTS AND PROGRAMMING**

While the City of Sydney's urban design and planning policies have enabled this transformation, its success depends on human patronization—people have to use the place. Residents, workers and visitors have embraced the new experience on offer and claimed ownership of Sydney's laneways. They consume not just the retail, hospitality and entertainment on offer, but also the place. The packed café tables and bar stools spill out into the laneways; passers by stop to say hello to a friend; tourists people-watch and photograph the public art. Sydney's laneways have become so much more than just service lanes or shortcuts between the main streets.

The City of Sydney recognises that *people* activate urban spaces and reinforce the identity of place. To meet the demand for placemaking through urban activation and space consumption, the City of Sydney implemented an extraordinary events and programming overlay with impressive events every month. The programming builds upon the urban design and planning framework of the CBD, allowing residents, workers and visitors to participate and reinforce a real and authentic identity for the place. On a macro scale, large events take place in significant public spaces, like the New Years Eve fireworks, attracting more than a million viewers and picnickers to the harbour foreshore. And on a micro scale, the laneways host temporary public art installations for the Sydney Festival and Art & About, they are transformed through night-time illuminations for Vivid Festival and their cafes, restaurants and bars offer gourmet treats for Good Food Month.

## **BY THE PEOPLE, FOR THE PEOPLE**

The experience of Sydney's streets, laneways, civic and open spaces goes beyond urban design and planning. Sydney is no longer a one-dimensional experience of the Opera House and Harbour Bridge. It has evolved into an intricate and complex assembly of both large and small scale, place-based initiatives that incorporate a mix of uses, layers of public art, a program of daily, weekly, monthly and annual events. People now engage with their city, participate in events and activate the public realm at all scales. This is placemaking by the people.

# DESIGNING FROM THE STREET

a conversation with Ton Schaap (urbanist)

## THE URBAN PUBLIC REALM

As humans we are focused on meeting other people, for which we need the urban public realm. In that domain the human scale is important as well as the vibrancy of the place – both are provided by plinths. A city that has a better public realm, will be more successful in the long run. This refers not solely to the plinth but to the whole design of the street and public spaces; street and plinth need each other.

In many office areas, buildings are positioned in a (parking) field and the public space is mainly determined by the car for access and parking. Where the car is dominant, it is usually not an attractive place where you want to be. There might be a need for such areas, but they are not the lively streets and neighbourhoods that are part of the urban system. The Amsterdam-Zuidas is an example of a well designed mixed-use office area: the design has been thought from the public domain with the main entrances to the street, and no dominance by the car.



Residential plinth in Amsterdam

## URBAN RESIDENTIAL STREETS

My inspiration for urban design and plinths comes from the European city before the mass use of the car. Plinths are often assumed to be non-residential. But most of the high density urban areas in Amsterdam are residential. These attractive areas are to be found in the European city areas from before the 20th century. In the modernist architecture and urbanism this city of streets has been lost: the street was seen as vacant space between the buildings. However this is especially the place where urban life takes place and which need to be designed as a domain with attractive façades and plinths.

Many of the attractive streets in the city are ordinary residential streets. You'll find them in Amsterdam-South but also in Amsterdam-East and in Old-West. Those streets have a sophisticated plinth design between the ground floor of the house and the public space. The design of the plinth should be a combination of generous and reserved - a resident needs privacy. The size of the window is important: the residents should not hide behind blinds or curtains in a too big window, or behind a too small kitchen window. The hardest to design is a street with mutual satisfaction for both residents and people walking along or driving by. This needs a fine detailing of the plinth, and can be provided by small front gardens or private zones along the sidewalk.

IJburg is in this case an example where the housing and building blocks have a good design of the ground floor that relates to the public street. For the plan of IJburg we had a good look at the streets and canals of old Amsterdam. Also Borneo-Spoorenburg in the Eastern Docklands is in my opinion a good example; here the plinth of the houses has a patio or carport and makes a good balance between front and rear entrance, between formal and informal. The sidewalks are wide enough to sit outside, so the residents are gradually occupying parts of this 3.5 meter wide zone with benches, planters and *geveltuintjes* (sidewalk gardens).

## STREET PROFILE AND PLINTH DESIGN

The design attitude of the urbanist and architect is important: do you consider the street as the remaining area between buildings, or as the heart of the city. As an architect you should be humble and start designing from the street, not from the building. You need to design good and



19th century housing with "Geveltuintje"



Private zone between plinth and sidewalk



New urban housing with plinths in the Eastern Docklands Amsterdam



Van Baerlestraat: 19th century street with shops

pleasant entrances and ground floors. In suburbia is more need for private enjoyment, but in urban areas you should make good streets. And good streets have a well designed street profile (the ratio between street width and building height), including trees.

The plinth is important for the street as are the upper floors: the whole façade of the building contributes to the vibrancy of a street. The 19th century belt around the Amsterdam innercity is a good example, but should not be romanticized. In the years after construction these neighbourhoods were often overcrowded and had a different use. Due to the growth of the city, these neighbourhoods are no longer peripheral but central located in the city. Thus I plea to build generic buildings and plinths that can absorb many functions: not form follows function, but flexibility for different use.

The plinth design is an architectural challenge: the height of the floor, the size and position of the windows and the entrance, and also the elevation of the ground floor is important. When the ground floor is slightly elevated above street level, the privacy of the habitants is secured. Seated inside, they have the same perspective and eye level as a passer-by. To design this well is difficult, because a house is built by a developer and the street is laid out by the municipality. As a designer you have to think of creative solutions, because the rules of the Dutch *Bouwbesluit* (building act) are adapted for houses in suburbia but are too oppressive for high density districts.

The height of the ground floor is important to have enough sunlight inside as well for the flexibility for non-residential functions. Also for the street profile, the measure of the plinth is important: high ground floors give atmosphere. The height of the plinth is also a reflection of the city: in a chic city like Milan you have a plinth of up to 6 meters high, which fits the grandeur of the buildings and streets. In the small historic city of Delft the plinth height is related to the cosy size of the canals and buildings. It is not the absolute size that matters, but the proportions of the building and it's façade related to the profile of street.



Wibautstraat: shops and coffee bars at the street corner



Specialized and small scale shops, such as a bakery



## **NON-RESIDENTIAL PLINTHS**

Most liveliness comes from the plinths with a special function such as a shop, office or other type of program other than living. Many urban neighbourhoods have these functions, often situated at a street corner or concentrated in the main street. Sometimes these streets are transformed in an extremity where the street is completely determined by shops and shopping, such as the Kalverstraat: vibrant but too crowded during the day, deserted in the evening. Success leads to monoculture and then the street becomes vulnerable.

There are several trends that affect the non-residential functions of a plinth. Nowadays our food is mainly distributed and sold in supermarkets instead of the small-scale neighbourhood shops. Supermarkets are closed boxes with an entrance of 6 meters wide, but with a depressing façade for the remaining. The supermarket is a necessity for a residential district, so it's a challenge to fit in the urban block. Either on the ground floor with supporting shops around them, underground such as the supermarket on the Museumplein, or on the first floor as has recently been done in Amsterdam-Zuidoost.

Nowadays Amsterdam has many single households, who are biking to their favourite shops in different parts of the city to buy food specialities. For large and heavy groceries they make use of the internet-supermarket with home delivery service. This will lead to a diversification of supply in the cities: the bulk order over the Internet and via the supermarket delivered to your door, and the personal shopping in the small shops: the Turkish bakery, Italian caterers, etc. These shops go back to the size and scale of the 19th century city, a size that people recognize and appreciate. The owners of these shops are independent entrepreneurs, not part of big organisations like supermarket chains. The kind of city we are talking about is probably not generic. It is attractive for those who want to be as independent and self-supporting as possible. The city of Amsterdam cherishes this niche of society.

# EMBEDDING BUILDINGS

Marlies Rohmer (architect)

## THE BUILDING IN THE CITY

The plinth is one way to embed a building in the city, to ensure that it is part of the street. It's the point of exchange between architecture and city, between private and public. In our architecture we emphasize this and encourage this interaction and flow between the inside and outside and the connection between city and building. However, there are other ways to embed buildings in the city- the plinth is only one.

First, the urban situation determines how the building can be embedded in its surroundings. The building's position in the street is important, as is the width of the sidewalk and the orientation to the sun: a location on the sunny side of the street provides different uses than the shadow side. The presence of a courtyard or garden and whether its public, communal or private also determines the interaction between building and city. In addition, the solution in urban projects for car parking, - inside, outside or underneath the building - , influences the liveliness of the ground floor and adjacent sidewalk.

Second, it's about creating places: spaces for encounters on the boundary between public and private. The old Dutch 'stoep' (doorstep), as seen along the streets and canals of historic Dutch inner cities, is the best example of this. The entrances of buildings can create an inviting gesture towards the city. Involving the public space in the architectural designs creates a place that provides encounters between its users. In the student complex in Utrecht the building overhang forms a covered waiting and meeting place,



Student Complex 'Smarties', Uithof Utrecht



Window benches, community school Houhavens Amsterdam

which is accentuated by a large swing. By design the building gives a space back to the city. Also at primary schools, playing areas can be designed as neighbourhood square, even with fences around it. If not too high and well designed, they even can generate intensive use as a safe playground for local residents.

**LAYERING BETWEEN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE**

It's not only these larger spaces that are important to embed a building in the city; it is also about smaller places that form the layers between city and building. This layering creates a passage between public and private:



## **BORNEO-ISLAND, AMSTERDAM (1997-2000)**

On Borneo-island in the Eastern Docks area of Amsterdam, Marlies Rohmer Architects designed a compact block which encloses two collective courtyards. The inner ring of dwellings, lining the courtyards, consist of studio apartments resting on an underground car park. The outer ring contains maisonettes with kitchen-dining rooms at street level and 'barn doors' which can be opened in a variety of ways, so establishing a relation between the dwelling and the wide public footpath. This should result in a lively street atmosphere. Part of the pavement is personified by the residents as an extension of the living room.



## **TRANSVAALBUURT, THE HAGUE (2000-2005)**

The Transvaal neighbourhood is a typical working-class district that has impoverished in recent decades. Many residents have moved away to new housing projects development, leaving a preponderance of low-income families. With the redevelopment of the district, it has become attractive again to a broad group of city dwellers. The plan comprises several different types, including both rental sector and owner-occupied sector units. The recessed entrances to the housing blocks create a transition between the private and public domains, thereby enhancing liveliness and public safety in the street. The housing blocks look like a single entity, but our use of architectural details such as alcoves and brickwork relief (following the example of the existing blocks) preserves the visual rhythm of the individual dwellings.



## **COMMUNITY SCHOOL "HET MEERVOUD", AMSTERDAM (2009-2013)**

The August Allebéplein is situated in Slotervaart, a neighbourhood consisting of post-war housing development in a modernist designed urban plan. The urban renewal of this whole area is in full progress. One of the projects on the August Allebéplein is "Het Meervoud", a facility for primary education. "Het Meervoud" conforms to the orthogonal plot pattern of August Allebéplein. The schools play grounds surround the building. Entrances, bench seats and plant containers visually embed the building to its surroundings.

not only in the façade but also in the design of the street, the sidewalk, a hybrid zone, and the entrance of the building. It may be a small detail such as a bench under the window, or small stepping stones to the front door. In our projects at Borneo-island in Amsterdam and the Transvaal-neighbourhood in The Hague, the layering is designed to involve the residents into the street. A kind of “veranda feeling” in front of the house (a recessed hybrid zone) strengthens the social climate: it provides an opportunity for spontaneous interaction without compromising privacy. For children the sidewalk is thus an ideal playground because control / surveillance is naturally present here, as already was noted by Jane Jacobs - the guru of the *sidewalk ballet*. Intensively used sidewalks generate social control on which parents can trust and children can benefit by. The street forms a village within the city, where everybody knows and meets each other.

A well-designed ground floor is essential to embed a building within the city. In housing projects, a common mistake is the use of too much glass on the ground floor. Transparency is required if in every program brief, but in practice all large glass surfaces are closed by curtains due to privacy reasons. The result is a closed façade, instead of a transparent façade. Windows must therefore be tailored to the use and the spaces inside and the width and height of the hybrid zone between the building and sidewalk. A solution can be to elevate the ground floor slightly above the street level by 2 or 3 steps, causing a small difference in elevation and hence privacy.

## **“WHAT HAPPENED TO...”**

In the last years our architectural firm conducted a research into the use and perception of our realized architectural projects from the last 25 years: “What happened to...”. We talked to the current residents and users in order to mirror the ideals, dreams and knowledge with which we designed these buildings, to the actual practice today. This performance strongly depends on the target group of the project. The social status and culture of the residents is decisive whether they have an introvert or extrovert attitude, and how they want to use the transition zone to the street. In some projects (such as Borneo-Island) even the public area is appropriated by the residents, extrovert urbanites who are outside a lot and have lots of contacts with their neighbours. In other projects (such as the Transvaalbuurt) the residents are more to themselves and opt for more privacy, so the transition zone to the street is less used. The plinth and the passage from inside the home to street is thus a physical design solution, but the actual use and function is determined by the successive generations of residents.

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# THE CITIES OF THE FUTURE ARE BICYCLE-FRIENDLY CITIES

Meredith Glaser & Mikael Colville-Andersen  
(mobility experts)

## **A PARADIGM SHIFT**

For 7,000 years, since the first cities were formed, streets had a very distinct role. People gathered in them, transported themselves, and sold their goods. Children gathered and played in the streets (yes, *in* the streets). Streets were an extension of our homes and our living rooms. They were public domain and probably the most democratic spaces in the history of humankind.

Then a massive paradigm shift altered our perception of streets. The car. In the rapid urbanisation of the late 1800s and early 1900s engineers were the urban heroes of the day, tackling all the urban challenges thrown at them. When the automobile became more widespread in the early 1900s, people were still accustomed to using the streets as their domain. Collisions became commonplace, people (including children) were dying and nobody had a solution to the accelerating traffic safety problem. Almost in desperation, engineers were handed the job, in collaboration with the automobile industry who eyed an opportunity. Nearly overnight, streets become regarded as public utilities, like electricity or sewage. They were puzzles to be solved with mathematical equations. Citizens were herded into new concepts called sidewalks and crosswalks and children into fenced-in playgrounds. Finally, the streets were clear for cars.

After about 100 years of traffic engineering, where science was applied to social planning and human streets for the first time in 7,000 years, no one has figured out how to ease traffic congestion or reduce deaths and injuries. Sure, there is

more technology for gathering and analysing data, but the mind-set hasn't evolved. We're living in cities controlled by bizarre, often out-dated mathematical models and equations, impact assessments, cost-benefit analyses. In many cities around the world adding a separated cycle track, widening a sidewalk, or implementing traffic calming measures takes years of planning – because it doesn't fit into some computer-generated mathematical model down in the engineering department.

Urbanization is on the rise, now more than ever. Traffic congestion is (still) plaguing our cities, wasting people's time, money, energy, and lives. We need new solutions in a hurry.

## MODERN MOBILITY SOLUTIONS

The bicycle makes sense in cities. It's an affordable, efficient method of transportation. It's green, it's healthy – but those are tag-along benefits and miss the point. People want to get from A to B in the quickest way possible. In cycling cities like Copenhagen and Amsterdam, that means riding a bicycle. Investment in bicycle infrastructure is a modern and intelligent move for a city to make. Studies from Denmark tell us that for every kilometre cycled, society enjoys a net profit of 23 cents. For every kilometre driven by car we suffer a net loss of 16 cents. Our cities need modern mobility solutions and the bicycle proves time and again that it can offer results.

## IN THE EYE OF THE USER

One key to modernising our cities is good design. We all have a relationship with design and, on some level, we're all designers. A good designer places herself in the mind of the *user* of the product: the human being at the other end of the design process. Designers think about functionality, useability, and user-friendliness. Designing a city for pedestrians or cyclists – or any aspect of a liveable city – should be like designing for any other product on the market. It should be like designing a chair. Is it easy and intuitive to use it and sit down? Imagine if riding a bicycle or walking in a city was that easy and intuitive.

Planning for a cycling city naturally needs the right mix of infrastructure, communication, public transport, and policies that support and get its citizens on bicycles. Urban design also has a prominent role in creating an attractive, "life-size" urban environment for people to *want* to cycle, to get out of their cars, to change their behaviour. An attractive and alluring city at



The Amsterdam minivan



Cycling is social in Amsterdam





Copenhagen morning rush hour

eye level will make that lifestyle change easy and logical. With an effective design process, bicycle infrastructure seduces people to use it. Make the bicycle the quickest and easiest (and irresistible) method from A to B and people will ride.

Engineering has very small role in something as organic and human as urban streets. The foundations of the good cities of the future must be built on human observation – anthropology and sociology – and design. (And we can't forget to listen carefully to the thoughts and observations of the leading minds in the field.) It's the people in a city who define it. We should be studying their behaviour, their patterns and movements, desires and needs, in order to understand how to better develop our cities, how to create streets more accessible to more citizens.

## **MONUMENTS FOR THE FUTURE**

What we're left with is this: changing the perception of citizens. The perception of how people can transport themselves around cities. How do we do this? We don't do it by telling people to ride a bike or save the planet. That fails. It encourages subgroups and eventually just pits people against cars, bikes against cars, and people against people. Campaigns should focus on citizen cycling, like the city of Munich has done so well, rather than the promotion of green, healthy lifestyles. Safety and helmet use should not be on the agenda. We know too well that the helmet campaign in

Copenhagen caused a sudden and major decrease in cycling.

Telling people what to do often overcomplicates the issue and results in changing perceptions for the worst. We don't need to overcomplicate things—cycling is and has been a very normal activity for regular citizens for decades.

What we have to do is *show* people. We have to design and build infrastructure that are proven to work and can be used year-round. They have to be simple, efficient, and intuitive. They have to target the 99%, not the few in Lycra steaming ahead with their fancy bikes. Prioritising policies for mass public transit will show people. Narrowing car lanes to make room for other sorts of transport will show people. Lowering speed limits and implementing traffic calming measures will show people. Putting in place effective bike share systems will show people. Pilot projects are a great way to experiment, to see if an idea works. Then make it permanent.



Year-round bicycle infrastructure

This is not all about bicycle infrastructure, pedestrian facilities, traffic calming, urban design. This is about erecting monuments. Monuments that we the people design and erect to create liveable cities. These are monuments to the past, present and the all important future. Monuments that make cities better. We are the architects and the designers. These are our cities. It's time to change the question from "How many cars can we move down a street?" to "How many *people* can we move down a street?" The answer to the latter becomes much more modern and visionary. And simple. Oh, and cheaper.

# STREET PERFORMING: LOW COST, HIGH IMPACT

Vivian Doumpa & Nick Broad  
(advocates and researchers)

Buskers (a.k.a. “street performers”) are a viable tool for rejuvenating public spaces. If done well, busking is a high-impact, low-cost option. No infrastructure is needed, no barriers, no ticket sales, no marketing, no strategy sessions; just an artist, who doesn’t need a salary, performing for tips. And they can start tomorrow. Buskers prompt social interaction on the street level, create intimacy and allow people feel comfortable and safe. They also provide one of the few forms of live entertainment that low-income citizens can access and enjoy.

And yet, busking is at risk of being licensed out of existence, with permit systems, auditions, fees, written application processes, equipment bans, scheduling and branding making the spontaneous, surprising art in public spaces a thing of the past. Some cities have banned busking altogether, some don’t have any regulations at all, and yet others actively celebrate and support street performers. The management of general public space depends on each city’s prevailing attitude towards social inclusion, freedom of speech, accessibility and sense of comfort.

Busking can work really well, even with regulation. For example, Glasgow’s Buchanan Street is one of the most successful commercial pedestrian axes in the UK. Buskers are considered an essential part of the experience and identity of the street. The local policy-makers do not interfere as the street continues to be

a welcoming place. The community is allowed to self-regulate.

Melbourne has introduced auditions for busking acts that might be considered “dangerous” (swords, fire, etc), but the judging process is in the hands of other buskers. In that way, Melbourne authorities have allowed the street performers to self-regulate, despite their safety fears.

In Singapore, because of the great amount of buskers wishing to perform, the City established an auditioning process, similar to a talent show. The National Arts Council and the local performers run the process together. In practice, though, many street performers do not bother with getting a license; as long as nobody complains, the police don't bother them.

## SUGGESTIONS FOR STREET PERFORMANCE POLICIES

Dialogue and interaction between buskers and policy makers will work best if busking is approached as an asset to be encouraged rather than a problem to be solved. To get the best busking talent, cities must make the best buskers want to work there.

To achieve this, busking polices and guidelines should be developed in cooperation with the city's busking community. Properly implemented, a best practices guide for busking can be hugely rewarding for all concerned. Astute authorities will leverage their cities' reputation as busking hotspots in order to boost their cultural capital.

A common complaint is that failing city centres are moribund while commercially successful ones are becoming homogenised. A vivid street-performing scene can draw people into city centres and encourage them to spend time there. A lively scene can demonstrate the culture or character of that city and differentiate it from its competitors.



Jerzy, Vienna

## A STARTERS GUIDE TO ENCOURAGING BUSKING IN YOUR CITY

- Auditions ensure that artists meet a basic standard.
- With auditions, anyone can apply at any time, via video or in person.
- Pitches already being successfully used by buskers should be left alone.
- Not all the best pitches are licensed.
- The licence recognises the difference between different types of act (circus, music etc).
- There are no limits on the number of permits given out every year.
- The program is promoted annually at a large media event.
- Scheduling systems must be intelligent, accessible by phone and open 24 hours.
- Anyone can perform without a licence on licensed pitches, if they are free/available.
- A dedicated official must be appointed in case of questions, disputes or complaints.
- A website individually promotes the buskers involved in the program.
- The city visibly encourages and supports the artists on a day-to-day basis.



Mark Rothman, Covent Garden, London

## **A PERMIT SYSTEM**

Freedom of expression is an inalienable right; permission should always be granted and permits should never be mandatory. Instead, if restrictions on busking exist through a licensing system, it must offer significant benefits in return. It must be desirable.

The license should be seen as a reward for buskers who are trying to make the city a better place to live or visit. As such, the punishment for breaking the rules is having the license revoked. Threatening fines, confiscation of equipment or arrests will not foster a sense of inclusion.

If there are buskers who continually refuse to adhere to the rules, let local buskers in the area know that if that performer does not stop, the rules may have to change, and ask them to sort it out among themselves.

Administered properly and supported by a busking community that feels valued, a good license system offers tremendous potential benefits to residents, tourists, artists and businesses alike. Busker-friendly cities attract the world's best artists who can help create lively, vibrant public spaces, allowing cities to draw on the energy of busking and greatly enhance their city brand.

*For support or to find out more about what buskers can offer, visit [buskr.com](http://buskr.com).*

# SPONTANEOUS STREET LIFE IN ROCINHA

Renee Nycolaas & Marat Troina  
(researchers and urban planners)

Since the 1940's, the city of Rio de Janeiro has become known worldwide as the 'Marvellous City', when the carnival's song with the same name was released. The music about 'that place that would seduce everybody' did not only refer to the beaches and mountains, but also to the street life. In those times, urban life took place by foot or tram in streets with hierarchically distributed commercial activities, generating unexpected meetings of people. Rio's lively streets made Brazil's capital so charming.

In the 1960's, the city changed direction. Rio de Janeiro lost its capital city status to Brasilia, resulting in a great loss of jobs and public income. In the same period, large scaled eastwards urban expansion was implemented, based on the modernist and car-oriented urban plan of Lúcio Costa. Public investments were allocated to the construction of this new Rio de Janeiro, contributing to the decline of the older parts of the city.

The model of the car-oriented city, structured by private residential condominiums and shopping centres became hegemonic. Streets were not appropriated by pedestrians anymore, but objects of observation from cars and packed buses. Violence and fear added to their degradation. The mono-functional, privatised and car-based model is even expressed in the recent social housing programme, resulting in 65,000 dwellings in Rio de Janeiro. Gated community complexes of 500 units were built in isolated areas, far from neighbourhood centres and the city centre.

While street life in the planned city is losing its vitality, Rocinha represents the opposite direction.



Rocinha & Sao Conrado

## ROCINHA

Rocinha, originating in 1929, is one of the biggest and most well known favelas of Brazil and Latin America. Informal occupations by the low-income, working class quickly transformed the former rural area into a dense urban core on a steep hill. Today, more than 100,000 inhabitants form a city within the city of Rio. The subdivision of the original large plots into very small parcels led to an entanglement of the few original roads, small alleys, and stairs connecting buildings of, on average, three floors. With Rio's expansions, the area became centrally located and well-connected.

As most informal slum areas, Rocinha started as a free zone for survivors; residents are usually migrants willing to make their living in the city, but with no chance to enter the formal housing market. The illegal occupation resulted in a



Carnival

segregated, extremely dense area. Adequate sanitation and other public services are non-existent. The lack of an efficient sewer system and the garbage on the streets lead to illness and poverty runs rampant. At the same time, Rocinha's street life is expressive, fun and warm. The vitality in Rocinha's self-constructed, self-governed streets—often idealized in urban planning theory—is born out of necessity. Without disregarding the critical living situation, we see that the social fabric comes for a great part from the self-organisation and the lack of a planned modern urban environment.

## **LIFE ON THE STEEP ROCINHA STREETS**

With at least 700 inhabitants per hectare, a very rough estimation, Rocinha is extremely densely occupied and no formal rules limit habitation. Residents of slums build principally for their own, particular use. Over time, as families and wealth change and grow, the houses evolve in size and quality. The possibilities and personal taste of the residents, rather than any public regulation, determine the appearance of the houses. Over the decades, Rocinha became a varied neighbourhood. The naturally hilly configuration of the area adds to the human scale typology. The few central streets wind through the area, ensuring constantly changing perspectives. Open space is scarce and lays principally on the few central roads that date from the original larger parcelling. The streets function as connecting veins, interlinked by hundreds of narrow footpaths. It is in this messy complex of connections where public life comes together.

Cliché but true; Brazilian culture is happy, existing by virtue of multicultural artistic expressions, music, dance, jokes and spontaneity. Meetings on street corners, children playing on the street and parties with music on the squares are all ubiquitous. That is life in Rocinha. People hardly have private space and share the little amount public space available.

Another socio-economic problem that bears an advantage: because of the spatial infrastructural impossibilities for car use and the low incomes of residents, few people drive a car. Most people walk or take buses, vans or motor taxis.

The intense and diverse commercial and cultural activities follow the economic logic of meeting local demands. In less than one kilometre, you can do your shopping, fix a motorcycle, find a barbershop, buy food, pick up a video movie, and go to the church or the gym. None of these establishments exceed 8 meters of street façade, some have only 1 meter. Commerce and services are mixed with housing, which primarily occupies floors above the street level. Around 6 o'clock in the afternoon, the neighbourhood looks like a shopping mall corridor on the days before Christmas. It's on the street that old friends meet and the community issues are discussed.

Rocinha, like the thousands of other slum areas throughout the world, reveals miserable, inhumane conditions, including poverty, crime and filth at the one hand, and urban vitality among the people and in the streets on the other. It is a vitality not replicable with today's Brazilian urban planning





Street in Rocinha

models. This vitality originated from a necessity for social life and a lack of personal space. But is the result a compact city, or overcrowding? Does Rocinha show mixed use, or complete chaos? Can we speak of strong social relations or forced cooperation? The indicators balance on a very thin line.

We can learn lessons from this informal, self-organised city. Considering urban design, Rocinha confirms how a human scale, variety, high density, flexibility and little car use contribute to a pleasant space. Considering its organisation, it also shows we can trust that people, in tight circumstances, are able to organize themselves. With little regulation, they have the freedom to organize social and practical meetings, to create shops based on demand, and to form ad-hoc samba groups. We also learn about community identity and solidarity; a place where neighbours take care of each other reciprocally. Once we gain this trust, a next step is creating circumstances (budget, space, freedom and an overall urban framework) for collective projects, both social and physical. Creating a framework for self-organisation should not just be a fashionable concept, but an imbedded planning strategy.

# RECLAIMING MUMBAI

Mishkat Ahmed-Raja (urban designer)

“Chaotic” is the term that best describes Indian cities, and the chaos is generated by the many activities defining the streetscape. This is particularly evident in a megacity like Mumbai, the commercial capital of India, with growing infrastructure development to cater to its ever-increasing population. The classic Indian street is inherently a place where people meet each other, congregate, do business and celebrate. The street today is multi-layered – the (shrinking) pedestrian realm, the vehicular lanes, the bridges, metro, and monorail above. A lively streetscape with multiple activities that change over time and season, provides a great human experience and the essential “eyes on the street”, ensuring safety and security of all users. But what is the future of Indian streets?

## **THE TYPICAL INDIAN STREET**

Since India is a secular republic, the largest democracy in the world, religious diversity and religious tolerance are both established in the country by custom and law. Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Zoroastrians, Jains, Buddhists, Sikhs and people of many more faiths live in harmony in this country. Each religion has its distinct festival where the community comes out into the streets to celebrate. Some events transcend the boundaries of religion and faith such as weddings, birthdays, national day, public concerts and shows.

For all these events, the street in India becomes a showcase – for example, the famous Ganesh festival procession with idols of all forms and sizes,



the 'baraat' or wedding procession of the bridegroom's family with music and splendour as they approach the bride's home, or even the recent candle-lit protests held for women's rights. The street is the universal element that binds people from different neighbourhoods (each neighbourhood is often characterized by people from the same ethnic or religious belief) and is truly public in nature.

Streets are also used for all types of business. Informal markets thrive on public streets. An old tree, a wall, or a bus shelter can be used to hold up the temporary frame of these road-side stalls. Such markets provide cheap buying options to the large lower middle-class population. At the end of the day, they are dismantled, packed and carried away. Local stores on the ground level of a residential or commercial building selling household goods, clothes, food and other knick-knacks make up another business layer.



## THE NEW INDIAN STREET

Today, cars, parking lots, and single-use developments are gradually taking over the public realm, as is a common phenomenon in developing countries. Until the 1990s, when the Indian market liberalized and allowed products from all across the world to be sold in the country, the car was a 'luxury' item. Today, a car is a necessity in every family to reach one's workplace or to run daily errands. The increase in air and noise pollution, the over-burdened public transport system, and the hot tropical climate make travel difficult. Mumbai has seen a 55% increase its vehicular population in recent years and in 2013-14 alone, 50,000 cars and 94,000 two-wheelers were added to the streets.

Since vehicles have increased while road width has remained the same, traffic woes and congestion are very common. There are several state and central policies facilitating the construction of new wider roads, highways, bridges aiming to reduce congestion and create an image of a rapidly developing country. The government is taking some steps to revitalise the public edge by encouraging sustainable transport systems to reduce car dependency and focus on human health by making way for the pedestrian and the bicyclist. However, in this development spree, the cultural and social context has been entirely ignored.

Pressure on land is leading to the construction of high-rise apartment buildings, and the community space that was once used for religious and family or neighbourhood festivities in the form of internal courtyards and neighbourhood *maidans* (multi-use open space) has become extinct. Malls are the new congregation spaces, lined with stores and activities, in a climate-controlled environment, their atriums a modern version of *maidans*. Moreover, the sudden increase of gated communities has made 'islands' within the city; tall walls closing off the streets from the inside. Travelling by personal vehicle to run daily errands is the best option since most communities are disconnected from public transit. Very few promote a live-work-play, mixed-use model and are mainly residential enclaves. Although these private communities offer an environment conducive for walking and playing within their boundaries, these same amenities are being forgotten in the public realm. The Government bodies must address these issues at a city level, since they are integral to the creation of a holistic urban experience.

### **A PLEA FOR “EQUAL STREETS”**

The “Equal Streets” initiative began in November 2014 in Mumbai, along a busy shopping street in Bandra. Barricades create one oversized pedestrian-only street from 6.30am to 11am on Sundays, emphasizing the idea of 'shared streets'. It was overwhelming to see the immense amount of people taking their morning walk, along with mothers strolling with their babies, children skateboarding and cycling, a group of musicians humming in the background. For those few hours, people walked carelessly along the street, and the air was a little less polluted.

Initiatives such as “Equal Streets” are only one small step towards larger decisions that must be taken at State and National levels to frame policies that will conserve the idea and traditions of the Indian street. Streets in India inherently have the liveliness and multiplicity, much desired qualities for placemaking. It may be a product of the cultural diversity, the high population density or the social values, but it is critical to maintain that essence and prevent the destruction of the only remaining public place.

# PEDESTRIANISATION OF MAMA NGINA STREET

Elijah Agevi, Cecilia Andersson & Laura Petrella

## A VISION FOR NAIROBI

Nairobi, the capital city of Kenya, with a population of about 3.36 million, is one of the most prominent cities in Africa, both politically and financially. Home to thousands of Kenyan businesses and over 100 major international companies and organisations, including the headquarters for two UN global agencies and several regional ones, Nairobi is an established hub for business and culture.



In the 1990's and early 2000's, Nairobi was grappling with rising crime and violence and the central business district vacated in the evenings. In 2001, a victimization survey conducted in the city centre showed that 37% of Nairobi citizens had been victims of a robbery in the 12 months preceding the survey. Of all Nairobi residents, 54% felt unsafe during the day and 94% during the evening in the City Centre. Moreover, 72% of all residents avoid travelling and working after dark. Former Deputy Mayor of Nairobi, Joe Aketch, was adamant to turn the city around and create a 24-hour economic hub, envisioned in the Vision 2030.



## IMPROVING WALKABILITY WITH A PILOT

A women's safety audit walk was conducted in the central business district after dark with the participation of Deputy Mayor, the Minister of Local Government, the Head of City Planning, the Head of the City Environment Department and a few other key stakeholders. The safety audit walk was an eye-opener for decision makers. The stakeholders observed that many streets were in complete darkness and that the businesses along the most vibrant streets were closed; metal curtains blocked all lighting onto the streets. The restaurants and cafés were closed to the street and were only inhabited by security guards and homeless families.

As a pilot, the City decided to pedestrianize one of the busiest streets with a movie theatre, a bookstore, shops and cafés: Mama Ngina Street. The City Council began the discussion with the local business community who were vehemently against the pedestrianisation, arguing that their clientele required car parking just outside of the establishment they were visiting.

The intense discussion between the City Council and the business community ended in a compromise. Together, they decided that instead of a full-scale pedestrianisation along Mama Ngina Street, it would be converted into a one-way street for cars and the sidewalks on both sides would be expanded. These changes would allow for more flow and ease of movement. Additionally, benches were placed at regular intervals in shaded areas, allowing people to sit and enjoy the street. The street lighting was also enhanced, to create more security and a better perception of safety while using the place at night.

Another proposal was to offer more space to the cafés, allowing customers to spill over onto the sidewalk, in hopes of creating more eyes on the street and making passers-by feel safer in the evenings. Unfortunately, the city by-laws—dating back to the 1950's and 1960's—did not allow for this. Many of the old colonial by-laws are still in effect today, and many effectively hinder uses of public space. The Council has started a process of reviewing the out-dated by-laws but has not yet approved any changes.





## **A STREET FOR DAILY GATHERING**

Despite setbacks with the by-laws, Mama Ngina Street has become a pleasant and well-utilized public space in the city. Several new bars have opened, enhancing the evening program on the street, and the street vitality has drastically improved. The changes in traffic flow and sidewalk space, plus lighting and street furniture, has resulted in a very vibrant area of the central business district. More people meet, sit, and enjoy the street. Now it's common to see people congregate in one of the corners to discuss various happenings and current affairs, particularly socio-political issues.

## **LESSONS FROM MAMA NGINA**

With limited financial resources from city, the physical changes to the street have created a very vibrant street where the citizens of Nairobi can enjoy the central business district both day and night. A next step for this project is perhaps to temporarily pedestrianise certain streets in the business district, as a way to promote the initiative to the business community.

Pragmatic partnership between the local business community and City or County Government was key to the successful win-win implementation of this initiative. It is important for local parties to have “ammunition” (like research-based evidence) available at their disposal to convince the business community on the benefits (and costs) of pedestrianizing streets in business districts. City by-laws and other regulations need to accommodate pedestrianisation of a central business district and, as in the case of Nairobi, this may entail reviewing and amending the by-laws in order to allow for change. The key is to have a high-level political champion within local government to drive the initiative and ensure that the important decision-makers are convinced and supportive.

# REVITALISATION OF OPEN SPACES IN KIRTIPUR

Cecilia Andersson

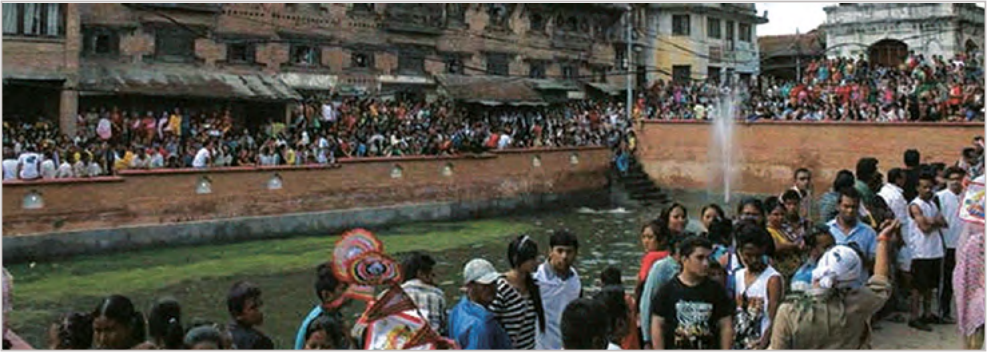
Open spaces have always formed an integral part of the settlement planning in the traditional settlements of Kathmandu Valley in Nepal. These have been inbuilt in the form of public and private courtyards, chowks, pati's and water ponds in the core settlement areas. The open spaces have been used not only for performing the personal daily activities but are also commonly used as an area for celebrations and festivals as well as other social events year round. Open spaces played a significant role in the traditional planning practices where housing was densely planned for security purposes and preserving the agricultural land, the basis of subsistence in the agriculture-based society. Thus open spaces have been and still are important elements in the traditional settlements of the Kathmandu Valley. Additionally, the open spaces were important from a disaster risk reduction point of view: the locals use them for shelter during earthquakes.



*Old situation Dey Pukhu area*

## **Challenge for revitalisation**

Now these open spaces are deteriorating and lack proper management. The influence of modern culture has brought considerable change in the usage pattern of public space. Activities that were once performed in public have been confined into the



New situation Dey Pukhu area

residences, with people focused on more individualistic activities than communal. The public spaces that in the past were well taken care off, have slowly started collapsing. Maintenance on a municipal level is ineffective and lacking. The public spaces are rapidly deteriorating and other uses (such as car parking) are encroaching on their space.

The solution is to revitalise Kirtipur through promoting a people-centric pond and public space improvement and establishing a management structure to maintain the public spaces. The project is tri-fold: to improve the traditional water management system, to conserve and enhance existing public spaces for the better utilisation by communities, and to build capacity of local community and local government in public space management.

### **Pilot project in the Dey Pukhu area**

One of the key open spaces in the historic core area of Kirtipur is the Bagh Bhairav temple and its surroundings. This area was chosen as the pilot project for demonstrating people-centric open space management. The traditional pond (Deupukhusi) and rest places (pati) are some of the significant traditional elements existing in the area.

The pond was in a neglected state, despite its sociocultural importance. The land where the rest places (pati) were located had been encroached for private car parking use. With joint efforts between the municipality and the local community, the rest places were returned into their original style and public use, during the renovation of the pond. The renovation aimed to create a more people-friendly space for social gatherings and interactions.

From November 2013 to March 2014, UN-Habitat, Mojang and the Centre for Integrated Urban Development (CIUD), the local implementing partner, worked together to conserve and enhance Dey Pukhu and the surrounding areas. Through community participation and stakeholder engagement, plans for up-grading

the public space were prepared. Since the Dey Pukhu public space project in Kirtipur has been completed, the municipality has been inspired to also embark on developing a Public Space Revitalisation Plan for the whole of Kirtipur. This plan includes an analysis of all the existing public and open spaces, strategies for their revitalisation, embracing a participatory design process and allocating resources from the municipal budget.

The experience from Dey Pukhu also inspired the same team to start a second project in Kirtipur together with the community. The site is a large green open space (park), which includes a school, a temple and important water points.

## **A PARTICIPATORY PROCESS**

The design phase of the project as well as the implementation was done in a participatory manner involving the different stakeholders associated with the area. The people-centred approach was at the core of the project and engaged the elderly, youth and women's group towards the design, implementation, and the management of open spaces. It also involved capacity building at the local community and municipality levels.

The construction work was carried out with the help of different stakeholders: implementation team, municipality and community representatives, and local workmanship. The coordination of different stakeholders provides for more sustainable and manageable future. Different trainings were organized in order to raise the awareness of the project. These trainings built local capacity in community-led planning and management, pond conservation, public space management, and sustainable urban drainage.

The general strategies adopted for the improvement of the open space included:

- Improvement of the physical environment (lighting, seating, etc.)
- Renovation of the courtyards in the vicinity
- Improving the linkages between the open space, streets, and squares
- Enforcement of rules and regulations on encroachment of public spaces
- Adding recreational activities for all age groups to make the space more lively



New situation Dey Pukhu area

- Setting up a framework for the maintenance of the pond walls, waterspouts, etc.

## **LESSONS**

The Pilot project at Dey Pukhu and the lessons learnt have been significant in giving direction to formulation of the revitalisation plan. Community consultations were an integral part of the design and implementation for the Dey Pukhu public space site, but also in the formulation of the plan.

Revitalisation of the traditional inner core was important to improve the image of city, enhance the quality of life, and boost the city at eye level. It is also being increasingly acknowledged that investing in public space brings measurable economic benefits by stimulating growth in visitor economy (tourism), raising property values, and increasing commerce for local business.

To improve the image of the city as a liveable, traditional and historic city, it is essential to create a network of quality streets and spaces for transformation. The revitalisation plan of Kirtipur aims at the development of the traditional city core in a holistic approach, making it more economically and environmentally sustainable by welcoming tourists, encouraging pedestrian routes and enhancing the use of the open space. Important aspects of the program are community planning, sustainability, local fundraising, program ownership, and the operation and maintenance. Overall the program is directed to create a vibrant, dynamic and inclusive city that encourages the use of its assets.

# MAKING ROOM FOR PEOPLE

## CASE STUDY VALENCIA STREET

San Francisco,  
United States of America



### INTERVIEW WITH

Kris Opbroek  
*project manager, Great Streets Program*

**“You have to take some  
chances, or things will stay  
the same forever.”**

### FACT 1

76 000 ft<sup>2</sup> of added sidewalk (7 060 m<sup>2</sup>)

### FACT 2

69 added bike racks

### FACT 3

\$ 6.1 million project costs

## TIMELINE

- 2005 Mayor Newsom passes the Livable Streets Initiative
  - Great Streets Program established
  - Complete Street Policy adopted
  - Better Streets Policy adopted
  - Discussions begin with MTA about traffic calming on Valencia Street and identification of the 4-block corridor as 1 of 7 of the priority corridors
- 2006 DPW & MTA form partnership for the Valencia Street transformation
  - Series of community meetings lead to nomination of 16-17<sup>th</sup> Street block as most important commercial, pedestrian, and cyclist connector
- 2007 Applied for two additional grants from Federal government, which brought the total project limits from 1 to 4 blocks
  - Extended project to include 15<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> Streets
- 2008 Secured all grants and other funds
  - Begin design process with multiple agencies, key stakeholders
- 2009 Begin construction
  - Project is partnered with concurrent paving projects as recommended by Complete Streets Policy
- 2010 City of San Francisco adopts Better Street Plan
  - Construction finished
- 2011 Landscape complete

## CONTEXT

Valencia Street is an active, highly populated corridor in the diverse “Mission” neighbourhood of San Francisco. Many shops, restaurants, and art galleries line the street and are heavily used by the residents and visitors. Cyclists frequently use Valencia Street and several bus routes traverse the corridor. One block away from the project site is a transit stop that serves the entire Bay Area region.

## PROBLEM

The 4-block corridor of Valencia Street had a history of conflicts between cyclists, autos, and pedestrians. It is a major cycling thoroughfare, a popular commercial area, and a hub for local and regional transit connections. Traffic moved too fast on the streets; buses blocked cars and cyclists. The sidewalks were overcrowded with people and parked bicycles. The ground level of the street was so congested, merchants had little opportunity to claim space for outside seating.

## SOLUTION

The bottom line was that cyclists and pedestrians needed more space and the cars needed to slow down. The Great Streets Program put together an interagency team of experts with their own program, MTA’s Parking and Traffic Department, and the Department of City Planning. Collectively, their goals prioritized safety for all users, increasing sidewalk space, improving bicycle lanes, and maintaining the diversity of the neighbourhood.

## SECRET

**Obtaining balance.** The interagency team worked very well together. They had the right people around the table whose skills and experience were balanced. The team saw the vision and felt optimistic about the results. Within the project itself, balancing the goals of the community with technical merit ensured its success. The community—including residents and merchant owners—wanted the neighbourhood to maintain its character and uniqueness while also supporting all modes of traffic, especially pedestrians. When the community had concerns over the corridor design models, the team had technical data to back up their rationale for the designs but was also flexible with community input.





## LESSONS

**Be flexible.** All involved parties allowed for plenty of discussion and cooperation, both from a departmental and individual standpoint, and everyone actually agreed on the design, traffic flow, and cross sections of the corridor.

When dealing with the community, wherever they could devise a back-up plan or alternative in case the resulting design failed, they did. This maintained their credibility with the community and created an atmosphere of ‘togetherness.’

**Be efficient.** The team made sure to meet goals of all current local policies: Livable Streets Initiative, Complete Streets Policy, Better Streets Policy and then Better Streets Plan. During construction and renovation phase, the Valencia project piggy-backed with another concurrent paving project, saving money on both sides.

**Don't be afraid to push the envelope.**

With the solid support of hard traffic data, the non-engineers were able to convince the engineers of new and bold design elements that added to the ground level's public realm. Everyone celebrates these details today.

## IMPACT

Not only is the street much more balanced (instead of a 70-30-ratio car space to pedestrian and cycling space, it's now 50-50), the street also represents a more pedestrian scale. With added lighting, street furniture, new trees, and artistic details on the cement, the physical space is a pleasure to walk and experience. As a pedestrian, you can see everything much better: you can see cyclists, people, and especially the store fronts much better. Because the sidewalk is much less cluttered, the merchants now have gained real estate with their plinths; outdoor seating permits have dramatically increased on the street and ‘parklets’ - small parks or table and chairs taking up two parking spaces - are becoming popular as well.

As a multidisciplinary team, the project impacted the way they thought about interagency collaboration. Everyone learned a lot throughout the process and everyone came out with a win. The experience was positive and their success will translate to future collaborations.

## DO

- seek new partners
- pair your project with concurrent projects
- create back-up plans

## IN CONCLUSION

Of course there were challenges from the start of the project. The corridor is extremely busy and the neighbourhood is diverse with people, land uses, and transportation needs. The community was very active in the design and comment processes. Despite the many challenges during the project—merchants upset during construction, technical issues underneath the street, and current maintenance challenges—the end result was a definite success. These four blocks of Valencia Street have been completely transformed into a pedestrian- and cyclist-friendly area. It's now a place where people are welcomed to linger and experience the community life.

Balance was an integral part of this ground floor transformation. The team balanced the needs of the community with their own expertise and experience with urban planning and traffic flow management. They also approached the design process with hard data to support their reasoning, but were flexible to the input of the community. Interagency collaboration was a success, and set a new bar for collaborative efforts in local and regional government.

# EMBRACE FLEXIBILITY

## CASE STUDY SLUSEHOLMEN NORD

Copenhagen,  
Denmark



### INTERVIEW WITH

Lars Korn

*architect/project manager, Center for  
Bydesign, municipality of Copenhagen*

**“Rules are important...but there  
must be exceptions!”**

### FACT 1

1300 new dwellings

### FACT 2

15% subsidized housing

### FACT 3

25 different architecture firms

## TIMELINE

- 1999 Started conversation for a mixed-use neighbourhood in the industrial harbour
- 1999 Cooperation between municipality (CPH) and harbour
  - Hired Dutch architecture firm, Sjoerd Soeters, to complete the masterplan for the whole area, including 9000 new dwellings and 20 000 new office jobs
  - 3 developers were chosen to complete the neighbourhood
- 2002 Plan for Sluseholmen Nord completed
- 2003 By-law established requiring ground level windows and transparency
  - Design Manual written and approved
  - Construction begins
- 2009 Project completed
  - 1300 dwellings (½ unsubsidized rental, ½ owned; 15% subsidized)
  - shops and 1 kindergarten added

## CONTEXT

Copenhagen is a dense and growing Scandinavian city with a demand for well-designed, environmentally friendly housing in close proximity to the city centre. The Sluseholmen industrial area in the south harbour of Copenhagen had been in decline and absent of commercial use for decades when the municipality and the harbour corporation started a dialogue about renewing the area in 1999. The partner organizations had a vision of creating a new, liveable, mixed-use neighbourhood on this prime waterfront real estate.

## PROBLEM

Several challenges arose from the beginning. The industrial land use of the site was toxic and needed major environmental mitigation before people could safely live there. Water systems were another major challenge to tackle. Another issue was how to construct an entirely new neighbourhood with

architecture and urban design that maintains diversity, exhibits progressive Danish design, and preserves the walking and cycling culture of the Danes.

## SOLUTION

With inspiration from Amsterdam's IJburg development, the redevelopment team created a mixed-use neighbourhood based on a canal system that forms eight small islands. Each block and home are different from one another, yet all together they form a cohesive collection—and of course each building group has their own protected courtyard, in true Danish style. About 25 Danish architecture firms contributed to the façade variety.

The ground level of the neighbourhood is already lively, and is outfitted for future flexibility. With the help of a project Design Manual and an urban design by-law, the plinths are required to have windows for transparency and every corner plinth is equipped with high ceilings and zoned as mixed-use—this way, each corner is or *could become* a small café or restaurant, or remain a dwelling or office space. In the end, the team created an urban design that demonstrates a close knit yet urban atmosphere, promotes social cohesiveness, yet also respects privacy and family values.

## SECRETS

**Exceptions to the rule.** In the case of the façades and architectural diversity, rules are important, but there must be exceptions. In order to create an effective ground floor and activity-producing urban design, the exceptions to the rules were very important. It was necessary to interpret the Design Manual “with a grain of salt” in order to balance the demands of the ground level and obtain the desired results.

**Plan for future change.** The design by-law was a success and the team of experts were proud of this achievement. The by-law has been helpful for establishing flexibility

in the land uses on the ground level. The corner spaces are fully prepared for legitimate cafés and restaurants, which allows businesses to easily open in those spaces and promotes active street life in future. For the moment, the shops and the restaurants are placed along the main street, aptly named “Sluseholmen.”

## LESSONS

**Cooperation and commitment.** From the beginning, the team of professionals—including the City, Harbour Corporation, developers, and architecture firm—all had a fairly good relationship but with different ideas and opinions on the priorities and goals of Sluseholmen, which created tension among the group. It took a concerted effort for all parties to be very clear about objectives from the start. In the early discussions, the team came together to write a statement to the municipalities stating their goals and objections. This process made it easier to find a common language and reach consensus. The Masterplan and Design Manual processes added to the team’s harmony. In the end, as Lars Korn described, “there were a lot of thank-you’s and good feelings.”

**Preserve traditions in new development.**

The Danish courtyard is a typical asset in any urban residential building. It can be easy to sidestep or want to change traditions for the sake of design or adventure, but this team knew from the get-go that the courtyard was staying. In this development, each courtyard is a special gathering place for the surrounding residents and families.

## IMPACT

At the moment, all of the residences in Sluseholmen are completely at capacity. Because of the unique canal and island system, each home has a view of either a canal or the harbour. Every aspect of the ground floor of the neighbourhood fits together seamlessly. The bridges

and waterways create a lively atmosphere and a distinct Copenhagen neighbourhood. The corners of the main streets are prepared for commercial/flex-space activity with accessible entrances, high ceilings, and optional housing above. The Design Manual gave developers and architects inspiration and in the end, the façades work very well together and contribute to a sense of variety.

## DO

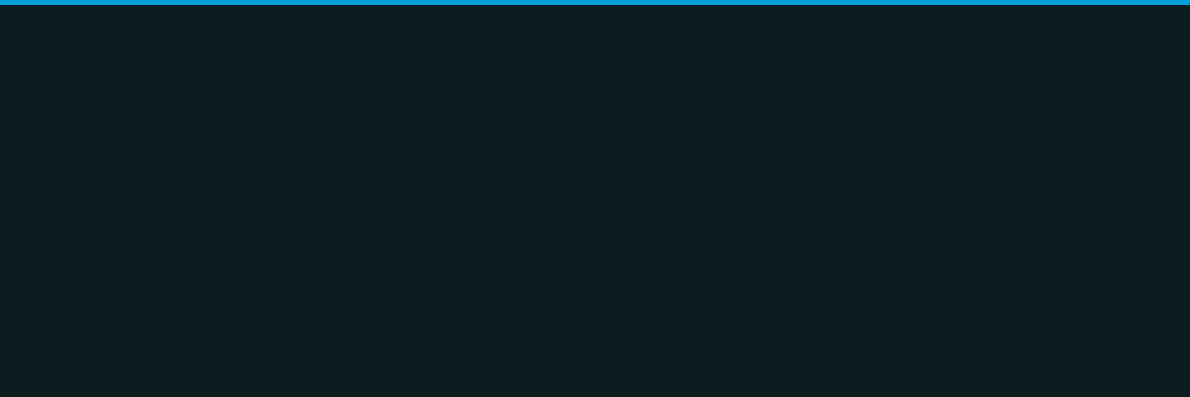
- develop flexible rules
- prevent group tension by setting objectives
- use historic traditions to your advantage

## IN CONCLUSION

Through enduring partnership and coordination this decade-long project was finally a success. By building consensus, writing a formal statement of project goals and objectives, and creating new devices the multiagency team tackled each challenge as it came. The site was properly mitigated of environmental damage. The canal system was soundly engineered and designed as the community’s principle gathering and interactive spaces. The Design Manual had a favourable outcome, though its interpretation still required flexibility especially to promote an active ground level and ensure a varied architectural identity.

From the beginning, the team’s goal was a desire for a high quality project and to grant a high quality of life to the future residents. A main component of this was a good and successful ground floor—canal side interaction with cafés and benches. This also meant passing the by-law, requiring windows and transparency of the main street plinths and flexible, mixed-use corner lots. Multiple strategies ensured both a successful project in the present and for the future.







# TAKING OWNERSHIP

# HYBRID ZONES MAKE STREETS PERSONAL

Sander van der Ham & Eric van Ulden  
(environmental psychologist and urban planner)

## NEW PERSPECTIVES ON THE HYBRID ZONE

The hybrid zone is probably one of the most visible and well-known spaces in the city yet also one of the most forgotten and undervalued spaces. A bench or pots, plants and other personal objects placed on what seems to be the sidewalk create a subtle transition zone, the hybrid zone. Most of the time you will only notice a sudden transition from public to private space — not maintained, not claimed, and not personalized. Yet the hybrid zone<sup>(1)</sup> plays an important role in establishing contact and interaction between city-residents and creating a friendly, welcoming, and attractive street environment.

The hybrid zone originates from a 15<sup>th</sup> century Dutch concept, the *Hollandse stoep* (“sidewalk”), as a response from residents to the increasing trade and traffic in their city. Traders made a small platform about 1.25 meters wide and elevated above street level, accessible by stairs with storage underneath for merchandise, to show their goods. In residential areas, the *Hollandse stoep* was an ornamental private sidewalk, creating distance



The Hollandse stoep on the painting “Mayor of Delft” by Jan Steen (1655)





from passing traffic, but also allocating a private space for social contact and observing public life. It created a very distinct space between public and private.

## **UNDERSTANDING THE HYBRID ZONE AS A PLACE**

Our multidisciplinary research team<sup>(2)</sup> set out to understand why hybrid zones are not consistently well-used and maintained. We conducted extensive research on how physical aspects of the hybrid zone impacts social behaviour. We analysed all 6231 streets of Rotterdam, the Netherlands, using Google Street View. Observations and measurements showed a well-used and maintained hybrid zone (measured by the amount of personal objects in the space) when the hybrid zone was between 1-2 meters wide. Neighbourhoods with more apartment buildings, rental homes, lower home values, and higher densities had fewer well-used hybrid zones.

Besides physical aspects of hybrid zones, social aspects are also apparent. Taking ownership or “claiming” the hybrid zone brings a certain flair to the street. It becomes personalized and it actually looks like it *belongs* to someone. This “belonging” impacts the immediate social atmosphere by enabling social identification. The hybrid zone, when claimed, allows people to judge, relate to, or identify with others. Passers-by and neighbours can speculate over this claimed space: Does this person have the same interests or same activities (is there a bench or children’s toys); do they like



the same music (based on sounds coming from the house); do they like the same kind of food (judged by smells)? Objects, behaviour, sounds and smells can all be reason to start a conversation, so that through the hybrid zone people can 'get to know' each other. This social identification works especially well for people living close by, such as neighbours in a street or people living in the same apartment building. A personalized space can give just enough information to initiate contact with a neighbour, which can prevent trouble caused by neighbours not knowing each other. In fact, about 80% of informal contacts between neighbourhood residents occurs in hybrid zones.<sup>(3)</sup> As expected, our research showed that people who have claimed their hybrid zone have more contact with neighbours while being in their hybrid zone. The hybrid zone contributes to public familiarity. More unexpected, the results showed that these people also make more appointments to get together with neighbours. The physical layout of the street does determine the amount and ease of social contact. In wide streets with broad views there generally is less social contact between neighbourhood residents.

## **FEELING AT HOME IN THE HYBRID ZONE**

Claiming and personalizing the hybrid zone is both practical and emotionally important. It's practical because people can sit in front of their homes, read the newspaper, drink a cup of coffee and watch



their kids play at the same time. It's an important part of city life advocates like Jane Jacobs pleaded for. But being able to sit outside in a personal space has emotional value as well. In our research, people mentioned that it extended their feelings of home when they sat outside, and made them feel safe on the street. People feeling 'at home' in their hybrid zone leads to feelings of responsibility for the space and what's around it.<sup>(4)</sup>

Claiming the hybrid zone also creates privacy, especially when the sidewalk borders the façade of a building. Usually residents complain that people walk too close to their homes and try to look through their windows. They respond by closing their curtains, sometimes all day and night. By taking ownership of the hybrid zone, they create a buffer between public and private. Plus, it gives people something pleasant to look at while passing by.

## **CLAIM YOUR HYBRID ZONE!**

The most stunning results of our research demonstrated that most residents don't claim their hybrid zones simply because they are unfamiliar with the rules and possibilities of the hybrid zone. Much can be done to support and promote better use of the hybrid zone. For example, municipalities and local community groups can inform residents the ways in which they can adopt and take care of their



part of the sidewalk. Not to fence off public life, but to extend home, experience more personalized space, and improve social contact.

Local government and developers also play an important role. They should make sure there is a place for people to naturally take ownership over. For example in existing situations where people are allowed to remove 1,5 tile of the sidewalk to make their own small garden. Also in new situations developers should reserve space where a well functioning hybrid zone can be created.

Although the hybrid zone here has mainly been described in the context of living areas, conclusions concerning ownership and the beautification of the sidewalk, also apply to shop-owners in shopping areas.

## NOTES

1. Machiel van Dorst, professor at the University of Delft, first mentioned the term hybrid zone.
2. Architect Daniel Heussen, urban planner Eric van Ulden, sociologist Gwen van Eijk, architectural historian Wijnand Galema and urban psychologist Sander van der Ham
3. Skjaeveland, O. & Gärling, T. (1997). Effects of Interactional Space on Neighbouring. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 17: pp. 181-198
4. Brown B. B. (1979). *Territoriality and residential burglary*. Paper presented at the meeting of the American Psychological Association, New York, NY.

# TURNING BUILDINGS INSIDE-OUT, OUTSIDE IN

an interview with John Worthington  
(architect and urbanist)

## **What are semi-public spaces?**

I think of 'public realm' as open 24-hours a day; space which is owned, governed and managed by the community. 'Semi-public space,' on the other hand, is generally located on the ground floor and available to the public at the owner's discretion; the space is owned and managed by the landlord. You can think of a department store—an original semi-public space. You only go in if you're interested to go in, but then you're not really required to purchase anything. Effective semi-public spaces are permeable with multiple entrances to allow through routes, which allow users to navigate the footprints of these often very large buildings.

## **Where is this movement coming from?**

If you draw the footprint of buildings today, they've gotten bigger and bigger, limiting pedestrian permeability and the connection between the building and the street life. Let's start with the European model of a city: 8-storey buildings with often a generous ground floor height and lower floors above. With these 8-storey buildings - I call them "ground-scrapers" - there is a sense of connection between the top and ground below: from that top floor you can recognise the features of someone's face, hear the noises, and see your neighbours across the way. Then we started to build the American dream:



King's Place, London (architect: Dixon Jones)

a tower or slab with a solid ground floor or plinth that comes to the edge of the street. Most often the tall element of the building is set back, retaining the sense of the city, street, and activity. Then came the even taller tower without the set-back and a huge plaza or parking forecourt that explicitly separates the street from the building. As buildings got bigger and bigger, more and more of the ground floor was taken up by service and security related to the building or companies within it. And with that came big blank walls. Today we're trying to get back to a direct connection between the building and life in the street.

### **What are the benefits of semi public spaces to the plinth?**

To me, the word *plinth* suggests that there's something inside and something above it. If cities are about activity and diversity, then great big blank walls hardly offer diversity or activity. Can we have a plinth without diversity and activity? Permeable and transparent semi-public space blurs the edges and creates borders not boundaries. Semi-public space gives reason to enter the plinth, interact with it, and give it activity and diversity. There's not a clear distinction between public and private city—which is good! The city blurs definitions of inside or out and activities flow across ownership boundaries.



King's Place, London (architect: Dixon Jones)

### **Why should buildings incorporate semi-public spaces?**

Work is not 9-to-5 anymore and there's just as much work going on outside the building as there is inside. The world of work is changing and we're starting to see the breakdown of barriers. We now see companies giving up some of their lavish service-oriented ground floors and let in a cafés, exhibition space and specialist merchandising both for the users of the buildings and those outside.

### **How do businesses benefit from semi-public spaces?**

I'd guess about a quarter or a third of the space businesses use nowadays is what I call "showcase space"—another form of semi-public space. As we move from a hard-product society to a soft-product, or knowledge-based society, we need places where we can both show off an ever more complicated product and how people use it. It's no longer a window with a poster—it's a space to support the knowledge product. It's a centre with necessary technology and room for people to communicate and exhibit their ideas. Showcase space shows off products and also opens the plinth. Companies recognise the opportunity of greater transparency and access to semi-public spaces, to represent their brand, and showcase their products and culture.



**What is the biggest challenge of semi-public spaces?**

Security is often thought of as a major issue. A strong tradition in central business district (CBD) centres is the presence of large institutions, like banks, and that they should look impenetrable, safe and secure. The model you can imagine is the great Italian commercial palace which is very much about displaying power and substantiality. These institutions demonstrated security through design—massive columns, grand entrances, windowless plinths. With semi-public space, security is not an issue because it's self-regulated. Instead of demonstrating security with a lavish foyer armed with guards, doormen, and cameras, these entrances strategically layer security by zoning space and discreet surveillance.

**Why aren't more buildings opening up their ground levels for semi-public space?**

Have we created sufficient expectation that it would be a good thing to do? Is the average person concerned about it? The answers to these questions are *probably not*. We know we have to use space more effectively; we know we have to intensify our use of urban land. The conversation has started, there are enough exemplars to show how places can be enhanced—change is afoot!

# THE NEVER-ENDING STORY OF STREET MANAGEMENT

a conversation with Nel de Jager (street manager)

In the historical centre of Amsterdam, the Haarlemmerstraat and Haarlemmerdijk are known as the “best shopping-street in the Netherlands” according to a national survey in 2012. The miscellaneous and original shops and pleasant plinth with shop windows define its attractiveness. The street also has a human scale by small-scale parcelling of buildings and the profile of the street. And most of the buildings are original with authentic plinths, details and layout.

Residents, tourists and day-trippers, and locals from the rest of the city frequent the street. The street is not overrun by tourists, as is the case elsewhere in the centre. There are several hotels and B&B's but they are small-scale, like the bars and restaurants which attract a specific kind of tourists and visitors. This mix of visitors comes for the specialized shops but also for the cinema and the restaurants. The success and attractiveness lies in a mix of supply, appearance and quality of the street. That this is not obvious depicts the story of the transformation of the street. Nel de Jager has since the late 1980s been involved in the changes of the street and tells about the approach.

## **THE NEED FOR A CHANGE**

The Haarlemmerstraat and -dijk were built early 17th century as part of the Canal district and Jordaan. The street was traditionally a shopping street, but reached a low point in the 1980s. In 1987 Nel de Jager went to work in the Haarlemmerbuurt district, and the street was totally

different than now. “I started there during the urban renewal as a volunteer in the workgroup Shop-management, because I felt that the neighbourhood a good vibe and had potential. But those were the bad years of the area: there were bricked houses and shops, coffee shops, junkies etc. There was also a lot of squatted building that all had a shop or cafe. Because of this the area had a very unique atmosphere.”

It was the time that the exodus from the city was high. Many people moved from the centre to the new housing areas out of the city, many urban neighbourhoods had vacancies in that time. During this period the railway through the Haarlemmerbuurt district also widened, so many houses in the area were demolished. That’s why part of the purchasing power was gone in the neighbourhood, which had an effect on the stores.

“I went to work with the entrepreneurs, because they also saw the degradation and were afraid that their property would soon be worth nothing. For those retailers the value of the store also was their old age provision. We started working to continue to attract customers, so we could keep the shop functions. “But at that moment there was little believe in preserving the shopping function - especially at the city departments. According to economic research at that time the shops had no right to exist, except maybe for a supermarket.”

Some of the buildings had already been purchased by the municipality - which had unclear plans for renovation or demolition: “Because the bricked buildings gave a feeling of discomfort, we then worked on temporary management of those properties: temporary businesses and shop windows. And local artists painted the really bad buildings in the streets, so the outside looked more appealing. “

“For the existing retail space but also the new premises on the ground floor of the buildings,





we then searched for new entrepreneurs: at the Institute of Small and Medium Businesses in Amsterdam I was involved in the movement of entrepreneurs in the urban renewal areas throughout the city. I came across nice companies and stores, which I approached with the question whether they would move to the Haarlemmerbuurt district. By convincing them of the future of the neighbourhood and the street but also with funding and low rents, we pulled those shops to our street. “

## **THE TURNING POINT: THE REDISCOVERY OF URBAN QUALITY**

“When urban renewal was already underway and new large homes were built in the area, we noticed that more and more people wanted to stay in the city and didn’t want to leave. People got the opportunity of owning a larger home in the city and this meant the return of purchasing power and with it the retailers, and that again attracted new people to the street.”

“Moreover, many historical buildings were preserved, partly by the squatters who showed that housing and services could be maintained without major demolition. But also due to the loss of faith in the survival of the shops: many existing buildings had not been changed and as a result, original details and parcelling were preserved. The Haarlemmerstraat has a wide variation in the plinth (high, low, wide, narrow) that gives a nice feeling to the street. As shops that are too wide, such as supermarkets and large retail chains, leads to closed windows. Small shops provide an attractive storefront, but the appreciation of this quality only occurred over time. Afterwards you can conclude that the previous lack of faith in the street as a shopping street, has given the space and time for this approach and thus for the success of the street nowadays.”

## **PUBLIC SPACE**

“Due to the new developments in Westerpark and the Westergas-fabriek, the Haarlemmerstraat and –dijk are now part of the routing network of the city: people walking and cycling through from and to the station. The street has been refurbished with new street pavement in the second half of the 1990s. Initially, all parking spaces would disappear from the street, but we have managed to avoid that because it is important to have a few parking facilities along the street. Public space is not so much about the car versus other users, but the overall accessibility of the street: for delivering goods, for residents, and for those few visitors who want to come by car. The car is a guest in the street, the biggest problems are the cyclists and scooters racing down the street making it difficult for pedestrians to cross the street. We have to find a good balance between all these types of transport. The public space is important day and night. In the evening the street remains active and attractive, there are no closed shutters, people live there, there are restaurants – so the street is vivid and pleasant.”



## THE STREET AND THE APPROACH NOW

“My role as shopping street manager has become a lot harder over time, because the street became popular and the properties now yield profit for the owners driving up prices. At the same time we have to continue the positioning and the image of the street, and search for unique business and special industries. We have never focused on a specific segment as food or clothing, but wanted at least to preserve the shopping function for the neighbourhood.”



“The main vision for the street is about craftsmanship and diversity. What do you have and what not, and what entrepreneurs do you want in order to have a larger range of shops for the customers. Changes in retail are of all times (we don't have a blacksmith any more) but it is the art to follow the dynamics, and to preserve the appearance of the street. There is no formula for how to do this, but my background as an urban sociologist teaches me to look at the small scale and the dynamics and respond to it - partly intuitive, you might say.”

## LESSONS FOR AN AUTHENTIC STREET

“Every street in a historic city has its own identity, you need to find the DNA and elaborate on that. Each street should have its own distinct character, I often hear people say they want a street like the Haarlemmerstraat but you cannot copy that; it must connect with to the DNA of their own street and city. A street or shop is not a museum, it remains dynamic and must fit the needs of the neighbourhood at first. If you can't attract visitors from your own district, then it will not work. You have to join the purchasing power of the area surroundings. And also the diversity of the neighbourhood is important.”

“Authenticity, parcelling, and historic buildings are a given, but you have to work on the process. Organizing a good street is a process that takes time and effort - especially to connect people and entrepreneurs. Do not think of a final image or a blueprint, but of a process, steps, and the dynamics of the shops. You have to sense the bottom-up movement and facilitate it, not a top-down approach as the municipality often does. I never approach a street as a project with a beginning and an end, but always as an organism that grows over time and that needs your constant attention.”

# THE IMPORTANCE OF 'LOCAL HEROES'

a conversation with Hans Appelboom (entrepreneur)

## **OWNERSHIP AND LONG-TERM VISION**

Our shop Duikelman is a renowned family-based enterprise in kitchen and cooking supply in the Pijp, a former blue collar quarter near the inner-city of Amsterdam which gentrified strongly since the late 1970s / early 1980s. Unlike many other specialized shops (with a large and wide spread amount of clients) that moved to the outskirts of the city in order to be optimally accessible by car, we decided not to move. Instead we associated and cooperated with colleagues in Rotterdam and The Hague. At the same time we committed ourselves with the direct neighbourhood being our first clients: events, street dinners, etc. We believed in the regeneration of the neighbourhood and the strengths of ownership and control over real estate. Not being dependent on project developers and landlords is a precondition to develop a long term business model and investment strategy. In doing so, we see a positive effect in the plinth of the rest of the streets.

## **MIXED URBAN AREAS**

We strongly believe in diverse and mixed urban areas with a concentration of specialty shops, as you can see in the old quarters of Paris. Areas that are not depending on maximum car accessibility but that are beloved by people on foot and bike who like the buzz of an urban lifestyle and by visitors who enjoy this as a special experience.

The Pijp is now in the midst of a long lasting and major infrastructural project for the new subway-line. Not being a big fan of this type of city





improvement, we now see the advantages and chances for the next future: a greater catchment area, more tourists and a better connection with adjacent hotspots like the Museum quarter. Tourism is a growing market in cities, so it is in the Pijp - foreign magazines refer to it as a Quartier Latin. Attractions like the Heineken Brewery, the Albert Cuyp market, daytime restaurants and small shops have to be cherished while the tourist traps (souvenir shops, money change etc.) should be avoided.

The Ferdinand Bolstraat is developing as main retail axis, with a collection of strong and well known chain stores and restaurants, as a magnet for the mainstream public. This type of development and stores is a precondition for the shops on the adjacent small streets with a lower level of rent and/or private ownership: small scale, diverse, and specialized. And those shops are also service-oriented towards clients and people who live in this dense and urbanized world.

## **NEED FOR COOPERATION**

I'd like to make a remark about the popular idea of a necessity for flexibility in (the use of) property and the levels of rent. Project developers and landlords on a speculative basis tend not to think on a long term. Often they aim for the highest return on their investments, resulting in tenants of the well-known kind. Real estate owners should be involved in an early stage in new plans and strategies in order to convince them that a long-term vision is better for everyone. Also cooperation with the authorities is important in order to let the small-scale production and service companies return, that are very important for an urban quarter like the Pijp. This requires a more liberal application of licenses; otherwise every available ground floor space on the adjacent streets will be transferred to housing.

So the point is to find a good mix and cooperation between entrepreneurs (chains and specialists, shopping and production, daytime and evening oriented, for locals as well for visitors), and people who live and work in the area. But cooperation and joining forces is very difficult, because everybody tends to go for their personal interests and hardly see the common challenges and goals. Entrepreneurs should be pro-active, take positions in the development process of a neighbourhood in advance, and cooperate in this development. An 'intermediate agency' or 'shopping street manager' can assist of this.

These kinds of recommendations will lead to strengthen the 'soul' of the Pijp and will result in an interesting and distinguished image and performance at eye level in the street.

# JAPAN: THE MACHIYA CONCEPT

Birgit Jürgehake (architect)

## SPACE – ROAD – SHOP

*Machiya* are wooden townhouses, with different variations built throughout Japan. *Ma* means 'space' or 'between', *chi* means 'road' and *ya* means 'shop'. So in other words: a space along the road with a shop. A *machiya* is usually a dwelling with a shop situated towards the street. The *machiya* first appeared in the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries when merchants in Kyoto, the former capital of Japan, used tables to display their products

in front of their house. Eventually the shop was built into the living space with patio gardens bringing light and nature into the relatively small and long house. Although some *machiya* houses are protected as Japanese heritage, many are disappearing.



A Machiya

## FLEXIBLE ELEMENTS OF THE MACHIYA

The very sophisticated plinth of the *machiya* functions as a smooth intermediate zone between the outside and the inside, offering a system of flexible elements that allow the plinth to change openness and function. Living in a *machiya* means living in a dwelling condition of ambiguity: you are inside and outside at the same time.

The plinth of the *machiya* easily adapts to the use of the shop. The outer walls consist of a wooden lattice, called *koshi*, that can be removed to open the whole front of the shop, resulting



A Machida with a shop in Tsumago



The Hamaya Machiya shows a transformation of the shop into a teahouse where tea-ceremonies are held and as well into a temple for the neighbourhood.

in a flowing space, one that is both inside and outside. A bench in front of this removable lattice can be used to display products, like in old times, or as a place for passers-by to rest. The space of extension is limited by a clearly-marked stoop, and lifted up by one small step and a clear change of pavement material. It is protected by a small roof providing shade and offering the feeling of being inside. Since the lattice is relatively transparent, a second layer, the *shoji* can be closed inside when the shop is closed to create a private room. *Shoji*, sliding doors made of wood and rice paper are also easily removed like the *koshi*. The *machiya* even uses different *shoji*, fragile bamboo for the warm summers and one thick rice paper for the cold winters. At one side of the plinth is a small entrance for the dwelling part behind the shop, often covered by a *noren* like a veil. In summer the entrance is open and the *noren* is the only protection between outside and inside of this entrance.



The small Saimoto Machiya in Kyoto is a house that is too small for a separate shop, therefore a combined working- and living space is situated towards the plinth. On ceremonial days the façade of the plinth will be removed and a neighbourhood temple or a place for children to play can be created, outside and inside becomes one space.

## LESSONS FROM THE MACHIYA

Today *machiya* are part of the old city centres and streetscapes are filled with them, creating a beautiful and lively urban area, with modern high-rise towering next to them. The plinth and its shop are timeless and show a colourful variation of details in the perfect woodworking, a dwindling artisan skill. Today we find shops, restaurants, cafés, galleries and small workshops in the plinths of the *machiya*. Entire neighbourhoods of *machiya* called *roji* still exist and are used for living combined with small galleries at the front.

What lessons can we take away from the historic *machiya*? The most important element for the richness of the *machiya* plinth is its flexible façade; opening and removing the façade needs to be done easily. Plinths today could offer the same flexibility, allowing for an incredible amount of possibilities and freedom for the user. Similarly, the use of the *machiya* is just as flexible—a shop, a space for neighbours, and a living room. Finally, the openness of the *machiya* blurs the lines between the inside and outside, creating a wholesome sense of responsibility and community. When borders get soft, people take care of their environment and stay connected.

# A PLEA FOR FLEMISH PARKING

Wies Sanders (urbanist)

All well and good, not all plinths are equipped with cosy storefronts and restaurant terraces. It would be irritating if every street, without end, enticed you to buy, drink and eat, especially if you are penniless. A city needs *some* boring façades, if only to be unseen in the midst of all these people. A city also needs garages, containers, service entrances, connections, and installation spaces and it is needed that they are not denied or hidden in a ludicrous way, but treated as equals in public space. Maybe it requires even more attention because the functioning of the city is increasingly dependent on installations and suppliers. Therefore, this is a pledge for more attention to the interaction between the plinth and the car and technical communication, with the Flemish parking as an example.

In the glorious days of the 50s, Flanders obtained an American profile with a real car culture. The car was not put in the street to show off, as is usual in the Netherlands, but neatly placed in the private parking lot, which was designed to integrate with the home. Already in the Art Nouveau times, the garage doors were often higher quality than the people's front doors and the modern 50s houses were equipped with even larger garages. Where the Dutch have their glass-curtains, a typical Flemish has a wide garage door. And unlike the Netherlands, drive-in houses are not a privilege for the suburban lifestyle, it is also an urban phenomenon that strongly shapes the appearance of the streets of a city like Antwerp.

Integrated private residential parking in Flanders is now usually not used as parking anymore: your own garage door with the sign *wegsleepregeling*







("cars will be towed away") is a guarantee to have a reserved parking space in front of your own door in the busy city street. The fact that the street is filled with parked cars is partly because every Antwerper is allotted two free parking permits from the city. And most of the people in Antwerp, despite the large bicycle facilities and ample public transport actually own two cars. Because even though you could do without, why would you? The garage is obviously used as an extra room and storage area for the expensive racing bike, the dog basket, and tools. The private garage is the urban version of the rural farm. On an average Saturday the garage door is open permanently, and brings a lively exchange with the street. It is a pleasure to peek secretly in the garages looking for collections of license plates, calendars, failed inventions, and lost toys. No shop window can beat that!

In the district Borgerhout, garages are often used as a workshop and start-up spot for entrepreneurs, or to trade for import and export, lot sales, repair spaces and rubbish caves, in where for decades no sweeper has been through. Maybe not everything is completely legal, but yes, Apple, Google, Amazon, Barbie and Microsoft also started in garages, why would a subsidized incubator be more successful than a garage in an urban district?

Also, gasoline stations and repair garages in Flemish cities are logically integrated in the construction line. Chances are that at an Antwerp crossroads you'll find a café, a shop and a garage, all on the same corner, all flourishing for years. The plinth of the building where the garage sits is set back a few feet to receive the car in a covered spot. The garage-owner sits next door in a beautifully designed glass box and maybe lives above. The entrance to a public car park or the repair garage is adjacent and the car park commonly occupies the entire inner area of the city block.

Access to a parking lot does not need to exceed a 2.5 meters width to unlock a new world and a wide range of functions. No wonder it is immensely popular in Belgium! But like elsewhere in European cities the fun is over. Due to changing security conditions, the gasoline (LPG) stations shut down one by one in the mid- 90's. And the small garages find it difficult to compete with the major car dealerships. In the better neighbourhoods, the released square footage from the closures are now filled with a glass façade and occupied by restaurants or offices. The less profitable locations remain in decline, endlessly waiting for a new proposal. Meanwhile, motorists are increasingly obliged to drive far outside the city to refuel or repair his car.

However, if we look a little further into the future, then the private car park and the local gas station could face a glorious future. A future where there is a need for an insured and nearby space for charging point for electric car, bicycle, tricycle, the fuel cells, delivery service and the necessary technical area for modern forms of working like co-working. In due time we'll have to transform these polished windows with geraniums all back to garages!

# THE TIME MACHINE: SAME BUILDING, DIFFERENT DEMANDS

Jos Gadet (urban planner)

## THE NEW ECONOMY

Although migration to cities is as old as cities themselves (slightly distorted by the economic and social suburbanization of the seventies and eighties in the 19th century), the nowadays growth of the preindustrial cities in the western hemisphere is rather a specific one. It is based on knowledge and human interaction.

American economist Edward Glaeser would agree when we say that whereas the typical industrial city was located in a place where factories had an edge in production, the typical 21<sup>st</sup> century city is more likely a place where workers have an edge on consumption, interaction and a pleasant public realm. A century ago, companies were tied to spots like Liverpool or Pittsburgh because of natural attributes like harbours and coal mines; this is no longer the case for companies. The global decline in transport costs means that companies are now footloose: free to locate where people want to live. In most cases, attractive cities like Amsterdam, London, New York, Munich, Copenhagen and Barcelona entice enterprises and entrepreneurs by their quality of life and public amenities.

And there is more. Actual urbanisation of the cities mentioned above is the result of a recent structural change in the economy of the developed countries. This new, knowledge-based economy is founded on interaction and synergy—and therefore crucial for face-



to-face contact. Nowadays, face-to-face contact takes place in environments such as breakfast bars, lounge areas, libraries, galleries, pubs and Starbucks clones. The urban orientation of the new economy has also led to a preference of dwellings within the urban fabric, within the mixed urban areas that offer a variety of amenities. This strong demand leads to increased housing prices and even small(er) housing units. Smaller houses create urgency for the use of semi-public, casual meeting spaces, such as those mentioned above. The very fast development of smart phones and digital social networks has accelerated and strengthened these forces.

## **THE REVITALISATION OF THE FRANS HALSSTRAAT**

This specific re-urbanisation demands specific spatial arrangements in which diversity and proximity are of utmost importance. Hence, this means that there is growing need of *urban tissue in which diversity and proximity is possible!* And this, in turn, explains the visual and functional alteration of the 19<sup>th</sup> century neighbourhoods in Amsterdam, illustrated by the revitalisation of the Frans Halsstraat in the famous Pijp District, immediately adjacent to Amsterdam's urban core.

The Pijp district was intended for the labour class, but because of rapidly growing land prices it became occupied by the middle class who were fleeing from the overcrowded and polluted 19<sup>th</sup> century inner city areas. Because of the commercial design of the building constructors and speculative construction in those pre-Housing Act days, small dwellings with relatively high rents were realized. Some of the inhabitants therefore rented a single room to artists, students or singles. Hence, the genesis of a lively and diverse neighbourhood took off; nowadays it's known as the Amsterdam Quartier Latin or Bohemian Amsterdam.

Poor maintenance during and after World War II and suburbanization of production and labour initiated the fall of the once-famous district in the 1960s and 1970s and it became a deprived neighbourhood. However, because of its direct vicinity to the historical urban core, its then low rents and poor image, De Pijp remained inhabited by bohemians and students around 1980. From that time on low rents also attracted migrants from Spain, Portugal, Turkey and Morocco. These ethnic communities enriched the neighbourhood with stores and facilities originally oriented towards their 'own' migrant population, however they were also immediately embraced by the student and bohemian residents. The neighbourhood became an attraction in itself!

Very important on this matter was the quality of the urban physical structure. The small scale, private investments and construction

mode in the 19<sup>th</sup> century resulted in 'building on-demand'. Residential space, retail space, shops, and working space were constructed in the same street, even in the same building. And more than that; the construction method made quick alterations of property functions possible in the easiest way, in order to meet the actual demand. This physical appearance is a necessary (spatial) condition for the revitalisation of urban districts. The ground floors appear to be the ultimate example of this urban phenomenon: the plinth expresses the dynamic character of a city district.

This is also in the case for the Frans Halsstraat. The opening of the pub *Carels Café* in the 1980s initiated the start of more pubs and restaurants. The Frans Halsstraat became the first 'entertainment' zone outside the inner urban core of Amsterdam. With this success the fame of this area grew, resulting in increasing rents and land prices. Not only students and bohemians were attracted to this part of Amsterdam, but also the more wealthy Amsterdam inhabitants, migrants and ex-pats were (and still are) attracted to this diverse mixed-use part of the city.

The success of the Frans Halsstraat, due to its adjacency to the historical city and its specific physical structure, forced the local government to end the common policy of massive demolition of the old (traditional) urban tissue in these parts of Amsterdam. Therefore the municipality started to sanitize its public property on the one hand, and legally forced private owners to maintain and develop their property on the other hand. Additionally, the local authority introduced one-way traffic, and invested in street trees and other public space improvements. Now several creative and other knowledge-based firms have started their businesses on or near Frans Halsstraat.

In 25 years this street transformed from an anonymous residential area for low-income groups into a vivid urban area with mixed uses, completely absorbed by the urban fabric. The transformation process in and around the Frans Halsstraat and the Pijp District as a whole demonstrates an area coming into view of the new bourgeoisie and the emerging 'creative class' not only to use and visit the diverse mix of facilities and shops, but also to buy or rent a dwelling. The plinths in this case were not a *sufficient*, but a *necessary* condition. The transformation was made possible by the mixed character of the urban tissue, the 19<sup>th</sup> century construction method, and the numerous transferable retail spaces in the plinth. That is why the Frans Halsstraat easily and quickly adapted to changing demands in the new urban economy and society.

# CITY IMPROVEMENT DISTRICTS IN JOHANNESBURG

Cecilia Andersson, informed by Elisabeth Peyroux

## **CONFRONTING BUSINESS AND RESIDENTIAL VITALITY**

Johannesburg in South Africa has undergone many changes over the past decades, from a mining centre and industrial city to a metropolitan centre given over to financial and business services. This city of more than 3 million inhabitants is the economic core of South Africa and a major economic hub in the region. While Johannesburg displays some key characteristics of a well-developed and attractive city, there has been little direct integration between formal and informal activities.

Johannesburg was confronted with problems of business and residential vitality common to many cities: a declining inner city affected by waning industrialization, the development of suburban shopping malls, the decentralization of office parks, and “white flight” from inner residential areas. High levels of unemployment and poverty, rising crime rates, and the rise of an informal economy are additional crucial factors. The city had also inherited distinct socio-economic patterns from the apartheid regime and urban spaces remain strongly marked by past segregation.

## **CITY IMPROVEMENT DISTRICTS**

The historical development of Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) can be traced back to Canada at the end of the 1960’s before they spread to the USA in the mid-1970’s and then on to other countries. In South Africa they are referred to as City Improvement Districts (CIDs) and the goal is “to



*maintain and manage the public environment at a superior level and thus enhance [the majority of the property owners] investments.”* Since the 1994 democratic transition in South Africa, City Improvement Districts (CIDs) have been implemented under various forms in the Johannesburg metropolitan area.

Since the early 1990's the concept of CIDs has spread widely to other cities in South Africa, including Johannesburg, as a response to urban blight and insecurity. They were also seen as an innovative solution to boost and foster economic development in suburban areas. CIDs enjoy support from public authorities and have become part of urban regeneration policies. The private sector played a key role in the transfer of the model, the adoption of the legislation and the spread of CIDs within the city.

## **CIDS IN JOHANNESBURG**

Business and property owners established the forerunner of South African CIDs as a voluntary pilot project in the inner city of Johannesburg. The result was the Central Johannesburg Partnership (CJP), launched in 1992 as the result of an Inner City Strategic Workshop held the previous year. First established as a trilateral partnership – business, the City of Johannesburg and the community – the CJP concentrated on the sole representation of inner city

business from 1995 onwards and became a private, non-profit company in 1998. The first CID stretched over a few blocks in the Central Business District (CBD) and focused on security, cleaning and maintenance, and upgrading of facilities for informal traders.

The Johannesburg's model of a CID rapidly spread to other parts of the city. While expanding outside the CBD, the concept of CIDs evolved to adapt to the socio-economic conditions of these suburban nodes. The services provided by the CIDs are supplementary to those provided by the local authority. They usually include security, cleaning and maintenance of public spaces, marketing, physical improvements and special programmes to address aspects such as transportation, access and parking. Some CIDs also include social programs such as the creation of a Homeless Association, development of income-generating activities and a car guard scheme employing the homeless.

CIDs are active in the fields of urban design as well. They have developed a wide range of activities to provide a distinctive identity and market the districts. This is of particular importance in the suburban areas. Territorial strategies through branding and landscaping are intimately connected to the various practices of "place-making" and "place-promoting". In the inner city, urban design activities include the transformation and upgrading of public space through capital improvement, landscape and pedestrianizing.

## **CID MAIN STREET**

Main Street, a voluntary CID in the inner city, is an example of a re-design and reconstruction project destined to attract people back into the streets. This major redevelopment project covers six city blocks. With the re-design of the street, vehicular access has been limited, sidewalks extended to allow for open-air cafés, and trees have been planted along the streets. Attention has been paid to the historical identity of the area: a mining theme has been developed with new lighting based on 19th century city light standards and heritage artefacts related to the mining industry.

## **LESSONS**

CIDs give rise to concerns about the risk of reinforcing spatial inequalities: wealthy suburbs where businesses and property owners have the ability to pay additional taxes versus low-income townships whose commercial and economic bases remains poor. Proponents of CIDs see them as a way to provide opportunities for upgrading and enhancing public spaces without burdening the state. While the crime prevention component of CIDs might work towards a safer environment more conducive to social life,



enforcing more control and surveillance of public space according to profit-driven strategies is seen as a potential source of discrimination and exclusion for certain segments of the population.

Nevertheless, CIDs embody new forms of public private partnership in the delivery of services and were given the mandate by the City of Johannesburg to collect the district levies directly from the property owners. The Johannesburg's CIDs have found a supportive political context.

## **SOURCE**

*Elisabeth Peyroux, (2008) "City Improvement Districts in Johannesburg: An examination of the local variations of the BID model"*

# FASHION TURNS A STREET AROUND

## CASE STUDY KLARENDAL

Arnhem,  
the Netherlands



### INTERVIEW WITH

Berry Kessels  
*district developer Klarendal, housing  
corporation Volkshuisvesting Arnhem*

**“Residents contributed to  
the regeneration of the  
neighbourhood, the developing  
of plans and by beautifying other  
parts of the district.”**

### FACT 1

1500 m length of Klarendalseweg,  
Sonsbeeksingel and Hommelstraat

### FACT 2

100 local artists in the area

### FACT 3

50 shops, 4 bars/restaurants and  
1 fashion hotel by 2012



## TIMELINE

- 1905 Klarendal neighbourhood is the first extension of Arnhem outside the city walls
- 1960s Height of good times; 32 bakeries, 16 flower shops, 25 cafes are active on Klarendalseweg
- 1963 ArtEZ Institute of the Arts opens in Arnhem
- 1970s Larger industries relocate. Increase of unemployment, crime and drugs, causing riots
- 1989 Residents organize themselves and violently kick out drug lords. Start of crime prevention and neighbourhood revitalisation plans
- 2005 Revitalisation plan *Klarendal Gaat Door* launched to improve living quality, introducing *Mode Kwartier (Fashion District)*
- 2008 Historic post office from Arnhem city centre has been rebuilt in Klarendal as a new restaurant
- 2012 Fashion hotel *Modez* opens, with international renowned Dutch fashion designers designing the 20 rooms. 50 shops in the street filled.
- 2013 Opening of the multifunctional centre

## CONTEXT

The city of Arnhem is one of the larger cities in the Netherlands. Klarendal was the first neighbourhood in Arnhem outside the city wall, with its original uses almost entirely industrial. In the early 1900s a railway line bisected Arnhem, one side with the old city and the other side with industrial uses. The 1960s and 1970s brought despair and unrest to the neighbourhood, spurred by the closing of factories. Unemployment sharply rose followed quickly by fervent crime, prostitution, and drug dealing. Klarendalseweg, the 1.6 km-long main street, saw many shop closures. Riots between the proud local residents and the police over the drug and crime problems persisted through the 1980s. Households

shrank, support for the local shops decreased, and vacancy rose. Time and time again, drug lords were evacuated but shortly returned. By the 1989 violent eviction of the drug lords, the residents vindicated. After a decade of planning in the 1990s, Klarendal's revitalisation plan was finally launched in early 2000s. Since then, it has experienced positive changes.

## PROBLEM

The mostly working-class residents were proud of their neighbourhood, the surrounding large industries, and the historic charm of Klarendalseweg. After the 1989 final riot, the major question remained: how can we turn give positive means to this neighbourhood? With nearly every shop on the main street closed, a high-unemployment rate, criminal behaviour and low incomes, what are the options?

## SOLUTION

In the beginning of the 21st century, a strong partnership formed between residents, the local housing corporation Volkshuisvesting Arnhem, Provincial Government of Gelderland, ArtEZ fashion school, and the City of Arnhem. Because of the relatively low rents, the neighbourhood was already developing as an alternative, artistic community with many students from ArtEZ living there. At the same time in Antwerp, the *haute couture* icons The Antwerp Six were sweeping the Flemish city and revitalizing the city with them. This success story inspired the partners of Klarendal to expose the connection between art, the neighbourhood, and ArtEZ. From this inspiration came the birth of the *Mode Kwartier* ("fashion district"). In 2005, renovations of the shops began, paid by the housing corporation. A group of post-graduates from ArtEZ and other academies were invited to rent vacant shops along the Klarendalseweg. The artists kept studios on the ground floor and lived in the space above. The post-graduates paid market-

value rent and were required to design their shop. In 2008, the reconstruction and relocation of Arnhem's historic post office from the old centre to Klarendal and the opening of a new restaurant in it, marked an image change for the neighbourhood. By 2010, 35 studio shops were filled; now, more than 60 are filled.

## SECRET

**Acupuncture intervention.** Beginning with the restaurant opening and the reconstruction of the historic post office, the partners applied a revitalisation strategy that pinpointed a host of interventions at various locations along the Klarendalseweg corridor. The street was redesigned at certain segments to enhance the pedestrian atmosphere. And of course the post-graduates' art studio-lofts, not only played a key role in keeping the street alive at all times of the day but created a destination and walking route for friends and visitors.

## LESSONS

**Creating a buzz.** The 2008 reconstruction of the post office and the new restaurant Goed.Proeven ('Well Tasting') were huge image-builders for Klarendal's revitalisation programme. This provided an official 'opening' for the street, especially for those unfamiliar with the neighbourhood and its recent improvements, and immediately made the street a buzz-worthy destination. In 2012 there is a second big opening because of three new additions: fashion hotel Modez & café Caspar, art space Kunstkazerne and gallery / workspace Plaatsmaken. The goal is to tell the world about the new Klarendal.

**Develop consistency.** Because of their unpredictable travel plans and general hectic lifestyle, a major challenge with the string of artists' studios is organizing common opening hours. A coalition or leadership team among the artists would be helpful in creating a consistently vibrant main street.

**Acquire residents' buy-in.** Over the years, some of the sceptical residents express dissatisfaction with the direction of the

neighbourhood. They fear too much change. Prioritizing residents' satisfaction, buy-in, and input on upcoming long-term changes may have brought more collaboration, support, and positive impressions.

## IMPACT

Of course the *Mode Kwartier* project has gained attention and international press but it has also helped the city of Arnhem by enhancing the image of the forgotten artist neighbourhood. The renovations, filled plinths, and street redesign have increased liveability in the neighbourhood. In 2013 the project has been awarded the *Gouden Piramide*, the official Dutch government's award for inspirational development. The jury called it impressive and praised the cultural, societal, economical and educational dimensions of the project.

## DO

- gain community buy-in
- address challenges head-on
- exploit established neighbourhood characteristics
- strategically placed neighbourhood improvements

## IN CONCLUSION

With an action-packed and violent history, the group of partners and post-graduate artists came together to create a destination corridor outside the city centre of Arnhem. The diverse neighbourhood had a solid base for evolution with the original proud residents, a constantly changing immigrant population, and the creative class from ArteZ taking advantage of the lower rents. An acupuncture intervention strategy guided the slow change and created a situation for people to visit. Of course they have experienced challenges and are working their way through the kinks. In the end, this project has given the trust back to the residents, reversed negative images of the neighbourhood, and contributed to a vital investment plan for the city of Arnhem.



# SLIPPERY SQUARES AND CONCRETE BUILDINGS

## CASE STUDY SCHOUWBURGPLEIN

Rotterdam,  
the Netherlands

### INTERVIEW WITH

René Dutrieux  
*project manager*

**“It’s important to show the  
cultural richness and modern  
heritage to the citizens”**

### FACT 1

9 cultural institutions

### FACT 2

2.3 million visitors per year

### FACT 3

60 outdoor public events per year





## TIMELINE

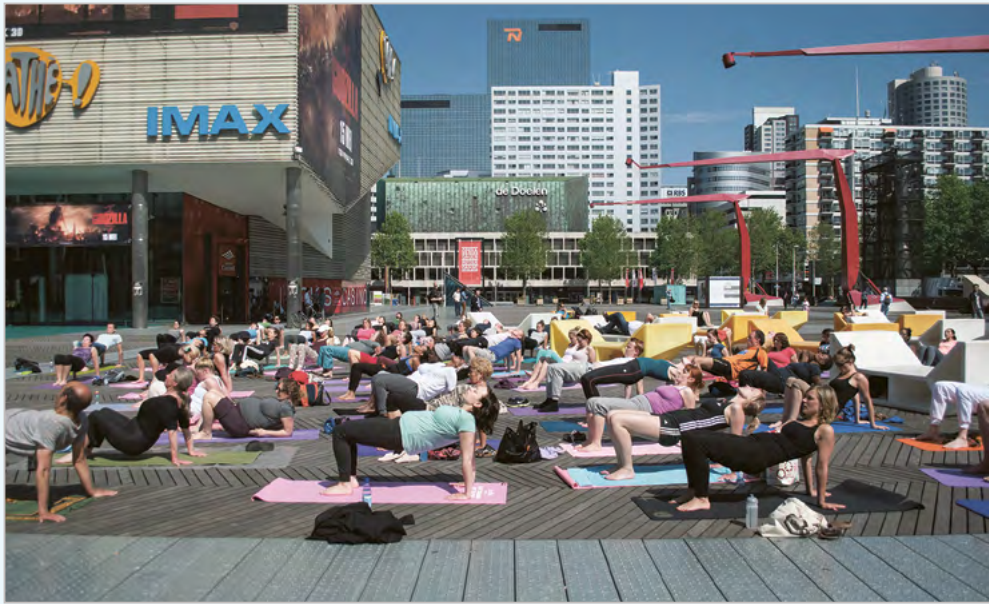
- 1887 construction of the Grootte Schouwburg (theatre)
- 1940 bombing of city centre of Rotterdam, Schouwburg partly destroyed
- 1947 opening of temporary Schouwburg
- 1953 opening of the Lijnbaan, the world's first car-free pedestrian street with shops and housing
- 1962 opening of concert hall De Doelen at the Schouwburgplein
- 1966 construction of parking garage under the square
- 1987 demolishing of temporary Schouwburg
- 1988 construction of the new Schouwburg
- 1996 reconstruction of the square and opening of cinema
- 2010 founding of the Vereniging Verenigd Schouwburgplein (Association of United Schouwburgplein)

## CONTEXT

The Schouwburgplein (Theatre Square) is situated in the city centre of Rotterdam, which was rebuilt and modernized after the WWII bombing. The city's most important cultural institutions in performing arts are located around the Schouwburgplein, attracting millions of visitors per year. The square is also close to the modernist Lijnbaan shopping complex, an icon of the reconstruction of Rotterdam after the war and the first major pedestrian-only shopping street in the world. Despite the many visitors to the institutions and the nearby shopping streets, the square has been a void in the city instead of a place for (cultural) gathering.

## CHALLENGE

One important challenge is to reveal the cultural richness and the modern heritage of the buildings to the citizens, and to bring life to the square. As the Schouwburgplein is just outside the main flow of pedestrian traffic, people don't coincidentally pass by. Also,



theatre-goers tend to arrive just before their show and depart quickly after, spending little time on or around the square. Three main goals were set in order to make the square more attractive: improve the physical quality of the square, bring visibility to the culture *inside* the buildings, and activate the square with programming and events.

## SOLUTION

In 2008 the city council made a proposal to the cultural institutions: the municipality would invest in physical improvements of the public space, while the institutions would program events outside their buildings to activate the square. This was the starting point of the association Vereniging Verenigd Schouwburgplein, in which the nine cultural institutions, community organizations, and the business association are represented. The objective of the association is to strengthen the square as a hospitable metropolitan cultural plaza for all Rotterdammers and thereby economically strengthening the area.

Since its start, the association has worked on a multi-annual program to activate the square and turn it into a more pleasant

place. In recent years many changes have occurred. Spatially, the mobile seatings “Enzo’s” and a small outdoor stage were placed on the square. The association has also built a multi-annual program to activate the square, working in close collaboration with the cultural institutions. Control is ensured on the basis of a location and activity profile in which the character of the square and the type of activities are determined. Furthermore coordination takes places with the other squares in the city to align activities and events.

Physically, the plinths of the theatre and the concert hall are now more open and accessible due to investments by the municipality. The theatre’s lobby is turned into a meeting place where you can go without visiting a show. Also concert hall De Doelen is being upgraded with a more hospitable and open entrance, including an inviting grand café to the street.

## SECRETS

### **Create a representative association.**

The association is the main contact for all activities and ensures quality control for all events. A program leader collaborates with



the cultural institutions and programs the cultural activities. Additionally, a “square master” functions as the liaison between the surrounding residents, entrepreneurs, and with the municipality.

**Connect the inside and outside of the buildings.** The buildings of the cultural institutions around the square were internally focused and didn’t display what is happening inside. The theatre’s lobby is now open to the public, and the concert hall is undergoing renovations for a more hospitable and open entrance.

**Program, program, program.** To turn the Schouwburgplein into a lively public place, more activities and events were needed. New activities and events on the square have activated the square and attracted new visitors.

## LESSONS

**Determine the profile of the place.** Regulate the kind of activities and events according to the quality profile of the square and its institutions. For Schouwburgplein, this is the starting point for all activities and events. The locations profile has an official status, determined by the city council, and has some strict rules on noise and type of events. The location profile is also useful in the communication with the surrounding residents, when discussing possible events.

**Slow transformations and small steps:** instead of some big events and activities, the association is working on a longtime transformation of the square. It takes time to build new cultural traditions and to change the physical appearance. These slow transformations apply to the nature of being a city.

## IMPACT

The primary output is an active and structural cultural program (from 2011 onwards) with events organized by the cultural institutions and ‘external’ parties. Part of the programming are larger more-day events that recur every year (such as the Circus City



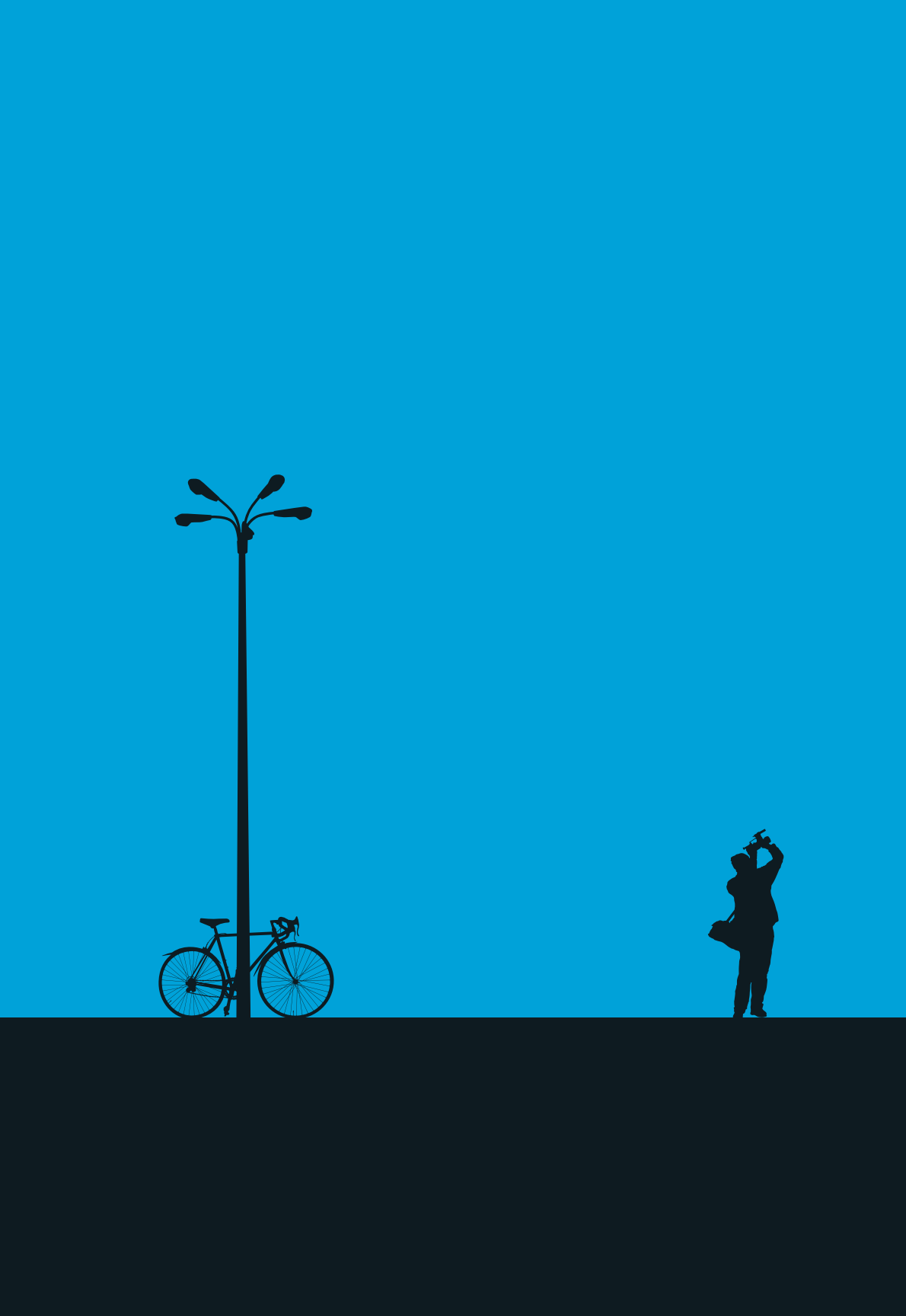
Festival, the 24 Hours of Culture Festival, and the Dance Week), but also small weekly events on Sunday like yoga sessions and performances. In 2009, only 11 events took place on the square; in 2014, that number increased to 60 events. These events on the square attracted 75,000 visitors. The eventual aim is to offer around 100 events on the square in 2016. More than before, Schouwburgplein has gained a reputation as a cultural square in Rotterdam.

## DO

- Cooperate between all parties with common purpose
- Activate with programs and events
- Open the plinths and ground floors to the public

## IN CONCLUSION

The slow transformation of the Schouwburgplein into a vibrant cultural square consists of physical, functional and organizational aspects. The association works well for all parties to collaborate on the improvement of the square, both physically and functionally. While upgrading the quality of the public space and strengthening the relation with the plinths of the building, the programming of cultural events and activities will attract more visitors and bring public life to the square. Over the last years, the programming of activities at the square has increased by cultural productions of the institutions as well as external events.



# PROPERTY DEVELOPMENT

# A DEVELOPER'S INTUITION

a conversation with Frank van Beek (developer)

## **PLINTHS AS AN INSTRUMENT**

The vision of our company Lingotto is to realise good city districts. We do not have a specific strategy to apply every time: each project is customized. Plinths can be an instrument to realise good and pleasant streets wherever necessary. In the Netherlands we are often charmed by small and cosy shops in cities like Barcelona. These are high-density cities with small homes, lively streets, and a small-scale distribution system for goods and products. These situations cannot be translated one-for-one to new developments in other countries. Plinths are only possible at sites where they have potential and where it is appropriate: in city centres, along main routes or at street corners. Not on a back street as is sometimes required by municipal instructions.

## **PLINTHS IN NEW DEVELOPMENTS**

New developments differ from historic streets that always have been a shopping street such as the busy Haarlemmerstraat in Amsterdam. These examples can serve as inspiration but it is very difficult to realise good plinths in new situations today. The municipality often requires plinths in a new development, in order to create a lively and attractive public realm. Realising a good plinth however is expensive due to high construction costs and required pre-investments. As a developer, we always pay attention to the conditions and aspects of context, location, public space, program, form, and financial gains.

## CONTEXT

To realise plinths you need a mixed urban district or areas with a high density; no homogenous office areas or suburbia. Especially downtown areas and districts close to the centre have potential for plinths, but within these areas different streets have different potentials. City centres contain and attract more people than other districts, so here plinths have a high opportunity of success. This central area of the city is growing to the adjacent neighbourhoods, as there is a demand for more urban city-life and thus for new plinths in those areas.

## LOCATION

The important question in developing plinths is: which location has potential? There is not a way to calculate this; you need *fingerspitzengefühl*, or instinct. You have to look at walking routes, busy streets but not too busy; it must be a pleasant atmosphere to walk along. On the Van Eesterenlaan in the Amsterdam Eastern Docklands, the most successful plinths are on route to the supermarket; on IJburg they are near the shopping centre; and on the Wibautstraat most liveliness is around the supermarket, the subway exits, and the educational institutions.

## PUBLIC SPACE

The significance of the kind of adjacent public space of the plinth is big: is it a square, a walking street, or a street with cars? The details and lay-out of the public space are important to create a pleasant street where people want to walk and shop. Besides a pleasant street for walking and biking, also a few (short-time) parking spaces should be available in front or along the street. These are needed for distribution and for picking up or delivering goods by car: a necessity for most kinds of shops.

## PROGRAMME

The main part of a good plinth is in the programming and use: which functions are suitable for this space? Finding the right programme for the plinth is a task for the owner/landlord, not for us as developers. It is a special business of fine-tuning the different functions in a plinth, commercially and aesthetically. Especially the development phase is difficult for new shops, due to the needed financial support. Also non-commercial activities are good use for plinths, but you only need a certain amount of kindergartens, dry-cleaners, and doctors in a neighbourhood. Housing is often not a suitable function for main streets; most of these plinths are designed with large windows, which will be closed off by inhabitants because of privacy reasons. When a plinth is meant as a home, it should look like a home and not like a shop or an office.

## RESTAURANT DAUPHINE (Prins Bernhard-plein, Amsterdam)



This restaurant is at a particular spot next to a traffic circle, where an old Renault-garage was transformed into a restaurant. This site is near the centre but consists mainly of offices and houses. The restaurant changed this spot into a new destination. The owners have recognized the potential of the old garage and the area and transformed it into a special location.

It is both architecturally and functionally a good example of transforming a building and giving a new cosmopolitan feel to the place. The grand scale of the plinth is of course one of the success factors, but also the designing of the details is an important aspect such as the restaurant's name between the columns.

**COFFEE COMPANY / FLINDERS**  
(Meester Treublaan, Amsterdam)



A good example of finding the right location and recognizing the programme potential is near the Amstel train station at the Meester Treublaan. Recently a new Coffee-Company along with furniture store Flinders has been established in a former retail shop that had been empty. The two share a single space, and you can try the furnitures while drinking your coffee.

This plinth had been a dull place, but is suddenly changed with a new entrance on the side facing the water and the bridge. The potential of this location, close to the station, is well seen and has been adapted smartly.

## **FORM AND SIZE**

The plinth is not only part of the building but also the street. The form, the parcelling, and the appearance are thus related to the width of the street and the sidewalk, and the length and height of the building. Buildings consist of a plinth, a body, and the head/roof. The height and width of the plinth is a ratio of the total façade. The plinth is sometimes needed from an architectural perspective, but then lacks a special function. To create a flexible plinth for different purposes you need a necessary width and depth of the building, which also should be flexible and could be changed over time. When the structure is fixed, you lose this flexibility of the ground floor.

## **FINANCIAL ASPECTS**

Plinths are important but are sometimes difficult and expensive to make and exploit, because of construction costs. Pre-investment is needed to create future value for the street and the city. This investment requires a corresponding land price to make it possible. Land prices sometimes are too high to realise a good plinth quality. The municipality must consider if they want to have good plinths or to make money; it is difficult to do both.

## **PARTNERS ARE ESSENTIAL**

For the development of the plinth you need partners. First the municipality should not impose preconditions about the form of the plinth, but instead facilitate with supporting regulations: a flexible land use plan. The market is able to develop the places with potential and find the right use for each plinth. Although it is often easier to find a place for a particular user than to find a function for a particular place. In developing a particular street a plinth manager can help to realise this to full extent; in such case the different owners and landlords should work together as partners and not as competitors.

## **THE FUTURE OF PLINTHS**

A final remark on two trends that will affect the way we use and develop plinths in the future. First we're seeing a shift in retail from physical shops to virtual shops on the internet. As the demand for shops will diminish, I predict that remaining shops will transform either into introvert supermarkets or as showcase stores for internet shops. Only in attractive streets the shops will survive as specialized image shops, mostly in food & beverages or design. The second trend is the growing demand for flexible spaces for the self-employed: more and more people in the Netherlands tend to be self-employed (ZZP-er) or work free-lance. They don't need offices along the highway but require flexible work-spaces and meeting places in the city centre for contact and interaction: sometimes in a coffee- and sandwich-shop, sometimes in a rented office space. These new city professionals are interested in urban network spaces and are attracted by the image and the atmosphere of these places. That might be the new future of the plinths.



# KEEPING THE SLEEPING BEAUTY AWAKE

a conversation with Robin von Weiler  
(real estate owner and investor)

## **THE NEXT STEP AFTER A SUCCESSFUL REVITALISATION STRATEGY OF THE MEENT**

Over the last years, developer and building owner, Robin von Weiler, has played an important and well-appreciated role in transforming a declining shopping street in Rotterdam into one of the hotspots in the city.

The Meent now has the lowest vacancy rate in the city centre of Rotterdam. The effects of the street's popularity have impacted surrounding areas. More high-quality shops have come, and the area is sought-after for housing, restaurants and public events. With the newly-opened Markthal and the revitalisation of the central canals, this part of Rotterdam attracts international attention.

## **WHAT WAS TIPPING POINT FOR THE MEENT?**

The opening of "Vlaams Broodhuis", a well-known bakery, in a formerly unsuccessful employment agency, queues started and almost immediately gave the adjacent real estate a boost. Before Vlaams Broodhuis, the street was in decline, but not enough to take serious action. The bakery owners saw the potential, were confident of their brand, and searched for the right location with a large curbside terrace. Von Weiler and the owner of the block helped the bakery acquire suitable space by showing and leasing them the space, but also by removing the temp agency.



## HOW IS SUCCESS MAINTAINED?

The challenge, says Robin von Weiler, is to stay impartial. Experience is the biggest killer of impartiality. “You have to force yourself to look at the street with fresh eyes. All the time. Other peoples’ opinions help, so always listen to what people think of the street.”

Coping with permanent change is another key component. According to von Weiler, standard demands for a well-functioning street can change over time, but the values remain the same. The values on the Meent, such as the characteristics of the buildings, the ease of crossing the street, and the length of the street are important to maintain.

The length is not the distance from West to East, but the sum of walking along shops opposite each other. If a street entices people to cross while shopping, the experience of the street becomes longer. Currently, the Meent has one weak crossing: opposite the large WTC office building no shop front exists, but a closed plinth. The shops on this side are effectually less popular.

## FASHION AS A GAME CHANGER

The success of the Meent attracts investors. Yes, that’s a good thing, but doubtful side-effects linger. Higher end fashion brands, without



roots in the city, discovered the Meent as potential new store locations. The Meent has relatively low rents compared to streets in similar-sized cities. Shop owners subsequently raised their asking price but high-end tenants pressed further.

The increase in the rent changed the game. Existing tenants were faced with higher rents and increased local taxes, a major burden to their businesses. New tenants quickly realized that rent were higher than profit. Both new and existing tenants struggled.

A good analysis of the value of the street was obviously lacking. Simple measures like a pedestrian counting mechanism – how many people pass by- in the street for shoppers would help to prevent unrealistic rents to be asked, and problems for tenants.

Von Weiler knows that he cannot control market parties and their strategy for profit. To maintain balance, he spends a lot of time mediating and informing and always aims for high quality tenants.

## **RESTAURANTS AND BARS**

Restaurants and bars are often an asset to any street, and also the Meent. The city plays an important role here. The city's "Horecaplan" sets the guidelines for the mixture and the quality. Guarding this mixture might be the biggest challenge for the coming years. The right balance brings quality, while the wrong balance is problematic.

## **KEEP ON INVOLVING PEOPLE**

The Meent has all the opportunities to stay successful. The basic conditions for the street are good. The function of the street as the most important east-west connection in the city centre, the building and street design are popular.

But even more important is that the street developed a culture of maintaining the quality. Robin von Weiler, together with his coalition of tenants, the city and owners, kissed the sleeping beauty. Now that she is awake the whole coalition, from the city to tenants and owners, despite their individual interests, share the goal to keep the sleeping beauty awake.

Involvement brings quality. Owners of buildings who don't care about surroundings are a risk. But they cannot be forced. "If you want to improve the area, you have to work on it yourself," says von Weiler. Tenants and professionals who want to make a difference and go for quality can help. When needed they are hand-picked by von Weiler and asked to participate. To avoid complaints from tenants who don't feel invited to participate, overinforming is an answer. People cannot complain about too little communication, and will help to improve it.

Small things matter: 30 centimeters more or less width of the pavement, the height of the doorstep, it can be vital for the success of the street and the building. Von Weiler looks at those details, and compromises with the coalition. Since their aim is a sincere quest for quality in a realistic financial context, people are willing to help.

The added value of the development for the city is enormous. But to keep adding value, lasting attention is needed. A street has new challenges all the time. Involved and dedicated individuals like Robin von Weiler make the difference.

# MIXED-USE MAKES MONEY IN OFFICE PARKS

Jeroen Jansen & Eri Mitsostergiou  
(researchers and consultants)

## **THE VALUE OF MIXED-USE OFFICE LOCATIONS**

In 2010 our research team examined all four major office areas in the Netherlands. The results showed that the combined vacancy in mixed-use areas (11.1%) is considerably lower than in single-use office locations (20.7%). We further analysed the submarkets and buildings in Amsterdam with the highest vacancy and identified four factors that relate most to vacancy rate. While distance to a major train station, distance to the city centre, and the perceived safety of the office areas were important, mixed-use turned out to be the number one deciding factor. Creating a lively public space by adding retail, restaurants, bars and other functions to the plinths of office buildings does seem to pay off.

## **THE CASE OF KING'S CROSS IN LONDON**

Drugs, prostitutes and urban decay were a common part of London's King's Cross in the 90's. No one really wanted to work and live near the area, or even walk through it and its terrible perception made it difficult to imagine any way to change this. While early plans for redevelopment fell through, the 1996 decision to move the Channel Tunnel Rail Link from Waterloo to St Pancras became the catalyst for change. The landowners decided to develop the land and in 2001 Argent was selected as the development partner.



Aerial picture of the development site



Granary Square with the University of Arts in the historic building

In all phases of the project the developer worked closely with the formal authorities, but also with local community groups, through the King's Cross Development Forum. From the outset, the vision was to create a high-density part of London where people could live and work. The scheme totals around 750,000 m<sup>2</sup>, where offices account for 56% and includes 22 office buildings, 17 residential buildings, 45,000 m<sup>2</sup> of retail space, a hotel and the University of the Arts London.

In 2011 the first parts of the development opened to the public, among them the university at the Granary Complex. Since then, restaurants have opened, schools have been established and the first residents and office tenants have moved in. Granary Square has become a popular destination and regularly hosts festivals and events, while the introduction of the Eurostar terminal and the redevelopment of St Pancras International and King's Cross train stations have contributed significantly to the transformation of the area.

King's Cross was never desirable as a business location; top rents averaged around €250 per m<sup>2</sup> per year. Currently, rents over €800 per m<sup>2</sup> per year are achievable. Office tenants include top brands like Google, Louis Vuitton, BNP Paribas Real Estate, Camden Council and Vista Print. The fact that these top companies want to locate here indicates the value of mixed use office locations.

## **PERCEIVED RISKS FOR DEVELOPERS AND INVESTORS**

While combining different uses within an area does not pose challenges, per se, for developers and investors, bringing different functions together within one building does add elements of complexity and risk. Developers and investors perceive that mixing uses makes their job more difficult and leads to a decline in their investment. Primary perceived risks for the mix of uses in a single building include:

- mixed-use contaminates image/brand
- involves more intensive management (different access, shared facilities, security requirements)
- contributes to added nuisance (noise, waste, odours)
- causes downward “drag” on investment value unless situated in established high-class retail locations
- leads to difficulty letting/renting retail if not in an established area
- additional design/management/leasing expertise required
- less investor demand for mixed use buildings – harder to sell
- structures may restrict redevelopment options

Although a number of perceived risks are involved in developing mixed-use buildings, the number of examples of successful and well-functioning mixed-use areas (compared to single-use areas) is increasing. This trend indicates that the outcome may compensate for the additional ‘risk’.

## **ELEMENTS OF SUCCESS FOR MIXED-USE OFFICE AREAS**

Successful projects have the following elements in common: they are locations within the existing urban fabric, they are brown-field developments, they are

mixed-use schemes and they offer excellent public transport. In a truly mixed area residential must be included; only then there is the potential for a 24-hour place with live, work, and play happening all together. :

London may be an outlier, where money and people are pouring in like no other city in Europe. But it is just one of many new development schemes all over Western-Europe. Similar to Amsterdam's South Axis and London's King's Cross, a number of other mixed-use (re)developments are underway. For example, the Europa Viertel

in Frankfurt, Paddington (Sheldon Square) in London, Hafencity in Hamburg, and Hellinikon (Old Athens airport) redevelopment in Athens. Since these are long-term projects, their success may be challenged by time and market cycles, although Canary Wharf (London) and Potsdamerplatz (Berlin) have shown otherwise.



Retail units at Two Pancras Square

## **A MIXED-USE OFFICE LOCATION AS A 'FRINGE BENEFIT'**

Companies located in office buildings that offer a vibrant public space with retail, restaurants, bars and other amenities in the plinths, plus residential and hotel functions and in close proximity to public transport, are simply suiting the demands of their employees. Being located in a hotspot is thus one way to hire and retain personnel and can therefore be regarded as one of the most important 'fringe benefits' for employees.

Creating mixed-use environments is not only a favour to workers, but also to the city itself. It is the organic mix and density of cities that has produced vibrant and attractive areas in our cities throughout centuries. It only makes sense to continue to offer environments where people can work, live and enjoy their leisure time. With people, companies and employees, also comes commercial value.



# MARGINAL SPACES AT LA DEFENSE

an interview with Alessandra Cianchetta (architect)

**La Défense and the city centre of Paris seem to be polar opposites in terms of the urban fabric and design. How do you find the relationship between La Défense and the city centre?**

La Défense is an expansion of a very important, historic axis in Paris that runs westward from the Louvre. Post WWII and especially during the 50s, Paris no longer could accommodate enough businesses and the French State wanted to show an image of modernity with lots of steel and glass, and intense separation of flows, modes, and uses. La Défense is a monument to this idea—that this was a business district and nothing else. Considering the high degree of specialization it's still a relatively lively place, contrasted with busy and calm periods. And on the weekends it's a destination for a different population who don't want to go to central Paris.

**With such a history, why the sudden interest in redesigning the whole area?**

The first masterplan was in '64 and since then it's been a focus of many studies, producing a huge amount of data, but there hasn't been an overall strategy for the area. The quality of the public space is dated, obsolete—it feels like a 1950s *Jacques Tati* film where modernity was an escape. But it's not only about design. The issue is that this idea of specialization and extreme separation of activities doesn't work and is no longer desirable. The real estate is becoming less economically attractive and there is a serious risk of high

vacancy. The management want to compete on a larger scale. It's about making it more inviting and overcoming the monothematic uses of the area.

**Can you tell us about the main stakeholders in this project? What are their roles?**

The main stakeholders are two of our clients, Defacto, the public institution who manages the public spaces and the below ground spaces at La Défense and Epadesa, the public institution who actually builds both public spaces and buildings. There's quite a long history with them, and some ambiguity concerning their interactions (ie, overlapping roles). Of course the companies, workers, CEO's, and administration also play a role. We also cannot undermine the 20,000 residents in the area. Although it's not many, they are still a significant player. Also local politicians play a key role. This project has a specific, special status and is thus politically sensitive.



La Défense Central Axis



Central Axis Design Proposal

**With the masterplan your team is proposing, what issue do you want to tackle first?**

The word *masterplan* is not that appealing because it suggests something rigid. Right now in urbanism we need something different, more like a tool or framework, something that can evolve and adapt to changes over time. Our goal is to create a tool that can evolve and encompass new changes and projects so that it's not obsolete in a few years. Generally speaking, it's a very complex task planning a strategy for all public spaces for the whole site of 160 hectares, including the 30 hectares of slab, while also addressing what is visible above ground and what is invisible, below ground.

**A predominant and unique feature of La Défense is this "slab". How can you possibly make 30 hectares of concrete charming?**

We started our study by looking at the space above ground, so on top the slab. It's true, walking on the slab as it is, it's not a great experience. It's so cluttered with unimportant details and the trees are ridiculously small (though it's quite impossible to plant big trees on the slab). The idea is to integrate new activities and to diversify the space. Developing a new nighttime identity is also important. But the slab is like the roof of a big building, so what's happening below is also important. It runs six levels deep and is a labyrinth of underutilized and gloomy galleries, trains stations, and rooms. In total, above and below, we found 100,000m<sup>2</sup> of marginal space.

## How does the plan propose to use those 100,000 sqm?

This ‘marginal’ or ‘receding’ space—found inside and between the buildings, but also in the public realm—needs to be revealed and reclaimed. If management wants to attract a different kind of population then this space must be addressed to intensify the use of the site. Our plan identified these spaces and suggested introducing new types of programming and functions. Retail alone is not the answer. Maybe the creative sector comes in, like galleries or a Fab Lab. We also suggested incentives for new ideas and concepts to come, like reduced rent prices. The public realm also needs attention. It’s not just about greening and landscape, but the atmosphere and activities presented to the user. We want to create a space that feels safe, comfortable, lively, and ever-accommodating to the needs of its users.



Parking Garage, Existing and Design Proposal

## It seems like one missing factor is people. There are not so many residents and besides tourists, where will the people come from?

In addition to the La Défense site, the back side, below the *Grande Arche*—which we are designing as well—is also undergoing a complete transformation. It’s a *urban couture* project, about connecting La Défense and beyond to the city centre. In the coming years, this side will be completely reactivated with a university, hotel, student housing, educational buildings, and a variety of functions. It will not happen over night; it takes time.

## Will the plan lead to physical changes to the buildings?

A consistent vision is the challenge; something that’s not opportunistic and minds the present conditions. At the same time, the vision must consider medium- and long-term actions and give unique suggestions. One of the principles of the plan is to connect La Défense with its surroundings. This requires perforating the slab and removing this sense of isolation. One way to do this is to take advantage of the receding or marginal spaces.

Defacto has already launched about 40 different projects on the site, most are centred around these marginal spaces. Making changes to these spaces will reconnect La Défense with the human scale, the city at eye level. For example, the entrances can be more welcoming with added lighting. Or along the sidewalk, at some points, the pedestrian is up against a big wall. If it was open, this could become something totally different. It could be a great experience.

# IMAGE-BUILDERS AND PLINTHS

an interview with Tony Wijntuin (consultant)

## **Before you started WYNE, what did you do for Schiphol?**

I was at Schiphol for 11 years, first in baggage and passenger services and then in commercial. When I transferred to commercial, my main task—to put it bluntly—was to increase profits and leverage possibilities among the retailers, food and beverage, and service providers (like banks). I brought along my interests and skills in the fields of traffic patterns and volume, and passenger profiles.

## **What was your vision for Schiphol?**

Schiphol, at that time, was losing track as one of the most innovative airports in the world and like I said, I was brought on-board to increase revenues. I thought, if we solely focus on the money—the Euros—the best thing to do is to renegotiate contracts. But that's a quick fix. It's not sustainable in the long run. What about quality? I wanted to know how we performed on quality levels. Through data collection, we discovered that, even though we were increasing retail space for food and beverage, turn-over and revenues were relatively decreasing. At the same time, our customer satisfaction was also gradually decreasing, especially with food and beverage. The missing link was quality—and this was easy to convey to my superiors and quite easy to change.

The hard part was what came next: if the revenue is in place and the quality is in place, how do we still compare to other major airports? The answer to that was image. We needed image-builders. This approach makes sense. The image part of the equation takes into account the user's experience. And the idea behind a well-balanced portfolio is to create added value that can be measured in terms of revenue, quality, and image.

### How much can be earned by adding image?

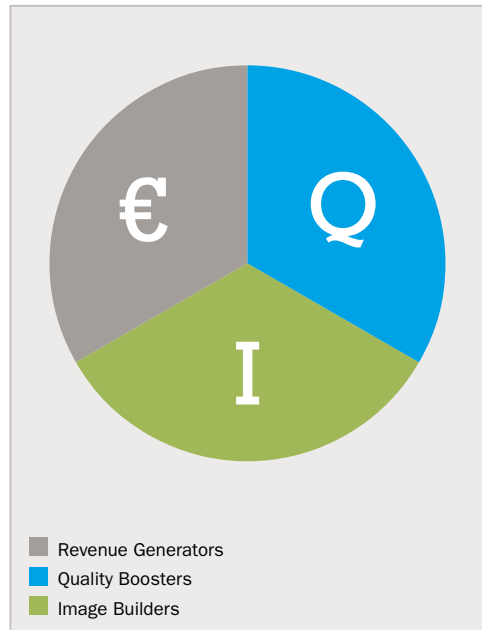
It's very difficult to measure image or the return of invest of an image-builder. In the beginning we tried to calculate this at Schiphol, but it was a lost cause. By building identity, the idea is to become more attractive and to entice users. Image-builders contribute to revenue as much as quality. If you want to be successful, it's more than revenue generators to build a solid and viable portfolio—it's image *and* quality.

One thing we did at Schiphol, for example, was create a dedicated baby-care lounge that generated no revenue what so ever, but contributed significantly to the airports exposure. Schiphol also recently opened the airport park. It was difficult to convince upper management of these image-builders but what it came down to was how we could create a portfolio that meets customer demands. We needed to be different than the others. And this was different.

### How do image-builders and your Portfolio Value Model® impact plinths?

The work of WYNE Strategy & Innovation, the consultancy firm I established after I left Schiphol, focuses on what's inside the plinth. Not only can public space increase the quality and perception of the plinth, but also the uses within the plinth, whether that is retail, food or beverage, or living space.

Using the image-building approach, the idea is to create added value. If you look at my approach, I always start with the (sometimes latent) wants and needs of the customers. On one hand, the customer wants convenient and functional retail. They want their grocery store and somewhere to buy their everyday needs. On the other hand, customers also want to be surprised. They want to experience something.





### **How can we translate this approach to the community level?**

Shopping streets are very different from locations like Schiphol, mostly because places like this have only one owner while shopping streets have multiple owners with their own individual shops. People are becoming more aware of the need to bring in additional, unusual propositions to create an attractive, unique environment. In the end, it should be a mix of uses that contribute to revenue, quality, and image. Image builders are the local heroes. Local heroes play a significant role - small mom and pop stores, local creatives, characteristic start-ups. Why not have a small, nice local grocery store in the same street as a high fashion store? These kinds of shops will not bring in big bucks, but create the specific identity. Big chains can play a nice "need to be there" role, but it's the smaller shops and spaces that are the real image-builders. As maturing shopping streets which often started off like "no go areas" and in time matured into attractive off-high street dwell-shop-eat environments, become more attractive for property owners, big box retailers and investors, one should be cautious with new entrants in the street. Sure you can bring in a high-traffic money making retailer, but then use a scheme that takes part of the revenue from that location to facilitate a smaller scale conceptual store. This increases the quality level of your space.

### **How do you execute this approach?**

We first use data from customer experience surveys, and then we experiment; it's trial and error. You need a creative team that can think conceptually. You also need your own personal experience, and create partnerships and coalitions. It's a viable approach and more sustainable than just looking at revenue-only methods. But it takes a strong backbone to stick to the concept and maintain the original identity.

### **So what's next?**

We're not only seeing this approach in shopping streets, airports, and railway stations—we see this in our daily lives. How are public spaces and third places adding value to our lives? It's not necessarily money-based. With the economic situation, we have to come up with new business models and this is one of them: functional and emotional added value.



# BETWEEN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEMANDS

Petra Rutten (director of social development)

## **BIG AND SMALL**

Inner-city re-development is a challenge. Urban areas are complex, and working with an existing urban context with many stakeholders and varied target groups is a difficult task. Plans (fortunately) are no longer rolled out as a blueprint, but grow more organically like a network, allowing innovations the opportunity to become part of the solution. This not only demands other forms of cooperation, but also a different attitude from all parties, both public and private. The initiator or the producer holds a powerful role: a long-term commitment to combining and retaining the concept and also keeping all stakeholders together, big and small, formal and informal.

## **CUSTOMER DEMANDS**

The goal is to create unique, attractive, and lasting environments in a context of change. Structural changes are taking place: technological, demographic, economic, and cultural. All are expressed in different ways with regional variations. As a result, the customer demands are differentiated, less predictable, and expressed more assertively. Innovating is a necessity for meeting the changing demands and, better yet, to exceed expectations. Customers are changing what they want to buy, the people are more diverse, and the way people integrate working, living, nurturing creates new demands. The city infrastructure, public space, facilities, and social and commercial activities need to anticipate those demands.

## INVOLVEMENT

The biggest misconception is that long-term involvement in re-development areas is not rewarding. The reality is, in order to create value, long-term focus is needed, and involvement is a must. And program, next to quality and design, creates value. If city stakeholders manage development based on (housing) quantity and production, we lose the ability to manage the quality. A high level of supply is the death of differentiation, opportunities, and growth. The best focus is diversity, density of program, and activities, but we can't solely rely on ground-floor commercial and retail. Cultural programming and activities are big assets, too, especially in temporary to permanent use. To achieve this, residents and local entrepreneurs must be involved on a deeper level. To achieve high quality revitalisation, informal programming is a key. Local ideas should be seen as a way to network and interact, to make plans flexible to new ideas.

Rotterdam, the Netherlands, is a major port city with a lot of space for good value. Interesting target groups capitalise on this asset for pioneering new ideas and activities. If this opportunity is used well in planning, design and strategy, Rotterdam could hold a distinct position in the Netherlands. Imagine the space and good value become an economy on its own. Rotterdam's rather tough image actually give it an edge over its competitor cities.

## BUSINESS CASE

The key to a good business case is to fulfil a need. Suitable to the place, autonomous and authentic to the surroundings. Function and programme should be tested and designed by the laws of the *genius loci*: the spirit of the location. If not, it's a failure and there's nothing more disruptive than a failed urban area.

A good example is the destination and temporary programme of the FenixFoodFactory in the Fenix harbour warehouse on the Rotterdam peninsula, Katendrecht. The FenixFoodFactory created a destination and provided a connection from one end of the harbour to the other end. The



Temporary use: Codarts bachelor's programme of Circus Arts at Fenixloods, Katendrecht Rotterdam



Fenix Food Factory, Katendrecht Rotterdam

Rijnhaven Bridge made the pier accessible and noticeable: a perfect lounge spot to see and to be seen. The rough interior needed no adjustments. Just a basic plan and basic facilities for a diversity of entrepreneurs with local goods, a lot of space to stand, sit and play. All it needed was a good way in and out, and last but not least, a very attractive rent, low enough to give the business a fair chance to be sustainable and high enough to attract (semi) professionals. The return on the investment if they are successful, for the entrepreneurs is a place in the final destination if they want to. The real profit is for the people and the city.

The key to make a good business case is the intersection between economic and social demands. Improving areas is difficult and time-consuming, and a good earning model is not always in reach. Make the area a destination with an identity; give people a reason to live in and be a part of a community. Offer interesting and diverse programme, the time and temporary use to demonstrate sustainability and value growth.

When public and private partners, formal and informal, designers and programme 'meet up' and share power it means they also share success. And, in the end, it can also mean sharing the inner city profit.

# TRAIN STATIONS AS DESTINATIONS

## CASE STUDY ST. PANCRAS STATION

London,  
United Kingdom

### INTERVIEW WITH

Ben Ruse  
*director HS1*

**“We wanted people to fall back in love with this station. So we asked ourselves: If we make this station attractive enough, can we make it a destination in its own right? And the answer was: Yes.”**

### FACT 1

7 seconds of average train delay

### FACT 2

£ 800 million project cost

### FACT 3

1 million passengers passing per week



## TIMELINE

- 1996 HighSpeed1 (HS1) takes ownership of St. Pancras International Station
- 1998 Modernization team established. Study visits to major global transit stations including Madrid, Lisbon, New York, and Schiphol Airport
- 2001 Architectural and engineering plans drawn and approved.  
– negotiations with Heritage  
First about building preservation techniques and agreements for ground level retail  
– renovations begin
- 2003 First retailers sign lease contracts
- 2007 Renovation complete: 60 of 64 retail spaces on ground floor filled
- 2010 Hotel St. Pancras' historic renovation complete

## CONTEXT

In the 1970s and 1980s, the British railway system experienced a period of steady decline. The once-grand St. Pancras Station was in poor condition, dirty and attracted crime and drug use. The 1990s brought discussion of renovating and modernizing the grade 1 historic building and renewing the surrounding neighbourhood, which is mostly inhabited by middle- and lower-income residents.

## PROBLEM

The main issue was how to maintain this building and its function as a major transportation hub and make it a destination of its own. Preserving its architectural integrity was a high priority but few wanted to invest in a commercial case for the building. Creating a commercial district within the building seemed nearly impossible with the amount of space needed for passenger-related areas, especially with Eurostar as a preeminent client, such as international customs, lounges, security and ticket information.

## SOLUTION

By opening the historic storage areas at the ground level, where beer, grain, and raw materials were once reserved, light and air was allowed into the ground level, providing an opportunity to position retail there and make the ground floor productive. Entrances to the station were placed on all sides, inviting the public into the space. Managers focused efforts on bringing in specialty stores and cafés into the ground level, not fast-food chains or other formula shops you can find all over London.

## SECRET

**Community buy-in.** Being a good neighbour was a strict priority for HS1, the owner of St. Pancras Station, throughout the construction process and continuing today. They purchased double-glazed windows and wash dryers for all surrounding residents because of the noise and dust incurred by the restoration process. Now HS1 sponsors various events both within and outside the station and are active in the community.

## LESSONS

**Find inspiration.** The restoration team travelled all over Europe searching for the best practices of passenger travel. Schiphol Airport (Amsterdam) turned out to be the leading example. Schiphol's ground level design, superb way-finding techniques, and pedestrian scale plan stood out to the St. Pancras team.

**Create a shared vision.** The partnership between English Heritage (preservation), HS1, and London Continental Railways began with a shared vision strategy that made them come together and contribute to the group's goal.

**Aim high.** Together the partners set a new bar for a travel hub. They aimed as high as possible by seeking Eurostar as a client. Without fear, they took risks on new brands & specialty stores that are not usually located in stations.



## IMPACT

It works! With an effective partnership, shared mission, and active participation in the community, St. Pancras is a place for lingering, relaxing, and people watching. The architectural details of the station were wonderfully preserved and accentuated on a human scale—at the eye level. Compared to other stations and pre-restoration, anti-social behaviour like violent crime and graffiti are not issues anymore. Also, St. Pancras continues to be a destination, even for those not travelling; about 25% of visitors come to the station without a transportation reason.

## DO

- write a vision statement
- find international inspiration
- take calculated risks

## IN CONCLUSION

The St. Pancras International Station restoration is an inspiring example for a public transportation node with a unique strategy for improving space at the eye level. The restoration team set a shared vision and created a destination, reinstating the building as an urban landmark, national transportation hub, and community asset. Now the station is again an active gathering place.



# CREATING LIVABILITY

## CASE STUDY HAFENCITY

Hamburg,  
Germany

### INTERVIEW WITH

Tanja Nagelsmeier  
*commercial utilization development and  
coordination, HafenCity Hamburg GmbH*

**“We pay a lot of attention to our plinths in HafenCity. Soft strategies are the key to success, such as networking, information and communication with and between all parties involved. Fixed property regulations also play a major role for the whole development.”**

### FACT 1

746 new homes

### FACT 2

2700 new jobs

### FACT 3

6500 m<sup>2</sup> commercial ground floor space





## TIMELINE

- 1997 The parliament of Hamburg approves the HafenCity project
- 2000 Master plan approved and adopted by Hamburg Senate
- 2001 Construction begins
- 2003 First building completed (SAP)
  - Begin construction of Dalmannkai/Sandtorkai
- 2007 Introduction of HafenCity Ecolabel
  - Begin construction of northern Überseequartier
- 2008 HafenCity becomes an individual city district
- 2009 Completion of first neighbourhood, Am Sandtorkai / Dalmannkai
- 2010 Revision of Masterplan for eastern HafenCity complete

## CONTEXT

Hamburg, the second largest city of Germany and located in the northern-most part of the country, is home to 1.8 million residents. Situated on the River Elbe, Hamburg benefits from its large port and is one of the wealthiest cities in Europe. A portion of the port's land, located in the heart of Hamburg, was consolidated and left vacant for decades. In 1997, the City designated this 157-hectare (388-acre) site as HafenCity and begun the complex planning process of creating a new city. Because of its prime, central location in Hamburg, HafenCity is an ideal hub for residential, commercial, cultural, and business uses. Am Sandtorkai/Dalmannkai was the first completed neighbourhood in HafenCity (2009) and the rest of HafenCity will finish by 2025.

## CHALLENGE

HafenCity Hamburg GmbH, a 100% subsidiary of the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg, is developing HafenCity at Hamburg's behest. This entity is responsible for administration of the "special city and port fund" under public law. Sales of HafenCity land, mostly owned

by the City of Hamburg, finance the majority of public infrastructure, which HafenCity GmbH builds. In addition to planning, building, and financing responsibilities, HafenCity GmbH produces a new downtown and is intent on creating an active community with successful commercial and business uses as well as residential and leisure facilities. On top of that goal, the city should be sustainable, designed well, and most importantly, fine-grained and alive on the ground level beyond regular business hours and the whole year long.

## SOLUTION

HafenCity GmbH set up a one-of-a-kind system for ensuring success. From the very beginning, HafenCity GmbH set the ground level development as a high priority. With this in mind, HafenCity established a unique land-purchasing and -developing strategy. For each plot, HafenCity GmbH produces a set of criteria that spells out the specific demands for the site, also particularly related to the ground level – land usage, design, etc. For example, 5m (16ft) ceilings are required for ground floors to accommodate not only for retailers but also catering, exhibition areas, museums, theatres, cinemas, schools and universities, or other businesses. Also, the price for ground floor space are reduced to entice new uses and to experiment. Finally, the investors are obliged to seek corresponding users to make sure that the mix of uses brings customers and visitors to flow through HafenCity seven days a week and the whole year long.

## SECRETS

**Create one complete concept.** The set of requirements HafenCity GmbH produces for each available plot are not just detailed demands investors must fulfil in order to purchase the plot. Each set varies from plot to plot and includes site-specific demands for land use specifically related to the ground floor, with the aim to provide investors with



new ideas and inspiration. Together, the requirements create a whole ground-floor concept.

**See the common goal as ‘urbanity.’**

HafenCity GmbH infused a solid mix of fine-grained land uses in each neighbourhood, guaranteeing high frequency of ground floor activity. Next, they founded a set of associations made up of community residents and commercial uses to keep communication lines open, honest, and working well. They hold regular community meetings to ensure proper dissemination of information and to identify problems and find solutions.

**Provide information.** A fundamental part of the process is to provide information about neighbourhood developments and technical assistance to interested parties of HafenCity. The HafenCity GmbH also hosts

round-tables for investors and architects of adjacent plots to get together, inspire and challenge, and make the best out of every ground floor. To integrate newcomers and start ups especially on the ground floors, the HafenCity GmbH launched and continues to support social networks in form of clubs or associations. Two staff handle social relationships with the residents and commercial affairs for the ground floor tenants.

**LESSONS**

**Set objectives.** The requirement for each plot helped maintain certain goals and objectives for land use, design, and sustainability of the ground floor’s public realm. HafenCity GmbH demanded the investors to meet those objectives and set the bar very high. But the system is flexible, far more flexible than a



long-term fixed development plan and the market can react with innovative ideas.

**Think outside the box.** HafenCity GmbH forced the investors to think of ground floor utilization; even residential-focused investors must think about ground floor from the beginning. The process of learning for both HafenCity GmbH and the investors was challenging and time-consuming, but earned success in the end.

**Form a network.** Community associations, round-tables for investors and developers, and public meetings helped create networks, prevent potential problems, and made it easier to solve problems. For example, to create unconventional solutions to handle on-going construction work, which aggravate ground floor tenants, the group created a small village of temporary units (tents) in another part of the neighbourhood, away from construction dust and noise.

## IMPACT

Tanja Nagelsmeier, from HafenCity GmbH, explained that they learned a lot from HafenCity's first neighbourhood and transferred the knowledge to the next quarters. By integrating public amenities into ground floors on a grand scale was a major success. The architectural conditions in sale contracts and zoning plans, the reduced price for ground floor space and the forcing investors to seek corresponding users all laid the foundation for a growing vitality. The neighbourhood has a good mix of residential and commercial uses, and the network between commercial and residents remains

strong as well. Issues concerning ground floor design, accessibility, configuration of public spaces, and orientation systems for customers have been thoroughly discussed, altered and made even more explicit.

## DO

- consider identity and urbanity as basic perspectives
- manage the diversity of factors to create a vital ground floor
- find corresponding users
- provide explicit information and transparency
- launch and support networks and communities
- ease possible tension with sensitive responses
- create solutions with the major players and the community

## IN CONCLUSION

Through learning, patience, and collaboration, HafenCity's first neighbourhood was completed in 2009. Am Sandtorkai/Dalmanckai is now home to about 1,500 people and 2,700 new jobs. The cityscape in this neighbourhood is quite diverse; 27 developers and 26 architecture firms were involved in the 15 buildings of the neighbourhood. The ground level is a public place, open to everyone. Together with the investors, developers, and architects, the GmbH advocated for a well-designed and thoughtful ground floor through their site-specific demands. They set clear objectives and pushed investors to think outside their comfort zone—and ended up with a complete neighbourhood with its own character and identity. Continued cooperation with all partners and especially the community network shows a real investment and dedication to HafenCity, qualities that will carry on to the next phases of the city.



# URBAN REGENERATION

# UNCOVERING HIDDEN TREASURES

Gerard Peet, Frank Belderbos & Joep Klabbers  
(lecturer, project manager and architect)

One of the most authentic shopping streets of Rotterdam West, the Nieuwe Binnenweg, is under reconstruction. Over the last few decades the street suffered from economic decline and degradation. With a vacancy rate higher than other streets and a rather low variety in shops, the Nieuwe Binnenweg was in need for an upgrade.

## **ORIGINS OF THE BINNENWEG**

The Binnenweg, originally a country-road between the towns of Rotterdam and Delfshaven, dates back to the 13th century. The 1860's industrial boom of Rotterdam's harbour area marked the beginning of development along the Binnenweg as an urban street with a total length of over two kilometres (1.5 miles). Originally, the developments were mostly dwellings. In 1900, only 57% of the premises had shops on the ground floor. By 1940 it was 87%, making the Binnenweg an urban high street with all sorts of shops, from groceries to luxury goods such as jewellery and fur.

The architecture of these 19th century developments was simple and effective. At a fast pace, relatively cheap and high-density housing was constructed, all with very similar characteristics. This so-called "revolution-construction," was the work of enterprising contractors who used catalogues with readymade ornaments rather than the design service of architects. The result was a visually coherent streetscape with classic tripartite brick façades, horizontal lines, vertical windows and stone ornaments. Whenever the original ground-floor dwelling had to be turned



into a shop, the brick façade was simply cut away and replaced with a storefront.

During World War II, when Rotterdam's city centre was bombed, the Nieuwe Binnenweg took over the entertainment function of the city centre with shops, cafés, restaurants, and a cinema. During the fifties, sixties, and seventies the original city centre slowly reclaimed its central function. Since then, the Nieuwe Binnenweg has seen a decline of economic activities. Although marginal shops, vacant spaces, and poor maintenance of the houses and shops are evident, the Nieuwe Binnenweg has retained some of its beautiful icons such as high quality furniture stores and delicatessens.

## **ORGANISING THE REVITALISATION PROCESS**

Due to the economic decline of the street the local shopkeepers have since organised themselves and demanded action from the local government. In 2007, the local government and stakeholders of the Nieuwe Binnenweg started a program of revitalisation. The question was how to finance an integrated approach of revitalisation of the Nieuwe Binnenweg and how to involve the private owners in the program. To start the process, a wide range of stakeholders—major property owners on the street including the housing corporations and private property owners, the entrepreneur association, and the borough of Delfshaven—were invited to participate and formulate their goals and objectives. The revitalisation program was organized around four objectives: a safe and clean street; restoration of about 100 shops and houses; acquisition of about 40 new shops; and renewal and improvement of public space.

So with a wide support of social and business participants, the municipality created a political bind to direct and fund a large part of the revitalisation. The local public transport authority RET, responsible for the almost worn-out tram lines, and the European Fund for Regional Development (EFRD) financed most of the project. The local government offered partial funding for housing rehabilitation and economic development. All together, about €20 million public funding was generated and about €15 million of private funding through the building improvements. Entrepreneurs could also invest in their shop. They could obtain 55% of their investment with a max of € 15 000,- subsidy per shop.





## FAÇADE RESTORATION

The overall appearance of the street and façade consists of more than the plinths alone. Above eye level the brickwork enriched with tiling and baked enamel finish, mouldings and ornamental concrete finishing, contributes to the rich visual quality of the Nieuwe Binnenweg. One of the priorities in the program was to restore the visual quality the shops and houses. In over a hundred years these façades, and especially the storefronts, had suffered from poor maintenance and low-quality home-improvement. To preserve as much of the original quality as possible, the project focussed on the façade as a whole.

To restore the façades to their original historic quality, they were examined, following criteria from the City of Rotterdam's *'Commissie voor Welstand en Monumenten'* (Quality Assessment Committee). These criteria state, for example, that the transition from public to private space needs special attention, especially on a small scale. For example, entrance doors and doorbells should be of high quality. Doors should complement the architecture of the façade and original ornaments should be preserved. Storefronts should always be designed to match the original façade and should relate to the adjacent architecture.

Although the situation was challenging, close observation of the storefronts demonstrated that not all had been lost; over the years, every new shop owner added a new layer to the storefront, avoiding the hassle of deconstructing the old one. Behind layers and layers of cheap cladding and billboards much of the old façades and ornaments were still there, and in great condition. Peeling off these layers exposed some remarkable findings, such as stained glass, tiled panels, and historic woodcarving. Brickwork was cleaned, bringing back the bright colours and layers of paint were stripped from mouldings and ornamental concrete to reveal its rich patterns and shapes. Much attention was given to apply the right colours for this 19th century architecture. These hidden treasures only had to be unveiled to restore the façades to their original quality.

## LESSONS FOR A HOPEFUL FUTURE

With the entry of new specialty shops, the street is re-developing into an attractive city street. From this project and process the following lessons can be learned. First, it's important for all participants to understand the significance of a long-term contract and realise that the process will take around eight years, or more. So all stakeholders should be committed to and understand the long-term contract. Second, to generate enough money the right stakeholders must be at the table, including the local businesses and social partners. Third, a written order for renovating the buildings with a specific attention for the original quality is a good instrument to get private owners involved, but a subsidy-instrument is necessary to work with them on integral improvement plans. Finally, it's difficult to stop a 20-year process of decline in only four years. In eight or ten years from now, we will see how the Nieuwe Binnenweg has developed.

# REINVENTING THE GROUND FLOOR AFTER 50 YEARS

Arjan Gooijer, Gert Jan te Velde & Klaas Waarheid  
(architects)

## **A RATIONALE FOR GOOD RESIDENTIAL PLINTHS**

An important cause of poor housing and living quality in the post-war Dutch residential areas is the unattractive appearance and mis-use of the plinths of many residential buildings. The post-war areas have been developed from abstract urban conceptions at a district level with merely programmatic targets. The daily use of the dwelling, surroundings, and streets were regarded as less important. But precisely in the everyday use a good plinth is of crucial importance. Fortunately, we can still change things that are 50 years overdue.

The plinth is the connection between building and surroundings. Design, programming (land use), and organisation of the ground level of a residential building determine not only the impact the building has on its passers-by. Those characteristics also determine the extent to which the area functions.

During the post-war reconstruction period there was much attention for the typology of the residential building. Architects and planners of the day sought an optimal organisation of floor plans, routing, and orientation of the dwellings. They paid also a lot of attention to new, open urban design. But in many cases the crucial link between the dwelling and the neighbourhood – the plinth – was not designed carefully enough. The ground floors of many residential buildings did not take advantage of the way they are allocated.

Today, these buildings and neighbourhoods struggle for a positive image. In order to revitalise them, we often have to focus on the plinths. In short, we can do this in three different ways:

- a. strengthening and optimizing the original plinth setup;
- b. adjusting the plinth setup to the existing allocation;
- c. adjusting both the plinth and allocation.

Each way depends on the kind of problem that is to be resolved. The following examples are from the portfolio of *Van Schagen Architecten*:

## **A. OPTIMIZING THE ORIGINAL SETUP: VISSENKOMMEN PENDRECHT**

The Vissenkomen (“Fishbowls”, a nickname due to the form of the windows) in Rotterdam Pendrecht are characterised by an open ground floor, only used for small storage rooms and entrances to porches. The openness of the plinth is a fundamental element of the urban plan: permitting the connection between inner courtyard and the street, which in the original plan both were planned to be the playing field for the children from the residential buildings.



Rotterdam, Pendrecht (Vissenkomen): old and new situation

Due to the diminishing of households with children in these residential buildings the openness in and around the porch entrances turned into breeding grounds for trouble/nuisance. The refurbishment of the plinths in the year 2000 focused on preserving the connections and transparency of the ground floor. At the same time the introduction of new materials made the borders between public and private clear as glass, literally. The distinct architecture of the building, also created by a strong distinction between the plinth and the floors above, remains dominant to the modest adaption of the plinth.

## B. ADJUSTING TO THE ALLOCATION: 3 EXAMPLES

In different projects we focus on benefitting from the chances that allocation offers to improve both the use of the environment and the residential programme of the building. Sometimes all what's needed are relatively simple interventions. Other times, it requires a stouter reorganisation of the plinths of the building.

In *Schuilenburg* (Amersfoort), green strips are located between the residential buildings. Originally they were not reachable from the



Amersfoort, Schuilenburg: old and new situation

building, so they were not used and had no meaning. A reorganisation of the ground floor, in which garages were removed, offered the possibility of a two-sided entrance. The architectural principal plan (plinth and the floors above) were enriched with a high-quality use of the new plinth programme with open façades, good lighting, and aesthetic tiling. The apartments above were renovated while being inhabited.

In *Enschedelaan* (The Hague) the residential buildings were built in a row structure (front side faces back side) so all apartments are oriented towards the sun. The green inner yard is not accessible from the residential blocks and has no direct functional use. In the renovation of the complex the ground floor is merged with the first floor into plinth maisonettes with a front door to the street and a garden on the backside at the inner yard. The remaining part of this yard is used for a community playground, reachable from the surrounding private gardens and from the lift hall. With this reorganization the residential building links better to its environment with direct entrances at the street. However the



The Hague, Enschedelaan: old and new situation

characteristic architecture of the buildings as distinct blocks has been preserved. The old balconies and galleries are turned into private verandas that function as intermediate between street and dwelling.

*Complex 50* (Amsterdam Osdorp) is also built in a row structure (“strokenverkaveling”). The ground floor consisted of porch entrances, storerooms, garages, some small apartments, and a narrow and low underpass. The two lower floors are completely reorganised. The principal intervention is a maisonette with its own front door at the street and a garden at the sun side. Despite this notable programmatic intervention over two floors, the main setup in the architecture (a plinth of one floor with a different world above it) is still preserved, because of the good proportioning and characteristic image. The content obviously has been adapted to the new use.

### **C. ADJUSTING PLINTH AND ALLOCATION: FLORIJN BIJLMER**

The urban plan of Amsterdam-Bijlmer was made for residential blocks on piles (the well-known Corbusian ‘pilotis’), so that the green landscape could ‘flow’ underneath the buildings. Those piles have however never been built. The ground floor of the famous hexagonal ‘honeycomb buildings’ consisted of storages, at some places interrupted with an underpass. In the renewal plan of the F-neighbourhood, the remaining parts of the high-rise buildings have been included in a new allocation of streets and closed building blocks.

In order to include the high-rise in this urban set-up, a new programme and image has been developed for the plinth of the Florijn-building. By expanding the ground floor space has been created for a new programme of atelier dwellings, entrances, business space and patio dwelling in the ‘plinth of the building. Within the volume, hardly visible from the street, space has been found for storages and parking. In the plan we focused on preserving the former inner-street. Here we situated the living rooms of the plinth apartments, allowing sufficient distance between living and the public domain while also creating openness and nearness in relation to the street.

### **CONCLUSIONS**

- The plinth is a crucial link between the dwelling and the use and image of the neighbourhood.
- There are different ways in which the existing plinth can be transformed: by improvement of what is already there, by reorganisation, or by a complete transformation.
- Every situation asks for a unique solution - topics to take into account are: allocation, program and use, organization of entrances, and direct surroundings.
- Often it is possible to use the existing architectural image in the transformation.

# UNDERNEATH RAILS AND ROADS

Mattijs van 't Hoff (urbanist)

As places of interaction, cities need two features: infrastructure connections and meeting or gathering places. Historically, many cities were established on natural or manmade crossings such as rivers and roads, or grew from harbours. At these crossings, trading places with markets and inns developed into villages and later into cities. Streets and squares in these cities still bear names reminiscent of this past of trade and markets. Our cities today are still places of interaction in the global marketplace. Connecting and meeting face-to-face remains an important aspect of business development, innovation and social contact: firms need local buzz as well as global pipelines (Bathelt et al. 2004; Storper and Venables, 2004). Growing mobility demand however has changed many cities in nodes of infrastructure, forgetting the human scale and meeting places. By using the infrastructure constructions for the plinths of the city, we can provide new urban spaces and opportunities to interact and gather.

## **CITY AND INFRASTRUCTURE**

Growing mobility have always required cities to adapt to new types of infrastructure. In 19<sup>th</sup> century Paris, baron Hausmann developed a system of new boulevards and avenues to improve connections. Also in other cities boulevards were developed, as well as new transport modes such as railways and tramlines: some on street level, some underground, and others elevated. Railway stations were the nodes in these



Elevated railway in Paris

networks and attracted businesses like hotels, bars and entertainment for the visitors. Elevated railways introduced new kinds of covered public spaces in the city; spaces to be used for markets, not intended as such but a by-product of the infrastructure.

In the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century the development of new infrastructure for cars dominated most western cities. Unlike the grand boulevards in Paris with their contemporary street façades, these new highways often dissected cities, were disconnected from the urban fabric, and only linked at interchanges. No human scale and no street life are involved. In many cities citizens protested these transformations especially when neighbourhoods were at the mercy of bulldozers for the sake of more highways, a famous example being the opposition of Jane Jacobs against Robert Moses' proposal for the Lower Manhattan Expressway. However we continue to see car-centred urban planning in many cities around the world, focusing only on the infrastructure and disregarding the relationship with city life, structure, and the human scale.



Elevated highway in New York, Williamsburg

### Back to places

Jane Jacobs' activism (among others) in the 1970s shifted perceptions about the city and city life: cars should not be dominant, people should be. This thinking has led to "cover-up infrastructure": the development and implementation of underground infrastructure with new functions and urban spaces on top. New local streets and parks on top of tunnels give new meaning and commercial development purposes for the surrounding buildings and plinths. In Paris, a park on Avenue du Président Wilson in Saint-Denis covers the A1 highway. In Seoul, an inner-city elevated highway was demolished and replaced with a historic stream and Cheonggyecheon Park. Unfortunately, these redevelopments for removal or bringing underground of fixed infrastructures are expensive solutions. Since not many cities can afford these solutions, infrastructure that provide space *underneath* may be more interesting.



Before: Cheonggyecheon highway in Seoul



After: Cheonggyecheon area turned into a park





Isemarkt Hamburg

## UNDERNEATH THE RAILS AND ROADS

Existing infrastructure constructions in the city have a dual meaning in connecting: as an elevated structure they provide interlocal connections for the city as a whole, however at ground level these structures often form a barrier between neighbourhoods and have a blank façade. Redeveloping these ground level spaces into public places or plinths, the infrastructure can be used as places for commercial, cultural, or leisure use. For this infrastructural plinth, we can distinguish three types or functions:

### 1. Markets

In many cities, markets belong outdoor despite disadvantages of the weather (rain or hot sun). Infrastructure can provide dry and shadowed spaces, if markets are located under bridges and overpasses. In Hamburg, Germany, the *Isemarkt* is a weekly market under the local U-bahn viaduct in the Isestraße. While the viaduct is from 1912, the market has been held since 1949 and with a length of 970 meters (0.6 mile) it is now Europe's longest open-air market. In Sacramento, California, a parking lot underneath the eight lanes of Highway 50 transforms every Sunday into California's largest farmers' market. At this market, farmers and ranchers from the surroundings valleys connect and trade with the local chefs and home cooks.

### 2. Parks and playgrounds

The areas underneath highways or train viaducts are also suitable for leisure and



Park A8erna under highway, Zaanstad

recreational purposes to the people in the surrounding neighbourhoods. In Zaanstad, the Netherlands, the highway A8 divided the city into two halves and the space under it was abandoned. With ideas from local citizens, the area was converted into a multi-functional public space, designed by NL Architects. A covered square with a supermarket and a graffiti gallery, a canoe pool, and sporting facilities now connect both parts of the small city. Similarly in Toronto, Canada, Underpass Park was created as part of the waterfront redevelopment, and turned an ignored area into a community playground, providing sports and play facilities for children and adults. Worldwide other examples can be found of parks underneath highways or on top of abandoned viaducts, such as the High Line in New York, creating green areas in the city.

### **3. Commercial and cultural plinths**

A third type of use is to develop the space underneath the infrastructure into a truly urban-built plinth with street façades and functions. These spaces can have commercial or cultural uses such as restaurants, galleries, or workshops, depending on the needs of the neighbourhood. These new plinths add activity and life to the street, making it a part of the city's economic and social structure and creating a more pleasant and safe route along it. One of the best known examples is the *Viaduc des Arts*, underneath the arcades of the Vincennes railway line in Paris. In 1988, architect Patrick Berger's plan was chosen for the conversion of the line into a strip of art



Viaduc des Arts, Paris

galleries and cafés. *The Promenade Plantée* was created on top of the viaduct, a 4.7 km (2.9 miles) elevated linear park. Similar projects with new galleries and workshops were developed in Amsterdam (*Onder de Bogen*) and in Rotterdam (*Hofbogen*). These developments of infrastructural plinths enable space for artists, craftsmen and commerce, bringing life back to neighbourhoods that lacked vibrancy and cohesion due to the transection of the railway.

### **Both infrastructure and place are needed**

Cities are places of connection and interaction: space for infrastructure and place are both needed. Instead of planning them back-to-back we can design for a cohabitation of infrastructure and people. Infrastructure designed not only to connect the city and region, but also to connect on the street level, adding functions and meaning for the surrounding neighbourhoods.

We can use infrastructure to develop commercial, leisure, and cultural places and activities for the city, and use spaces underneath infrastructure as places for people to meet and to expand public space and public life. Even when the infrastructure becomes derelict (e.g. old train viaducts), they still can provide valuable space underneath and on top.

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# HOFBOGEN: A VISION FOR THE IN-BETWEEN PLINTH

Henk Ovink (urban advisor)

The plinths in the city are the swinging doors between wet and dry, warm and cold, inside and outside. The plinth tells the story of the building as you enter it, or even before you go in, as its billboard, an advertisement of the inside. And at the same time the plinth reflects the city (sometimes literally) the power of the urban space, the place. The plinth is a border and at the same time, the membrane of the city; the swap space to look at, touch, and pass through.

## **THE FORGOTTEN LINES OF THE HOFBOGEN**

The Hofbogen Rotterdam could be called a building. It's a long, low-rise building situated very close to Central Station and the city centre, but in a slightly forgotten neighbourhood. It is the former elevated railway, the Hofplein line from The Hague to Rotterdam. With new rail lines and Rotterdam's new Central Station, the line became redundant (as did the building beneath the Hofplein rail lines). What remained was a strange building--not a viaduct, not a bridge, not a high-rise building, but an elongated, meandering building with a flat roof. The strength of this industrial heritage lies in its urban quality and in its architecture, the construction, the appearance, the urban strength and impact, the continuity, and the story it tells. Once railway line, carrier of trains, goods and people, now an object, carrier for commercial activities, and neighbourhood identity.

The unused rail line draws a long trail through the city and although it connects, it separates at the same time. The Hofbogen is actually all plinth—there's nothing above it but the unused rail line. It is not a building in the traditional sense. It is a kind of enormously long container wherein people can program and organize all kinds of things. It is a public invitation, a catalyst for entrepreneurs and innovation, activity and action. At the same time, the Hofbogen is one big in-between space where city meets city, a membrane for exchange and interaction between entrepreneurs, artists, and officials for an ever-changing use and meaning.



The Hofbogen also has a roof. In fact, this roof is nothing more than an elevated ground level, where the rails are and where the trains used to run. Lifted above the public space of the city, it forms a terrace for the city. It is also an in-between space; a place for staying and leaving; a place for experience. Up until recently it was only a roof. The Hofbogen roof terrace is special for this forgotten part of Rotterdam. It's where the neighbourhood gathers, people party, children play, climb and cycle. A greengrocer grows fruits and vegetables, and the new restaurant opens up a terrace on the roof. Even an annual film festival sets up on the roof every summer.



## TRANSLATING FLEXIBILITY

There are two scales for the Hofbogen line to fulfil this promise of urban reformer. On the scale of the city, it can re-connect the city centre with the surrounding landscape, by using the former rail track as a biking or hiking path. By rebuilding the mistakenly demolished bridge leading to it, the Hofbogen can become the connector to all layers and levels of the city. The other scale is that of the street. The plinth of the Hofbogen can 'store' a flexible program, adjusting the speed of the city to its demands. It can become more connected to the current time: flexible, adaptable and in any scale possible. The building has a great transformative capacity. And the triple-sided character (front, back and roof) creates an ideal billboard for urban program and changing demands.

While also making room for leisure and laziness, Hofbogen is an effective use of space. Block by block, people are starting to fill up the plinths with different uses and designs in this container-like building. Once we have users in the plinths, we can invest more in the terrace above. Every new occupant will create a reaction with new development, new design, and



new investments. Truly making space and giving meaning to every place starts with the many initiators and users; they all are the stakeholders. This process of creating value should run parallel to investing in the Hofbogen itself. With these investments the stakeholders should run a development agency that strengthens the connection between Hofbogen and the adjacent street, its inhabitants, and enterprises. The users and stakeholders could then make the Hofbogen into the development catalyst of the neighbourhood by exploiting its potential.

The Hofbogen is a vehicle for urban reform—spatial policy, governance, finance, innovation, process. It could be the catalyst, but where does that start? Not in city hall or at bureaucratic desks or in design studios, but on the ground. The plinth might be the convener for that reform, the convener for the transition, collecting and translating local needs to urban opportunities. The Hofbogen can be adopted by the central government in its ambition to create maximum flexibility in environmental rules and regulations. It can be a test site for urban legal reform, an example for the current urban development demand and the embodiment of adaptive and flexible city transformation.

# FROM BOX TO BUSINESS, A LOW COST INTERVENTION

Willem van Laar & Arin van Zee (consultants)

## BACKGROUND

In the 1950s and 1960s many low-rise apartment buildings ('*portiekflats*') were built in the Netherlands: three floors high with small dwellings. Some of these buildings had a plinth with local shops like a supermarket, a bakery, or a hairdresser. Nowadays it is visible that this traditional function of the commercial plinth has vanished. Changing circumstances led to bankruptcy of many small shop owners. Commercial activities dissipated, and new not to the neighbourhood related activities (like phone shops) have taken their place. The plinth is poorly maintained and degradation of the plinth is visible.

A similar situation is seen at the storages and garages at the ground floor of many other *portiekflats*. Many of these have closed façade, which brings feelings of insecurity, and thus vitality decreases. This problematic situation was the departure point of a group of professionals working in real estate with different backgrounds in Pluk, an organization that focuses her work on complex social issues. How to bring back economic and social vitality in these neighbourhoods with relatively easy applicable solutions? A learning journey to Liendert in Amersfoort brought new insights.

## LIENDERT

Liendert is a typical post-war neighbourhood in Amersfoort, a Dutch city with 150 000 inhabitants. The neighbourhood (7 000 inhabitants) can be characterized by: low incomes, relatively high rate of unemployment, over 50% social housing, perception of degradation by inhabitants and feelings of insecurity. A part of the neighbourhood called 'De Horsten' has a bad name in particular. Liendert is one of the neighbourhoods in Amersfoort that gets special attention from the government. A lot of social and physical investments have been planned. Emphasis in Liendert has consciously been on the qualities and strengths of the district and its residents, instead of only a focus on their problems. Potentially the neighbourhood 'de Horsten' is a top-location with its location adjacent to a large park. In addition the neighbourhood has a strong social network and lots of entrepreneurial residents.

## NEW SPACES FOR ENTREPRENEURS

One initiative was taken up by de local housing corporation in association with the municipality of the city Amersfoort and Willem van Laar. They concluded that a lot of small entrepreneurs living in the neighbourhood are often less visible because they run their small businesses at home. Amongst them are starters with a need for a small space with a flexible contract and some basic facilities. To rent private space is expensive and contracts are often fixed for several years; a serious financial risk for starters. Based on research in the neighbourhood and amongst entrepreneurs the idea came to rebuild the storage and garage boxes into small spaces for entrepreneurs for a low rent. Thus combining the need for local entrepreneurial spaces with a more open and vivid plinth.







The local housing corporation started with turning seven garage boxes into commercial spaces ( $\pm 20 \text{ m}^2$  with one shared toilet). The corporation got over a hundred requests for space. A few criteria were used to select seven of them: relatively young people, already living in the neighbourhood and who are starters and a role model for others in the neighbourhood. Their business varies from graphic design and IT solution, hairdressing to a jewellery case with retail. It is also possible for students to subscribe and start a business during their study.

## **PARTICULARITIES OF THE RENT**

The indicated price for renovation was € 20 000 per garage box and was subsidized by the Ministry of Social Housing. The rent for these spaces is low and comparable to the rents for a garage box: € 65 a month. The boxes are simple and therefore easy to adjust to the needs of the tenant. The contract is flexible: the term of notice is only one month, and the maximum duration of the rent is two years. In this way it really offers local starters an incentive to develop their businesses to maturity and after two years they can take new steps.

## **CONCLUSION**

The plinth has become more vivid, open and friendly by turning it into commercial units for relatively low costs. It appears to provide in a need for payable basic units with a flexible contract. It enables entrepreneurs living in the neighbourhood to start a business with a smaller chance of debts by failure. In combination with additional measures like renovation, camera surveillance and free business advice from local businessman it is a boost for the liveability and neighbourhood economy at relatively low costs.

# THE REBIRTH OF LITCHI BAY

Lai Shouhua & Jose Chong (urban planners)

Litchi Bay, located in the watery suburbs of the traditional Guangzhou city in China, is an example of a successful urban renewal intervention, connecting existing public spaces and historical buildings along the river and emphasizing design at eye level. By activating surrounding economic development, Litchi Bay became a vibrant public space for leisure and a primary tourist attraction.

## HISTORY

In 206 BC local officials planted vegetables and flowers in this area with their private gardens. Locals called the area “Litchi Bay”. In the Ming and Qing dynasties, Litchi Bay gradually became an attraction for ordinary people, surrounded by beautiful gardens and noble villas immersed in rivers and lakes. In the 1950s to 1980s, the rapid urbanization of Guangzhou city polluted the rivers of Litchi Bay. As a result, most water channels were filled in and transformed into roads. In 1992, the last water channel from Panxi Restaurant to Fengyuan Bridge was filled - Litchi Bay had disappeared.



Water channels filled and transformed into roads



Litchi Bay river system after reconstruction

## THE PROJECT

In 2009, a proposal to rebuild Litchi Bay was launched. The proposal asked for the recovery of a river over 800 meters long, water quality improvement, the renovation of historic buildings, the optimization of landscape environment, and the construction of light engineering works. The project covered an area of 6.5 hectares, from Liwan Lake to Fengyuan Street, including the filled water channels, historic buildings, and surrounding neighbourhoods.

The urban renewal program was successfully completed before the Asian Games held in 2010. The program also added various functions such as cultural performances, traditional Lingnan catering, and retail and fashion, transforming Litchi Bay from a historical area into a modern and dynamic leisure area. Both native residents who lived in Litchi Bay since a long time, as well as tourists and merchants are allured by the impact and potential of this program. Litchi Bay attracts millions of tourists, showing the achievement of the urban renewal program and preservation, water environment management and improvement of public space in Guangzhou city.

## LESSONS

The integration of the waterfront with the adjacent historic buildings and surrounding neighbourhoods is fundamental for a fruitful intervention. Moreover, physical infrastructure improvements need to be accompanied by recreation activities and a good management. The project demonstrates how a renewal project can transform a part of a city.

*Translated by: Xu Yunfei*



Litchi Bay: public space system after reconstruction



Wenta square after reconstruction



South Gate of Litchi Park after reconstruction



A street and water channel after reconstruction

# STREET TRADE AT WARWICK JUNCTION

Richard Dobson & Tasmi Quazi  
(architects and consultants)

## **THE URBAN GATEWAY OF DURBAN**

Warwick Junction is the main railway station and urban gateway of Durban, one of the biggest metropolitan areas in South Africa. Located at the border of the city centre, during apartheid it was the sole entry to the city centre for the black population: a deliberate concentration of traffic flows from rural and semi-urban Durban into the 'white city'. Roads, walkways and pedestrian bridges criss-cross the area, which is only 10 minutes from the city centre. Over 460,000 commuters pass through the transport node every day, making use of the main railway station, the five bus terminals and nineteen taxi stands. Additionally, the area attracts large numbers of street traders: between 6000 and 8000 street traders engage in a variety of activities ranging from traditional medicine, clothing, food, music, fresh produce, arts and crafts. These activities are present in 9 distinct markets and various peripheral locations within the public space.

Due to years of apartheid planning that aimed to separate different ethnic groups, the Warwick Junction area was poorly designed. The ever-increasing number of traders caused congestion and crime was rife. When South Africa elected its first democratic government in 1994, transformation became the priority at all government levels. The project started and was implemented in the context of the political and administrative restructuring of government.



Aerial view of Warwick Junction



Bovine Head Market

## **THE 'NEW' WARWICK**

In 1995, the council set aside a large budget (R4.72 million) to start the regeneration of Warwick Junction and established a structure for operating at an inter-departmental level. The project was part of a city-wide experiment with integrated area-based development, which meant that planning and the management of public resources was decentralized to a geographical area and that the various departments responsible for managing the area would work together. There were two fundamentals for the project: 1. Area-based management and inter-departmental collaboration, and 2. Commitment to participation and consultation.

Area-based management allows for participation of the citizens in all aspects of development planning. The conversion of what was once a congested and grimy area to exciting, interconnected markets and an informal shopping concourse are some of the triumphs of the Warwick Junction Project. The project reversed the status of Warwick in three years, from a perceived centre of "crime and grime" to a flourishing part of the inner city.

## **RESEARCH AND DESIGN FOR A CO-OPERATIVE RESULT**

There was no precedent in the design of the markets around Warwick Junction. The research and design team spent immense amounts of time observing the dynamics of the traders, how products were delivered, the use of space, how the wares were processed and displayed, different uses of space changing over the time of day, cooking processes, etc. Many low cost, durable and effective solutions were designed for shading, storing, displaying, and organizing the activities and flows of people and goods. Residual spaces and uncompleted infrastructure were put to new uses to make space for a variety of markets and users. The final design improved the working conditions of the traders, gave them greater recognition, improved connectivity across the markets, and supported maintenance and cleanliness.

The major infrastructural changes included:

- Increased pedestrian walkways
- Improvements in trading conditions
- Spatial redesign of the informal economy
- Providing trader storage
- Providing street trader sites, tables and shelters
- Providing water and electricity
- Providing business enhancement strategies (i.e. health and safety)

## **A PARTNERSHIP WITH STREET TRADERS**

The project grappled with the issues of maintaining a basic level of safety, cleanliness and hygiene, and the solution was to focus on a co-operative effort. The project team carries out targeted measures to improve safety, for example easing congestion, eliminating canyons, reducing concealed

spaces, improving street lighting, increasing police presence and investing in community policing. “Traders against Crime” was set up on a voluntary basis. It was impressive how the traders were prepared to work together in dealing with crime.

The street traders also came together to keep Warwick clean. This included an annual “blitz”, volunteer cleaners, transforming toilet and water facilities, managing pavement sleeping, addressing health issues, and providing childcare.

The city’s health department worked with the street traders, training them on minimum health standards. The department also compiled a preliminary database of street vendors, detailing their activities and documenting needed infrastructure.

Street traders also self-organized into the Informal Traders Management Board, set up in 1995. The first task was to clean up the many years of accumulated waste along the pavements. This “face-lift” operation was a milestone in the regeneration of Warwick Junction in that it showed that a lot could be achieved through inter-departmental co-operation in partnership with the street traders.

The team embarked on the marketing of the “New Warwick” to change the perception of the area as a run-down, dirty and crime-ridden area among the users, council officials, politicians, the private sector and the public at large. The exercise was important for traders and commuters as it enhanced a sense of ownership and pride in the area, but also recognized the contribution made by informal activities to the city economy.

## LESSONS

The starting point was that street traders are part of the city and from an economic and social level, they contribute significantly to the local economy. There was unanimous agreement of the need to invest in street trader management with an inter-departmental approach (with financial and personnel resources). Understanding the specific needs and dynamics of the different segments of the informal economy was crucial in the final designs of the markets of Warwick Junction. Establishing a local project centre was important for the consultative approach and the success of the project.



Brook Street Market





Brook Street Market



Herb Market

# THE 3-HOUR EXPERIENCE

## CASE STUDY DISTILLERY DISTRICT

Toronto,  
Canada



### INTERVIEW WITH

Willie Macrae  
*planner, City of Toronto Downtown Section*

**“We showed developers that  
you can preserve heritage  
buildings—and do it well!”**

### FACT 1

13 acres

### FACT 2

0 cars allowed within the neighbourhood

### FACT 3

40 buildings

## TIMELINE

- 1832 Gooderham & Worts Distillery founded
- 1990 Distillery operations ceased, creating an investment opportunity for most of the Victorian industrial buildings, all built between 1826-1927. Though not publicly accessible, the site was used for over 800 film and TV productions
- 1994 Toronto City approved a Heritage Master Plan for The Distillery District
- 1997 Three residential buildings begin development on the periphery of the district by a non-profit developer
- 2001 The site was sold to local developers (CityScape, Inc.) who partnered with Dundee Realty; the partnership took the Master Plan to reality
- 2001 Begin adaptive reuse and preservation of heritage buildings
- 2003 The Distillery District opened to public
- 2010 Two peripherally-built residential towers finished construction, one tower on its way, and developers have applied for 4th tower

## CONTEXT

After 158 years of successful distillery production, the Gooderham & Worts distillery finally closed its doors in 1990. Its prime location, near the Lake Ontario waterfront and two kilometres from Toronto's CBD, and the site's historic buildings made the 13-acre site a top-choice redevelopment and investment venue. Toronto urban planners immediately began the Master Plan process, envisioning a new, fully equipped, vibrant mixed-use neighbourhood that focused on culture, arts, and entertainment.

## PROBLEM

The planners and developers came across obstacles for planning the ground level from the very beginning. Issues regarding properly preserving and adaptively reusing the site's historic buildings, auto use and

parking for residents and visitors to the area, maintaining affordable rental costs, keeping ground floor tenants happy during further construction, and just how to get people down there (and keep them coming back!) were all major challenges that needed careful, strategic planning. Regarding the plinths in particular, though, was the challenge of physical buildings. Since they were originally designed to produce and store alcohol, installing windows and maintaining transparency between the outside and inside space was a nightmare.

## SOLUTION

A successful ground floor meant keeping it active, safe, and pleasant all day and into the evening. Placing a mix of uses centred around arts and entertainment venues (theatres, restaurants, cafes, and bars) ensured day-long, night-long, and year-round use in the district. The primary developer, Cityscape, Inc., insisted on creating a "3-hour experience" for residents and visitors out of this unique cultural hotspot and community, where all types of people live, work, and play together. For individual plinths, Cityscape chose creative retailers (absolutely no chains!) who invented original ways to display their goods and attract people inside their shops, in spite of the lack of windows and transparency.

## SECRETS

**Design to complement preservation.** The King Parliament Secondary Plan identified each of the district's buildings and specifically addressed which components were necessary to maintain—essentially, a set of design guidelines. In 2001, when Cityscape took over the property, they were very committed to heritage preservation of all the buildings onsite, following the design guidelines, and creating a streetscape that prioritizes preservation. As a guiding principle, they wanted the restoration to recreate the historic feel of the neighbourhood. Moreover, the residential

towers were strategically designed to be slender and placed on the periphery of the District's border—so as to preserve the historic view corridors and to maintain as much sunlight as possible on the Distillery's centre.

**Pedestrianise the street.** A major component of success included maintaining the area as a car-free zone. With only pedestrians, it was important to use material that respected the surroundings and the era of the buildings, to design the entrances to attract and welcome customers, to introduce new and exciting streetscape elements, and to retain other design elements that engage the regular passers-by.

**Devise a 3-hour experience.** Public art, outdoor lighting, seating, transparent windows, and high ground floor ceiling heights all contributed to shaping the ground floor public realm. Although the uses within the District are diverse, they all fit under an umbrella of arts and entertainment and create an inviting space for people to wander, linger, and discover new things—all in about three hours.

## LESSONS

**Eliminate big chains.** Cityscape demanded zero formula or chain commercial on the ground floor in order to maintain a local, neighbourhood feel. Though big box stores would bring in more revenue, Cityscape knew that would be detrimental to the vision of the neighbourhood.

**Acquire unique partners.** The developers recently partnered with Artscape, a non-profit organization that assists local artists, to subsidize the ground floor gallery spaces. This way, local and small-scale artists can afford, use, and remain in the ground level spaces.

**Program events.** Constant programming of festivals and events throughout the year has brought people down to the Distillery District. Since weather has been a consistent predictor of foot traffic,

events have stymied the effects of cold winter weather and increased foot traffic while also strengthening the community and local economy.

## IMPACT

Economically, the District's tenants are doing very well, especially the theatre. Artists have come and gone from the gallery spaces, as anticipated, and the ground level has experienced quite a bit of turn-over though the main establishments and office tenants have remained the same. Pedestrianizing the District has also made an impact on the rest of Toronto. As the city tries to embrace more pedestrian-oriented spaces and car-free zones and implement more pedestrian improvement projects, city planners look to the success of the District for key insights and strategies. Finally, in terms of heritage preservation, the Distillery District has shown the sceptics that it *can* be done, and it *can* work.

## DO

- adaptive reuse and brownfield redevelopment of historic industrial sites
- partner with non-profits and unique organizations who can bring creativity to the table
- create design guidelines for the site that compliment the existing design
- think strategically about the potential users' experience

## IN CONCLUSION

Since it's opening in 2003, the Distillery District has been a success story of brownfield and historic redevelopment, especially for the ground level. It's also demonstrated how the use of the arts can drastically improve an urban neighbourhood. Pedestrian-only streets and neighbourhoods are unique in the city of Toronto, and planners wanted to show the city that if it worked in the Distillery District, it could work elsewhere. By finding a unique partnership with Artscape, the Distillery

has been able to stabilize their tenants in the gallery spaces and support local and up-and-coming artists. Cityscapes' other partnerships with educational, cultural, and entertainment enterprises also lead the District in the right direction and solidify tenant occupancy in the buildings. Finally, those who live in the recently completed residential towers on the periphery of the District will continue to support and enhance an active ground level both in and surrounding the District—an important component to any successful ground floor. The major challenge for the years to come, as David Jackson from Cityscape explained, is to maintain the original artistic vibe of the neighbourhood.



# LIVE, WORK AND PLAY

## CASE STUDY HET EILANDJE

Antwerp,  
Belgium



### INTERVIEW WITH

Filip Smits

*program manager, City of Antwerp Urban  
Planning Department*



**“The revival of this neighbourhood  
is like wine, it’s getting better  
over the years.”**

### FACT 1

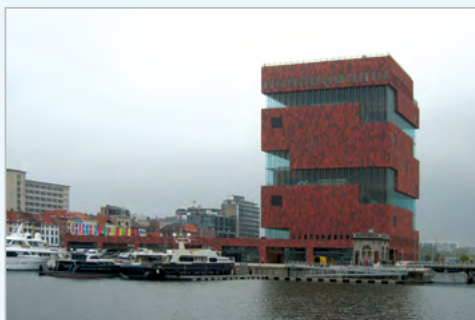
170 hectares

### FACT 2

1,500 current residents, expecting 7000

### FACT 3

1/3 public space (water + quaysides)



## TIMELINE

- 1795-1814 Docklands established by Napoleon as a military base
- 1990s City at the Stream contest for plans for international harbours
- 1993 First master plan for Docklands
- 2000 Master plan by Rene Daniels
- 2000 First project on the water
- 2002 Architectural contest
- 2006 Quaysides renewed, historical warehouse renovated
- 2011 Museum on the Stream opens
- 2012 Water decontamination project finishes and floating swimming pool opens in August
- 2013 People on the Move museum will open in historical warehouses
- 2015 Realisation of the public tram network Eilandje

## CONTEXT

With roots dating back to the 16<sup>th</sup> century and a strong military presence during the Napoleonic era, Antwerp's Het Eilandje area has undergone massive changes. This 170-hectare neighbourhood held a prominent role in 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century urban life, but in the 20<sup>th</sup> century it became a derelict barrier between port and city. The 1990s master planning propelled excitement over the neighbourhood's revival and, after the plan was complete, an architectural contest in 2002 paved the way for Het Eilandje's new beginnings as a sustainable, transit-oriented, and mixed-use waterfront neighbourhood.

## CHALLENGES

The project leaders were confronted with several challenges from the beginning. First, the main parcels of land within Het Eilandje were owned by the harbour authority, which was keen on profit from the imminent renewal of the area. This conflict thwarted partnership and an overall strategy for the neighbourhood. Additionally, the project area contained historical buildings in need of preservation,

brown-field land demanding mitigation, and water requiring decontamination. Non-automotive transportation to and from the neighbourhood to the rest of the city was a key concern for increasing foot traffic. Finally, the planners had to address the image of the neighbourhood—how to get people down to Het Eilandje and coming back for more.

## SOLUTION

The master plan completed in 2000 focused almost entirely on the ground floor—including the water surfaces and quaysides. The plan regulated ground floor ceiling heights of 3.5m and taller than other floors. The six residential towers were also preconceived with conditions of functional plinths; each tower must provide commercial or public space on the ground floor. Although the master plan provided the project leaders and developers with some inspiration, most of the inspiration came from the site itself: the fluidity of the port and the idea of people and goods moving in and out of harbour. They wanted to translate this historical ebb and flow into interaction with Het Eilandje's plinths.

Over the past decade, the project leaders at the City of Antwerp joined forces with the harbour authorities and the Flemish government to create a new investment scheme that combines private and public financing. The harbour authorities, who direct the water surfaces developments and decontamination, are in the process of transferring the land to city, which will allow the city to focus on sustainability and an overall strategy for the neighbourhood. The Flemish government has provided subsidies for public realm improvements, monuments, and financing a new tram route. Together, and in accordance with the master plan, the partnership created a new mixed-use neighbourhood with historic identity and a primary focus on high-quality, active ground floor spaces.

## SECRETS

**Break even.** The Het Eilandje neighbourhood revitalisation is a not-for-profit project. The City of Antwerp uses one strategy of private investment with specific developers and a second market- and public-driven investment strategy to produce a stand-alone financial programme with the goal of breaking even. One of the main attractions of Het Eilandje, the Museum on the Stream, is a free public museum with an open plinth (and top floor terrace) available to the public until midnight.

**Divide and conquer.** The developers showed more interest in developing smaller renewal projects over a longer period of time. Slowing down the revitalisation process allowed for “periods of quiet” for all partners, especially for the existing residents who tolerated the construction. This “slow urbanism” also ensured lots of flexibility and energy among the partners, as well as a steady stream of financial investment staving off the impacts of the crisis.

## LESSONS

**Not everything must be new.** Because of its historic importance, the planners and architects made sure that, through design, people could still recognize the neighbourhood from the past and feel connected to it. Adaptive reusing warehouses and older buildings, repairing missing connections, and restoring dilapidated details maintained the “rough” identity of the neighbourhood.

**No silent walls.** The master plan called for all ground levels as areas with public or semi-public functions so that people can easily interact with the plinths, streets, and quaysides—seamlessly, but emphasizing a distinction between land and water. As such, there are no “silent walls” in the neighbourhood.

**Keep in touch.** In addition to maintaining solid communication and good contracts with all the key project partners, discussions with people who live in Het Eilandje (or interested

to live there) are held every year. All the plans are communicated to the residents and the residents provide feedback and participate in the design process. The city council confirms these meetings and ensures impact of their participation.

## IMPACT

The revitalisation of Het Eilandje has created an extension of Antwerp’s city centre through brown-field redevelopment. Currently, 1500 people are residing in the neighbourhood and this is expected to increase almost five-fold to 7000. The Museum on the Stream continues to demonstrate a successful ground floor and destination for the neighbourhood and provides a culturally significant destination for newcomers. The partnership between the harbour authorities and the City of Antwerp has grown and, despite the current crisis, both parties maintain energy, excitement, and dynamic passion for the project.

## DO

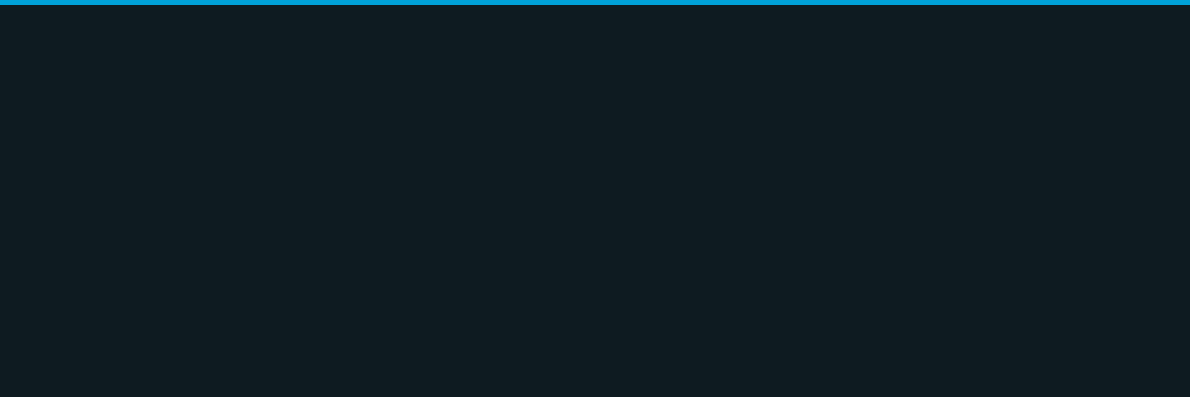
- maintain a “rough” urban identity when appropriate
- reuse and repair historic details
- consider slowing down a potentially fast-paced development
- keep cultural institutions open late, past regular business hours

## IN CONCLUSION

The project’s approach to prioritize a dense, high-quality, and sustainable neighbourhood brought new life and excitement to the area. These priorities coupled with the new financial strategy, ground floor requirements for public and semi-public spaces, a true mix of land uses and functions, and seamless transportation options all safeguard successful and active plinths. Although the neighbourhood is developing over a long amount time, this “slow urbanism” allows the project leaders to fully consider their strategy for an important live, work, and play environment.







# CIVIC-LEAD REVITALISATION



# IN THE MEANWHILE

Emily Berwyn (real estate professional and entrepreneur)

## **STARTING MEANWHILE SPACE**

In 2009, the recession was beginning to hit hard in the UK; businesses were going under, developments stalled, high streets were declining and unemployment was soaring. We noticed that vacant property and lapsed developments were a missed opportunity in the ‘meanwhile’, and it was almost impossible to access these spaces. The abundance of empty properties compound the decline of high streets (also called main streets), yet local people who need space to develop new business ideas and innovative uses for high-street spaces are excluded by the archaic property industry. It seemed to us that there was a great opportunity here—if only we could get hold of the space!

We needed an incentive, and we found it in the form of a policy that was introduced in 2009. In England, landlords of empty property have to pay 100% of business rates once the property has been vacant for three months. This is often very costly for them, especially when vacancy is high (14.5%, and in deprived areas over 20%) and occupancy is declining.

We began to explore the potential for temporarily occupying vacant space with creative enterprises, but encountered many bureaucratic barriers, including planning use classes, accessing landlord’s contact details and extortionate business rates. So we started *Meanwhile Space*, a social enterprise and community interest company (CIC) in 2009, to support and enable temporary use of vacant property.

## SUCCESS STORIES



Many of our 1,100 occupants have failed and learned from that experience; however many more used the stepping stone of a short-term space to establish a successful business. One success story is House of Bilimoria (above), an ethical fashion brand that was based in our Wembley hub, Cottrell House. Moving into a dedicated high street studio space, with tailored business support, allowed her to expand her business and now employs four people, and has progressed to lease a property on commercial terms. The brand debuted at London Fashion Week in 2008 and since then has been published in the V&A's book 'British Asian Style'.



Another is Christian Dillon from the East London Furniture project (below). While volunteering for a project in our Whitechapel space, and recovering from an injury, he started building furniture from discarded pallets. His unique creations soon received interest from the public. During Design Week, located in our Exmouth location, he displayed his designs and worked with people off the street who showed interest. By the end of the week he had enough commissions for cafés, bars, and offices to take a risk and push his business into a meanwhile space of his own. Three years later, employing 3 people, his brand is widely recognised for its cutting edge pieces utilising waste products.





## THE FIRST PROJECT

In 2009, we proposed the *Meanwhile Project* to a minister seeking a solution to help high streets through the recession. We sought out people all over the country who were already doing interesting meanwhile activity in empty spaces. We found 24 projects in 17 places to directly support with the grant funding, allowing us to pay for anything apart from rent that may be hindering their project (i.e., business rates, utilities, broken windows). Meanwhile Space delivered the project and developed resources from experience including the Meanwhile Toolkit, Lease and Insurance policies.

The term 'Meanwhile use' was defined by Meanwhile Space during this project. As a concept, Meanwhile encompasses the philosophy that empty space can be used to create opportunities for people. It goes beyond the pop-up period of a few weeks to make full use of a space for the maximum period it is empty. It is about transforming the way people think about empty space, revolutionising the property industry, and carving out a new industry.

## THE LOGISTICS OF MEANWHILE USES

In March 2010, the *Meanwhile Project* funding ended. Since then, our team has developed a host of services around enhanced project delivery, consultancy, placemaking, branding and promotion, training, employment and skills, community engagement, research and policy. Through word of mouth alone, a Meanwhile network of projects, landlords, local authorities, advisers and property industry experts has grown to over 11,000 international members.

The majority of our income is from delivering projects on behalf of local authorities. For example, Queens Parade in Willesden Green successfully revived Willesden High Road through a creative and flexible approach to short-term interventions. Investigation identified empty shops suitable for meanwhile use, and following negotiations with landlords, we secured an initial 6-month meanwhile lease on 10 vacant units, which had been empty for 5 years.

Throughout the project, Meanwhile Space supported 13 creative enterprises through landlord/agent negotiations, creating leases and pro-formas, and battling bureaucratic processes. Meanwhile Space bears the risk as intermediary leaseholders, and facilitated the renovations to the properties, working with 25 trainees from the local vocational college. For two years, Meanwhile Space continued to provide on-going support though Queens Parade is now independent of any council funding, with tenants paying around 40% commercial rent to cover running costs of the properties, until the landlord gains planning permission for redevelopment.

## THE MEANWHILE VISION FOR AN IDEAL GROUND FLOOR

All of our 42 spaces have been redeveloped or leased as a direct result of our occupancy – an excellent incentive for landlords to allow us to use the space. The most powerful incentive is that we cover their empty property rates while they are searching for a new tenant or awaiting planning permission. So far we have saved landlords over £670,000 in empty property rates, all the while providing space for over 1,000 start-ups, individuals and creatives.

In our opinion, ground floors should be diverse and should offer constantly changing, vibrant, engaging, and welcoming environments. High streets need to adapt or wither, as shopping is no longer the sole desirable activity of a town centre. People want interesting things to see and do that don't cost a fortune. And increasingly they want to do their shopping online, or in suburban retail hubs. We can't change that. But we feel human scale, locally led activity is a good way to test new uses on the high street and through Meanwhile, we can help our high streets to adapt to an uncertain future and to become distinctive, vibrant places.

Our vision for an ideal ground floor is one where vacant space does not exist; that vacant periods are foreseen and 'curated' to give people a chance to test an idea, in a highly visible, low risk and affordable way, even for a few weeks or months. This requires a transparency of ownership, a flexible approach to bureaucracies, and a central point all the knowledge on an area so it is easily accessible.

Communities socially benefit through activity at ground level in otherwise vacant property, which affords accessible community services and reduces blight and anti-social behaviour. Property owners benefit economically, through the security of active occupation, reduced costs to keep property empty and increased prospects for future uses.

*Because of the successes and increased demand, our team set up new sister company in January 2014, Unlimited Meanwhile Ltd, to focus on scaling the benefits of Meanwhile use throughout the UK and internationally. We're also in the beginning stages of creating an App, funded by Innovate UK, which will connect owners of underused space with potential tenants.*



# CULTURE BRINGS NEW LIFE TO PORTO ALEGRE

Paulo Horn Regal (architect and professor)

## THE 4TH DISTRICT

This is the case of a vast central area in Porto Alegre: 4º Distrito, or the 4<sup>th</sup> District. Characterized by impressive art-deco architecture, the area developed as one of the first industrial areas of the city, where living and working used to co-exist. Industrial uses peaked in the mid-1900s, however since then industries moved out to other areas, resulting in the vacancy of many buildings. After this period, residential use stagnated and the area lost much of its original character.

Auto garages, transport companies, a few offices, storage and vacancy now make up the uses of the area. Prostitution and drug trafficking takes place on some streets (even during the day), nothing is taken care of, the buildings are degraded, the streets have lost their potential charm. That is a true shame, even more when considering the vast but decayed cultural heritage and the central location of the area.



Degraded area of the 4th District

## **THE HIDDEN POTENTIAL**

What can be done? What strategies should be adopted? The hidden potential of these vacant buildings should be recognised and utilized. The use of garages and storage facilities, for example, should be redirected and the streets and public spaces need to be reactivated.

Using the empty buildings for innovative technology enterprises, or creating a “digital district”, is a common proposal today in the city. There are already similar proposals from the Municipal Governance Secretary and a NGO called CITE (Citizenship, Innovation, Technology, Entrepreneurship). However, nothing evolved because of the great complexity of actors, interests and urban visions. Moreover City Hall does not take initiative, nor is it willing to contribute financially. Apparently, it is not a priority for public plans and investments. The result: today we see isolated, self-organized and cultural initiatives from the local civil society to upgrade a part of the area.

## **SELF-ORGANIZATION AND CULTURAL INITIATIVES IN FLORESTA**

Entrepreneurs and engaged residents in one neighbourhood of 4º Distrito, Floresta, have started something new. Emanating from sheer will and the vision to promote high-quality urban life, Vila Flores, Urbsnova, and other initiatives began.

Vila Flores is a centre for culture, education and creative businesses, and a platform for creation, production, and circulation of creative goods and services. The owners, the Wallig family, felt that the building had great potential for cultural production and adopted this spectacularly beautiful building with its inner courtyard. The building is being refurbished at the moment, and will surely result in an impactful work.

The space allows for the collaborative realization of cultural projects, artistic events, courses, filming, and it is the workspace for diverse artists and professionals in creative sectors. Some projects take place for the local community, such as the one of the NGO Women in Construction, which holds workshops to prepare women for construction work.

Another initiative, Urbsnova, is a social innovation agency that aims to create, plan, produce and promote events that, because of their innovative nature, generate a real benefit for the community. The agency established Creative District, a collective of artists and entrepreneurs of the creative economy in 4º District. Urbsnova initiates some very original projects, such as stimulating the real estate market and considering the use of historical empty buildings. The buildings are sold for a lower price if they will be used by the creative economy.



Villa Flores

## **A ROLE FOR THE UNIVERSITY**

These independent initiatives have germinated into the community and are connected because of their common wish to improve the neighbourhood. Floresta benefits from a good location, charming urban space and active and creative people. Yet, the results of the initiatives could be more sustainable with more public support. Floresta could have positive influence on the more critical 4° Distrito as a whole.

In collaboration with 4° Distrito, the Faculty of Architecture and Urbanism of PUCRS is involved with these initiatives and at the moment dedicates attention to 4° Distrito in all its projects of urbanism, landscape design and architecture. In all courses, teachers and students think about the region and propose solutions and alternatives. Faculty is integrated in Vila Flores by occupying an exclusive room where the students and teachers can work in the closest way possible to the case area. (pictures) As the university promotes the proposals through public expositions they become more tangible. The proposals and the area receive an increasing amount of public attention, including the media.

## **OFFICIAL SUPPORT IS NEEDED**

Although these cultural initiatives may not be adaptable to other different, more complex parts of 4° Distrito, social, cultural and economic vitality may stimulate substantial changes in the panorama of some points of the region where urban conditions are similar to Floresta. Many parts of 4° Distrito require more thorough planning and incisive public policy to encourage their revitalisation.

The will self-organize and the demonstrated success achieved by the Floresta community to promote urban vitality exceeded all expectations, even without government assistance. However, if cultural activities have a fundamental role in the regeneration of an urban fabric, also the official support for its maintenance is necessary. It is expected that the joint efforts of the University, residents, entrepreneurs and government can accelerate changes. Enormous potential remains to be explored. We hope the municipality collaborates with the University. We are ready.

# USING TEMPORARY VACANCY FOR A PERMANENT BOOST

Willemijn de Boer & Jeroen Laven  
(real estate professional and public developer)

## **VACANCY MANAGEMENT AND THE LIVEABILITY OF A CITY**

An empty building is a lifeless place in the city and has a negative effect on the surrounding area. Without human energy and creativity, these locations do not fruitfully contribute to the community. Good plinths, as the most visible part of the building, should be a priority to really contribute to the overall experience of the street. If done well and with the right partners, managing vacancy through temporary use is a strategic way to bring the right function to the right space. But what is vacancy management and how does it work?

## **THE POTENTIAL OF AN UNOCCUPIED BUILDING**

A temporarily vacant building is often thought of as a liability. Vacancy management turns that around and sees these properties as assets. Vacancy means that a transition is happening; something exciting is bound to bubble up soon. Projects taken on by the community come into existence during a transition. And temporarily unoccupied or vacant buildings can form the common meeting place for these projects or a space for people to think and share knowledge—adding even more meaning and power to those connected to them.

There is no reason to design a building for a project: the process of putting the building into use is the project. Within such a context, how can an independent artist, designer, performer, researcher, or scientist use a vacant space? A building consists of different aspects:

architecture, location, feeling, future, history—but the context of a building serves as inspiration for expression. The context creates an environment where people, visions, and manifestations connect, even if at first sight they had nothing in common.

## **THE IMPORTANCE OF A PLINTH**

The plinths of buildings determine, to a large extent, the experience of a city. A storefront that is dark and empty or an office block that looks faded and barren, are places quickly passed by. The importance of good plinths goes for mixed use plinths in neighbourhoods as well as for large scale office areas in the inner city. In a project in Rotterdam, a temporary cinema has been given space in a plinth. This cinema did not use its location every day, and found co-users, who helped make the location a hot spot in the area. These co-users saw potential to give better meaning to the street in front of the cinema and added a temporary skate park. This skate park led to more permanent ideas for the location. Now the building is being reconstructed into a public function, building on the lessons from the experiences with the pop-up cinema.

## **BUILDINGS, STREET AND THE CITY**

The possibilities for using the plinths relates to the context of the building, which in turn relates to the context of the street, and then of the city. In our temporary use projects, we work on these three layers. It's important to add functions to buildings that fit the building, the street, and the city. We develop a strategy for a whole street in which the individual buildings gain new opportunities. We also involve co-makers, the people using the functions, neighbours, leaders in the city with an overall view of needs for space in their sector, and the government and real estate owners. Sometimes we organise pitches, contests, or use co-makers to set strong guidelines. In the end it always comes down to: how will the city benefit?

## **MATCHING OWNERS AND TENANTS**

When choosing a temporary tenant, it is important to consider the demands of the owner and the roles of the city, the urban co-makers, and the tenants.

*The owner.* The owner has both a long- and short-term perspective on their property. Long-term interests and short-term financial gain can conflict. If the owner owns several buildings in an area, the strategy for the use and profit for all the buildings can be different than for individual buildings. For some owners, such as housing corporations, the social value of property can be as important as the financial value. Some owners invest in their buildings, others are open for investments by their tenants. These factors influence factors such as the contract-period, rent, and target groups.

## EXAMPLES FROM THE FIELD: POP-UP STORES, THEATRES AND EXHIBITIONS



The project Tussentijd began in 2012 and is a platform for “meanwhile” vacancy management. The project is a cooperation between ANNA Vastgoed & Cultuur (ANNA Real Estate & Culture), a creative vacancy management company, and Stipo, a public developer and investor in the city.

In Rotterdam, Tussentijd Rotterdam has helped housing corporation Havensteder with transformation of a former shopping area in the old working class neighbourhood (Oude Noorden) into an area of food, fashion and design, combining trendy shops and old neighbourhood shops. The housing corporation had a difficult time filling a few of the shops in less favourable locations. Tussentijd Rotterdam stepped in and leased these spaces to tenants that fit the food-fashion-design district. Some of these leases are now permanent, and the district has become stronger.



In Schiedam, next to the main railway station there was a large underused site with building locations waiting for offices and other rail orientated functions. Tussentijd helped to attract temporary tenants who fit into a permanent strategy. A education institute teamed up with local tenants to create Schieveste Activity, an area where students can practice building streets, combined with a garden, meeting points, and neighbourhood-workplace. This project attracts other education institutes who are interested, they team up, giving new energy to the area, and it might become a permanent function if they fulfil their own qualitative ambition.

*The city.* The city plays an important role in facilitation and policy-making. Temporary use often requires flexibility in what is allowed, both in terms of functions and policies. For instance, what is and is not allowed by the fire department? Is it a shop, living, or entertainment area? Late-night events would be a source of conflict in a residential area. The city considers its policies and examines potential room for flexibility. Can temporary use of vacant spaces speed up implementation of a city policy? Can an empty building in an industrial redevelopment area be temporarily available for experimental functions that represent a possible future vision of the area?

*Urban co-makers and the tenants.* Filling empty buildings or spaces requires finding the right tenants. One way to manoeuvre this challenge is to work together with parties who function as urban co-makers, or other urban thinkers. These parties have a different view of the future of the city, and they often know which groups in the city have the best potential for future success. Owners often have difficulty finding these groups. Furthermore, tenants or entrepreneurs who understand the area where the building is located are the right party for the building or space. Tenants can use a temporary period to experiment with renting a building. If it's a success, a more permanent function often follows. Temporary use can also show the permanent potentials of a forgotten place in the city. Using and filling vacant buildings or spaces can help an area or the city, but can also be a threat for existing or nearby tenants as well as the leasing system.

## **A PUSH FOR TEMPORARY USE**

Temporary use is not an easy solution as it goes against established systems and routines, and it often causes uncertainty and requires a new set of skills. With the right methods and goals, temporary use can be a win-win for all parties involved: a permanent boost for the city that also benefits property owners and entrepreneurs.



# THE FESTIVAL OF EMPTY SHOPS IN BUDAPEST

Levente Polyák (urbanist)

## **KÉK IS BORN**

KÉK is the Hungarian Contemporary Architecture Centre (an NGO focusing on urbanism, architecture and design). KÉK began in 2005, when a group of architects, urbanists, journalists and artists, decided to launch a space for discussing architecture and the city. The group fortuitously gained access to a former warehouse in the backyard of a museum. The warehouse, in the vicinity of Budapest's relatively central but reasonably infamous Keleti railway station, was in bad shape. Unused for decades and tagged with Soviet graffiti, it needed significant improvements to accommodate events and the public.

The building itself was a catalyst for KÉK: it gave form to the organization and determined many of its activities. The size of the warehouse allowed for professional events, debates and conferences, and also encouraged after-hours parties. The building also brought a new cultural space in a working-class neighbourhood known for its extreme density and low living standards. By opening a backyard to the local street network and turning it into a lively and accessible space, KÉK increased visibility for the area to a citywide audience and began changing its sense of insecurity. Moreover, the experience of opening this long-time vacant warehouse to the public inspired KÉK to play a role in urban regeneration.

## **UNDERSTANDING VACANCY**

From the mid-2000s, we've witnessed entire streets losing their commerce and foot traffic, and adjacent public spaces turning into desolate spots. Aware of the emerging problem of vacant properties as a combined result of bad management and the economic crisis, KÉK began a structured research into the phenomenon of vacancy.

The Lakatlan program, run by KÉK, investigates ways to reuse long-time vacant properties in Budapest. Referring to the Hungarian word for "Uninhabited", the program combines research, advocacy and mediation activities. Bottom-up and small-scale initiatives like community gardens, participatory parks, pop-up shops, and social spaces in the city's existing fabric are a few of the program's priorities for boosting the urban regeneration movement.

In 2012, we launched a program to understand the causes, patterns and potentials of empty shops, offices, schools, hotels, department stores, cinemas and theatres all across the city. A main activity was mapping vacant spaces in the city, and elaborating models for small-scale urban regeneration, based on the reuse of empty shops and buildings of a neighbourhood. In May 2013, KÉK and the Vienna-based Wonderland Platform for European Architecture, invited architects from Helsinki, Sheffield, and Rotterdam to work together with residents on a neighbourhood plan for the temporary use of vacant properties. The workshop generated questions that opened the way for later phases of the Lakatlan program: How can vacant spaces become elements of a neighbourhood-scale ecosystem where certain activities and functions support each other? How can communities help sustain local businesses by giving them visibility among local networks? How can local businesses contribute to community activities and vice versa? Can a lively network of spaces bring life back to abandoned streets?

## **THE FESTIVAL OF EMPTY SHOPS**

Inspired by the workshop and various study trips, the concept of connecting the urban regeneration process with the spatial needs of bottom-up initiatives has been the underlying principle of the program's operational phase. In September 2013, we began working with civic organizations, social enterprises and cultural initiatives, mapping their spatial needs, organizational means and co-operational capacities, and connecting them with owners of long-time unrented spaces. Through our work with municipal officers, real estate professionals and civic organizations, it was clear that new frameworks, policies, and interventions for dealing with vacant spaces were needed.

This work led to the Festival of Empty Shops in October 2014, organized with the Budapest Municipality, but featuring mostly privately owned shops – a clear demonstration of inflexible municipal property management. The Festival opened long-time vacant shops for a dozen initiatives ready to install themselves in a ground-floor space for a month, testing the advantages and disadvantages of physical presence and constant availability. The jury established clear criteria: the selected initiatives had to be open in regular



The Festival of Open Shops



Cooperative planning workshop at Nyugati Ground



Investigation workshop at the Skála Metró department store.

hours, interact with their environment, and hold events. While the Festival was featured in various media reports and entered mainstream urban culture through TV quiz shows, it also brought life back in centrally located but disaffected streets, by bringing hundreds of people to the temporary shops' events. By putting these streets back on the map, and by giving an idea of how these streets could function if better managed, the festival succeeded in demonstrating the urban transformational capacity of revived ground-floor spaces. At the end of the month, about a quarter of the initiatives negotiated long-term contracts with their landlords, building on mutual confidence and a growing understanding of each other's positions.

Addressing the possibilities of larger buildings, as well as smaller, distributed spaces, the cautious drafting of rental contracts and the careful organization of renovation and maintenance activities turned out to be key elements in the sustainability of the accommodated initiatives. This is where the program's next steps are taking us: to explore funding possibilities, economic models and legal formats for the cooperative renovation, management and ownership of vacant urban spaces. Community initiatives, social ventures and cooperative management are crucial to successful urban regeneration: they have the interest to revitalise ground floor spaces abandoned by commerce. They have the capacity to bring our streets out of the crisis.

# THE SCIENCE OF JOY IN SAO PAULO

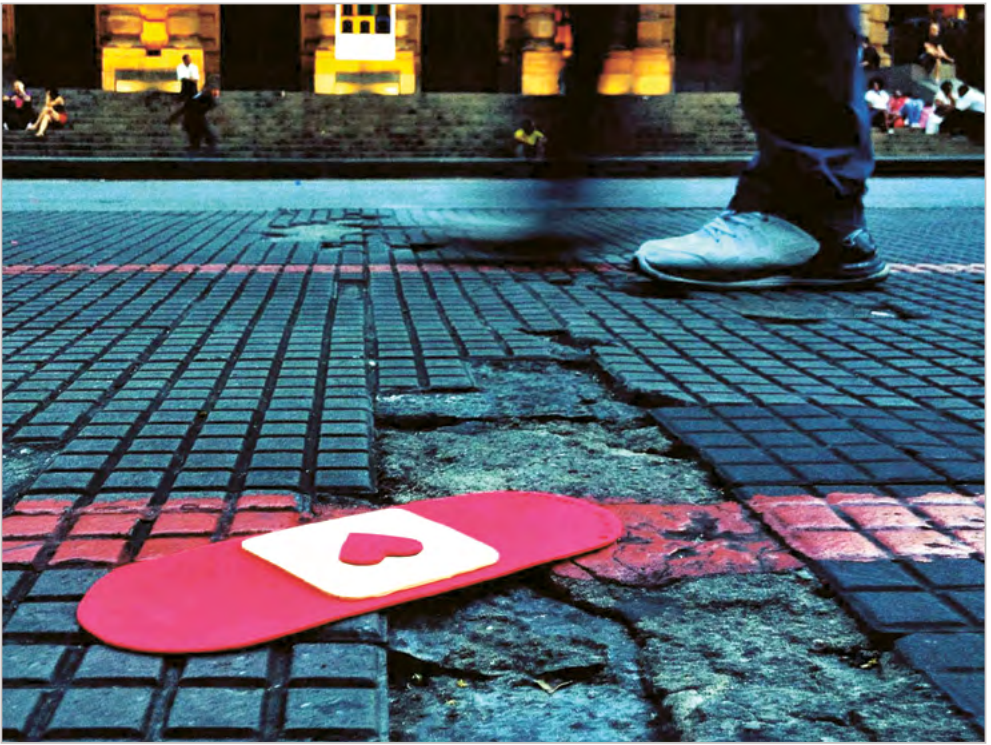
Jeniffer Heemann (urbanist and communications expert)

## **PEOPLE ARE THE EXPERTS**

My vision of a great public space is a place where people feel good and safe, and where they want to stay a bit longer. But I shouldn't define how a great public place must be. Only the people who live and work in the vicinity of the space can define that.

What is good for one city or neighbourhood might not be good for another. That may be the reason we see so many underused public spaces or dead zones in our cities: they were created without the community's opinion and participation. In this context, placemaking is a solution. Placemaking is a process that transforms any public space into a place that meets the community needs and desires, inviting people to *live the city*, connect to each other, and be healthier and happier.

To understand the needs and desires of a community we need to engage people at the start of the process. There are plenty of ways to engage people (Project for Public Spaces and People Make Parks have great tools). But engaging the community may not be an easy task, especially in cultures where volunteering and participation in social and political issues are not common, as in some Brazilian regions. In Brazil, people are joyful and they want to have fun, so we wanted to create a joyful and fun way of discussing important urban issues and engaging people in the creation of public spaces. We conduct our activities under the name of Bela Rua—our non-profit organization in Brazil that studies the life of public spaces to develop urban projects and solutions focused on people's behaviour, desires, and needs.



## **BAND-AIDS FOR THE SIDEWALKS**

Sidewalks of Sao Paulo are full of holes, cracks, steps and other obstacles. In 2012, the Clinical Hospital of the city revealed that of those visiting the hospital for injuries, 18% of those visits are due to injuries from falling on sidewalks. Unfortunately, it wasn't a subject that interested the media or the citizens. To drive attention to the problem, we created Curativos Urbanos (Urban Bandages), a campaign that used giant coloured Band-aids to signal holes and other "bruises" on sidewalks. During one month, the project captured loads of attention on at least five TV channels, four newspapers, three magazines, two radio stations, and lots of blogs and websites. Also, citizens in ten other Brazilian cities, Rome, and Paris replicated the project. In Sao Paulo, those responsible for sidewalk maintenance are the owners of the properties adjacent to that piece of the sidewalk (rather than the municipality). Many of them don't know of their responsibility, so our project alerted and informed them. And several 'bruises' were even fixed!

## **A CUBE IS FORMED**

In order to transform underused public spaces into inspiring active places for people, we tried different approaches to understand the community's needs and desires. But when people were asked about a space, they couldn't imagine themselves creating anything nicer there. They just didn't think of a public space as a great place for people.





So Bela Rua created a method, or product rather, that shows people examples of different uses for the space, observes how people react to new activities, and inspires people to contribute to new ideas. We call it (RUA)<sup>3</sup>, or Street Cubed. (RUA)<sup>3</sup> is a moveable cube that temporarily transforms any public space into a place full of art, play and fun. From inside the cube, we can take out benches, games, musical instruments and anything needed to offer new uses or activities in the space. After installed, the cube is the base for all kinds of activities, such as concerts, karaoke, yoga classes, art exhibitions, games for all ages, movie sessions, creative workshops, and more. It's also an opportunity for local artists and businesses to promote their work and services.

Throughout the cube experience, Bela Rua observes and analyses how many people use the space, who they are, and which activities attract people the most. We also conducted research by installing interactive posters where people wrote their needs and wants in the public space. After the cube has been implemented, a report was prepared suggesting permanent solutions for the place based on an analysis of the project. In 2014, this project was implemented in São Paulo, Brazil, with measurable results. The fun activities drove the community's attention to the underused square and showed people examples of different uses for the space. It also helped us approach and understand the community's needs and wishes, through research and interactive panels for people to write their ideas to improve the square. The most impressive result: on a Saturday night, one jazz concert was responsible for a nearly 15,000% increase in the number of people in the public space.

### **THREE PRINCIPLES TO CREATING A GREAT PLACE**

Number one is to approach and understand the community needs and wishes. As Fred Kent always says, "People are the experts!" Number two is to test ideas. Feel free to experiment. It's key to observe the interaction between the people and the intervention. Our blackboard panels allow people to leave feedback on what they like and what is missing. Number three: make it a fun process. We are working on more projects using a joyful and fun approach to be certain of its effectiveness. If we sometimes use art and humour for fun, why not use them to improve urban life?

# TO IMAGINE A SPACE CAN BE DIFFERENT

Francisco Paillière Pérez (social psychologist)

## DEFINING PLACEMAKING

Placemaking is a process through which a place is conceived and generated. From a particular space—a street, a parking lot, and old park, a forgotten alley, a vacant lot—and into a place where people want to gather together and encounter others. Placemaking is to make places where people want to be, and share life together.

But, then, what is the difference between making a particular place and placemaking as an action itself? I mean, places have been built and made since the beginning of humanity, so why is placemaking so new, and important nowadays? It has to do with the impact of the process; placemaking is to build something for others, for entire communities, for entire cities, and through this, for any human necessity. Placemaking is the ability to design and create something, to think of the public, rather than private interests; it is to add symbolic values to details, and to generate outputs for the enjoyment of public life.

Beyond building *for* everyone, placemaking means building *by* everyone, rather than by political, or corporate powers and personal egos. Empowering different actors within a community (to give an opinion, make a statement and/or change the way they live in a place) gives credibility and acceptance to any project. Moreover, by involving local actors, we make sure that the spaces we create express a shared identity, resulting in diverse and genuine cities that enhance cultural heritage, social values and ideologies.

Georges Perec wrote that “to live is to pass from one space to another, while doing your very best not to bump yourself.” I think that placemaking is the best and most safe bumper (a softer and more adequate bumper) that humanity has found after centuries of building spaces. It gives value and emotion to the places we inhabit and to the spaces we share as human beings: the public space. In the end, placemaking re-shapes and gives meaning to our public life, recuperating the purpose of its very existence.

## **IMAGINE SOMETHING DIFFERENT**

At *dérive* LAB we aim to explore, comprehend and inspire other (new) ways of living and thinking about life. We always start with re-imagination as a tool for placemaking processes. We, the citizens, have the opportunity to rethink, re-design and recreate the places we live. The ability to imagine that a space can be different already creates a possibility to change it; and if we want new, different, better, happy, enjoyable cities, then we need to give ourselves permission to re-imagine them. Even when things do not change in the short term, to trace an idea (whether absurd or real), is the beginning of multiple possibilities for it. Success (as a finished product) is actually not our main objective, but to invite others to reflect and change for building new and better cities.



Placemaking is about creating places while still questioning: why is it that cities no longer astonish their citizens? That is why the placemaking process is so attractive. Placemaking interventions can be quick and cost-effective. They move and amaze people and install creative thoughts of the re-imaginary. The goal of placemaking is not to come to an end, and to finalise building projects, but to be able to think, create, improve, and after that, rethink and improve again for our wellbeing, our happiness, and better cities to live in.

## **THREE PRINCIPLES TO CREATING A GREAT PLACE**

### *Imagination*

To think about change, and its possibilities is always a very good start. Imagination is a powerful tool we can use to change even a place's original function and meaning, to provide for communities' actual needs. In some cases, a street can perform better as a market, a park can function as an open-air cinema, or an abandoned alley as a gallery. When re-imagining the places we live in, we always think of this quote by Henri Lefebvre: "An existing space may outlive its original purpose and the *raison d'être* which determines its forms, functions, and structures; it may thus in a sense become vacant, and susceptible of being diverted, re-appropriated and put to a use quite different from its initial one."

### *Collective Construction*

We believe deeply in the power of Human-Centred Design; but there is a huge difference between designing for the people and designing with the people. In all our processes we invite people to participate in the conception of ideas, but also in the implementation and construction of such ideas. In the end, that is what places are all about, gathering and sharing life perspectives with others.

### *Human Scale*

It's important to keep the human at the centre of the city, to understand the value of design and its details, given the possibilities these will bring to our interaction. We have to remember that everything we create must be based on natural, human scales, because it will have a direct impact on the way people use the place.

### *Bonus: Take advantage of what you have!*

Conventional revitalisation calls for large investments and resources. We try to prove that we can work with resources we have within our reach: a great weather, diverse local materials, successful public markets, rich cultural heritage, creative neighbours looking for a place to show and engage with new audiences, and in general, the wisdom of our own community!

## ALLEY INTO PUBLIC GALLERY

The #GaleríaBallindamm project is a Tactical Urbanism and Urban Acupuncture project in an abandoned and forgotten alley called the Ballindamm Alamos, located in an industrial area of Mexico City. Modern cities should provide sufficient public space for its population, however due to various reasons there is a deficit in this offer; gaps exist in cities, and vacant and abandoned areas are untapped resources for the public.

The proposal is to intervene artistically and culturally, through specific actions and periodic in time. Derive Lab created an open-air gallery, with free access to everyone. The goal of #GaleríaBallindamm is to give vibrancy to the alley; to give it life and “something” to offer to neighbours and other residents of the city. We want to transform the alley into a safe and friendly corridor, with a reason to spend time here.



# 150 NEW BUSINESSES IN 2 YEARS

## CASE STUDY NEUKÖLLN

Berlin,  
Germany

### INTERVIEW WITH

Stefanie Raab  
*architect and owner of Coopolis*

**“In our shop vacancy projects,  
we are committed to new forms  
of cooperation between owners  
and space seekers to develop the  
site as needed for a stabile and  
sustainable future.”**

### FACT 1

ca. 40% of inhabitants in North-Neukölln are immigrants, 37% live from social subsidies

### FACT 2

30 – 50% of the plinth shops in North-Neukölln were empty

### FACT 3

300 new interim spaces in 5 years



## TIMELINE

- 1920 Neukölln, southeast of Berlin, is incorporated into the city
- 1945 Neukölln is part of the American sector in West Berlin
- 1961 start of the construction of the Berlin Wall by East Germany (DDR)
- 1989 Berlin Wall falls on 9 November
- 1999 German Parliament, the Bundestag, relocated to Berlin
- 2003 highest court of Germany removes zoning restrictions for Berlin
- 2005 Stefanie Raab and Maria Richarz start Zwischennutzungsagentur project in Neukölln
- 2010 Zwischennutzungsagentur becomes Coopolis and completes 150 new ground floor shops
- 2012 The Real estate Owner's organisation of Neukölln honours Stefanie Raab with a Badge of Honour

## CONTEXT

During the Cold War, West Berlin was desolate and unwanted to live there. The government offered men the opportunity to move there if they wanted to avoid enlisting in the army. This promotion attracted a certain population and created a hub for alternative lifestyles. When the Berlin wall fell in 1989 and the east and west of the city reunited over the next year, an enormous growth of the population was prognosticated. Many new flats, offices and shops were built in Berlin. In the following years, the number of inhabitants did not grow to the predicted level, which caused an overflow of empty space that was then filled by the creative sector. The creativity was there, but unfortunately the economy didn't follow. It's often said of this city—where no minimum wage exists—that no one has a job in Berlin, but everyone has a project.

## PROBLEM

Neukölln, a district of West Berlin with 250 000 residents, is bisected by the

S-bahn and split into two distinct parts: the south side is rich and the north side is poor. Stefanie Raab, long-time resident of North-Neukölln, has recognized the empty shops in the ground floors as a potential for the development of little local enterprises with a calculable investment risk for local entrepreneurs. She convinced the local Real estate owners of a new way of cooperation with local entrepreneurs to give them a chance to start their business without high shop-rents.

## SOLUTION

Inspired by the idea of cooperative uses for vacant shops Stefanie Raab began the project Zwischennutzungsagentur (agency for temporary use) together with Maria Richarz in 2005. In a short time it became a planning office for temporary and sustainable use coordination, networking and participation focused specifically on Neukölln. In three years Coopolis coordinated the temporary use of 150 new fashion stores, sewing workshops, galleries, cafes, youth facilities, music clubs, and other venues, in four different neighbourhoods of North-Neukölln. The district's urban fabric was redefined from classic sales zone over emptiness into a colourful and attractive public zone for the creative industries and local initiatives, in various sized buildings and styles. The content of the spaces have changed from classical shop using (that no one could afford in a poor district like North-Neukölln) into a colourful mixed-use-zone. The expectations of the real estate owners which rents they could ask for this zone was brought down to a realistic level. The missing link was someone to connect the vendor with the space they needed. As a connector, Coopolis took government subsidies to organize the change process. No government subsidies were used for rents or investments into the spaces themselves: The goal was, from the beginning on, to moderate self bearing deals between real estate owner and vendor so that they are independent from subsidies.

## SECRET

**Investment.** Coopolis maintains excellent vendor relationships with their tenants through their own investment—and the tenants give back as well. Often the shops were in a really bad state and there was no chance to renovate them by the vendors because no one could afford a high rent that would be caused by a professional renovation. Coopolis supported the contractual negotiations, listened to the owners and their needs on one side and supported the tenants in their starting phase with their enterprises or projects on the other side. The result was really fair contracts for both sides: the tenants invested by renovating the empty shops by themselves, the vendors got a new user for the empty shop that did not cost much, but made the place more attractive and liveable. In a short time, empty flats were also filled when the ground floor had a new use.

**Hands-on approach.** As residents of Neukölln themselves, Stefanie and Maria have every opportunity to see and meet their clients face-to-face. Their expert knowledge of the neighbourhood allows them the capacity to think *and* do.

## LESSONS

**Roles.** Stefanie is the mediator between families/property owners and the entrepreneurs while Maria is coach for the new entrepreneurs. By sticking to their roles, they are experts in what they do.

**Cluster planning.** Coopolis works with clusters of shops and moderates the collaboration with a collective of the residents who co-create the spaces in an organic way. Once the tenants/entrepreneurs have invested in their spaces, Coopolis helps the cluster to get to know each other and to cooperate in the future e.g. with common exhibitions in all shops at a site or to organize a happening for the neighbourhood like “Körnerschnitzel”—creating a dramatic effect on the surrounding neighbourhood.

## IMPACT

The neighbourhood rent subsidy means that tenants will stay longer and continue to invest in their space. The original 150 entrepreneurs have all stayed in business. The ground floors of Neukölln’s streets are active during the day and into the night. It will be a crucial aspect in the following years that the owners value the engagements of their new entrepreneurs. If they raise rents too fast, entrepreneurs will leave and the attractiveness that is here today will be destroyed. To prevent this, Coopolis started a next step with a local cooperation network between the local owners.

## DO

- use local knowledge
- establish hybrid formulas
- promote tenant security for the long-term

## IN CONCLUSION

Coopolis’ socially oriented project promotes long-term planning and high-quality gain for the plinths in Neukölln. By using the neighbourhood subsidy scheme, the entrepreneurs benefit from lower rent and at the same time are encouraged to invest in their space. This hybrid formula has revitalised the area and secured an active ground floor for the long run. In the past several years, Neukölln has positioned itself as a unique place in the city for urban experimentation and fostering a culture of entrepreneurship.

Projects such as De Klunkerkranch, Ritas Häkelclub, and Rita in Palma are only a few examples of the tremendous energy in the area. De Klunkerkranch is community project completed by a group of about 500 people and about €100.000. It is an urban farm, music venue, and cafe/bar in an underused parking garage in central Neukölln.







**TOWARDS  
THE CITY AT  
EYE LEVEL**

# THEMES, DIMENSIONS & CONTRIBUTING LESSONS

Jan van Teeffelen

## **TOWARDS THE CITY AT EYE LEVEL**

When over viewing the contributions in this book, an interesting set of values comes to mind in relation to the different actors in the 'city at eye level'. First there is planning: the forward thinking into the future related to the way we build and develop our cities and streets now. Next is ownership: the balance between what is desirable and profitable in the point of view of the investors and entrepreneurs in the short- and the long-term. Another level is smart development: the art of managing the city in cooperation with stakeholders to enhance urban quality (research, experience, and exchange of knowledge as a shared goal). We also have the idea of a 'sense of place': an attitude and understanding of the context and dynamics of a street from all types of observers (the city watchers, researchers, insiders). Last is the force of design, shifting from aesthetics (how things look) to the experience of the city (how things work). These aspects are interwoven and should not be discussed separately. Last but not least people are living in the city: they use the city at eye level and give it certain shared meanings over time. Their appreciation is finally the proof of the pudding.

## **WHAT PLANNING CAN DO**

City planning is an ever-changing field, due to a greater uncertainty and complexity in societies today. More than object-based developments, iconic architectural expressions, and slow-moving structural plans,

the dynamics, existing quality, and energy in the city are nowadays the focus for city improvement. What city dwellers experience on the streets and in their daily routines, influences social and economic assets and meanings of cities. Planning is becoming more about cooperation, exchanging knowledge, and defining roles in processes. An important reason for this shift is the dwindling financial resources of governments. Long term ambition and direction of city development should find new connections with a growing cloud of initiatives by people and businesses overseeing their domain of interest. In light of the current economic crisis and demanding environmental and quality concerns for urban areas, this new approach for planning is necessary.

Understanding the city at eye level is a relatively underdeveloped field in the shifting planning approach. A new body of knowledge can be gained from deliberate trial and error projects that are connected to different communities in the city: see what happens, see if it works, create new innovations, and set a new standard. This style of planning demands an exchange of long-term perspectives and short-term experiences. Planning should especially focus on transition and reset rather than addition and growth, because the amount of needed functions for good plinths (shops, restaurants, services etc.) is limited.

## **WHAT DEVELOPMENT CAN DO**

There is a difference between city development in a spontaneous and organic way, and development along planning schemes and project development. From the point of view of the consumer, the people who use the city at eye level on a frequent basis, city streets should be developed and managed on the level between private interest and public exposure. This approach concerns vacancy management, temporary use, and community involvement. Past efforts prove that an added value can be gained that would not occur on a purely market driven basis. The mission is to convince participants and to fill the gap between the short horizon of entrepreneurs and the long term of possible profits.

## **WHAT OWNERSHIP CAN DO**

Single or multiple ownership of real estate is an essential and qualifying characteristic for streets and plinths. A mix of businesses, operating at various hours throughout the day, evening, and night is what people expect from a vibrant city that they want to use all the time. What ownership can do is related (within the legal framework of contracts) to the rent and differentiations in turnover of shops. Single ownership of real estate and managing power in a street, can realise a long-term strategy and can adjust to changing circumstances. But this often lacks the spontaneous buzz and interventions in 'real' lively streets. On the other hand the task for multi-owned city streets is to provide safety, hospitality and comfort. Both models are important to learn from.

## WHAT A GOOD 'SENSE OF PLACE' CAN DO

Initiatives, ideas, and ambitions of local and global businesses contribute to the quality of the city at eye level. On one hand unique, often small-scale shops and start-ups give a street a certain vibe, or '*couleur locale*'. They seek up-and-coming streets not too far from the city centre or 'edgy' neighbourhood core. On the other hand, there are the global brands, which require a certain amount of space to create a flagship store and emphasize a brand and a lifestyle experience. These brands look for prime locations that offer high consumer density and impact. We have to foster both types of businesses because they attract new people and keep people coming back for more. In between the local street shops and the global brand flagship stores, is the small scale, so called 'warm' city - fit for strolling around. Here is the creative and experience economy flourishing in breakfast bars, galleries, pubs and coffee corners, parks and streets.

Local as well as global players are thinking and investing from the perspective of the sense of place, an idea about location, position in the traffic patron, densities of the streets, and appeal on public. The struggle is to fit all the pieces of the puzzle into one city and attend to each neighbourhood's specific sense of place and identity. Historic cities with a 'warm' sense of place will have problems to fit in the modern large scale shopping- and entertainment formulas, while the cities with a 'modern' sense of place mostly lack the small-scale streets needed for small businesses and a cosy atmosphere.

## WHAT DESIGN CAN DO

City planning and design has been driven by very different motives over time, shifting from supplying vast amounts of social housing to providing infrastructure for the automobile due to large-scale business parks, shopping malls and transit places. Now we see a new transition to network- and knowledge-based cities—the most complicated of urban forms yet.

Over the decades, design has contributed to the themes of city development: functionalism as a way of modern life, social issues in housing and public space, the image of the city in high rise and city icons, and recently to environmental issues and the quality of the existing city. The 'city at eye level' is a new theme that contributes to relationship between buildings and streets, and to the impact of high rise development on street level experience. It is a new and different 'commissioner' in urban design: ground level improvements, way-finding, public space, green space, and temporary use. This encapsulates a design shift from a bird's-eye view to a street-level view, and from an impact-oriented perspective to a user-based perspective.

# TAKE ACTION #1 - STREET: THE PLACE GAME AND THE PLINTH GAME

Hans Karssenbergh (public developer)

Transforming a street, a district, an inner city, or creating a new district with a great city at eye level takes years and usually involves incremental steps forward. Nevertheless, it's easy to make a quick start and create the first quick-wins soon. One of the first steps is to involve the community from the beginning: developers, owners, entrepreneurs, citizens, local government experts, new initiators and zealous nuts.

## **THE PLACE GAME**

To get started quickly and easily, to involve the network into a shared analysis and to generate new ideas for the future, a couple of tools have proven to work well over the years. Project for Public Spaces has developed the place game, a structured community-based game that takes one full day for all involved.

The basic idea of this 'serious game' is that the community is the expert, as described in the article on placemaking by Fred Kent and Kathy Madden. The entrepreneurs, users and owners who occupy a space on a day-to-day basis bring knowledge about the daily use, or underuse of a place, and many ideas of how to make the first quick improvements and how to turn the space into a place. New initiators, experts from the local government, and developers bring knowledge for how to develop the place in the longer run. Both sets of expertise are needed—and the community is the backbone, since they will be maintaining the place on a daily basis. Ownership is key.

In the place game, we split the larger group into smaller groups and then begin the analyse of the area. Walking and talking in smaller groups, analysing the

street together based on everyone's intuition, coming back with shared ideas – the game creates a different mind-set. It allows for interdisciplinary acting, breaks down barriers, and brings people together to take ownership and create their own places.

During the place-game we think of reasons to visit the area, following William H. Whyte's analysis of the effect of 'triangulation': different kinds of uses and functions piling up on each other. Each area, square, street can be broken down into at least 10 sub-spaces: the power of 10 (as explained in the article by Norman Mintz). If each of these sub-spaces has 10 reasons for people to visit, the entire place will have  $10 \times 10 = 100$  reasons, and will always be comfortable, day and night.

'Lighter, Quicker, Cheaper' is a crucial motto and solutions vary from adding movable chairs to a courtyard, opening up closed windows, to starting container villages—anything that the community comes up with and advocates for. With short term actions comes trust from stakeholders and the community. Long term is *three* years; short term one to three months. It is better to invest a bit longer beforehand, than to have to wait for results too long after, creating disappointment.

## **THE PLINTH GAME**

Understanding the city at eye level starts with what we see and feel. It is, first of all, intuitive. It is also something that must be actively worked on. Plinth strategy is much more than just filling an empty space. It's about developing a strategy that is based on co-creation, flexibility, creativity, placemaking, and basic urban design principles.

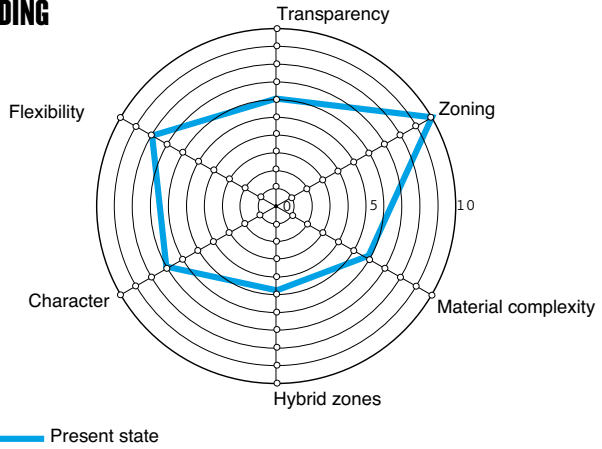
To focus on the street plinths, use the criteria from this book to do a plinth game. The workshops can be held both at the level of a single street that needs improvement, or developing a new strategy for an entire city, for both existing and the new areas. In the case of a single street, a day can be enough to get started; in the case of a whole city, at least two days are required. In both cases, one-on-one in-depth interviews with people representing a variety of angles beforehand are crucial. For the plinth game we also need all participants to create new solutions: building owners, renters, new initiatives, entrepreneurs, residents, developers, experts in maintenance, retail, public space, reuse of empty buildings, designers of new buildings, all depending on the situation at hand.

During the game, the criteria from this book can be adapted to the local situation and customised into 'spider graphs'. The use of the spider graphs is easy. For each of the criteria, mark a score for the current situation between 0 and 10 (in a brochure, we added suggestions for the scores, this brochure can be downloaded on our website). Next, add the scores for the desired situation. The difference between the two 'webs' provides an overview of the situation at one glance.

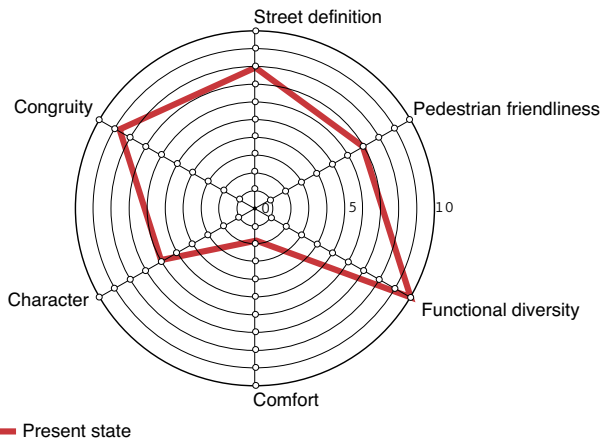
Interdisciplinary groups can each take on different streets or parts of the street, analyse, and generate new ideas for the future. In a compact, inspiring event of one or two days, a shared vision and plan of action can be created. Listing short- and longer-term actions helps as does referencing precedents from elsewhere, but the most important part is to, as Jane Jacobs said, *walk the streets together*.



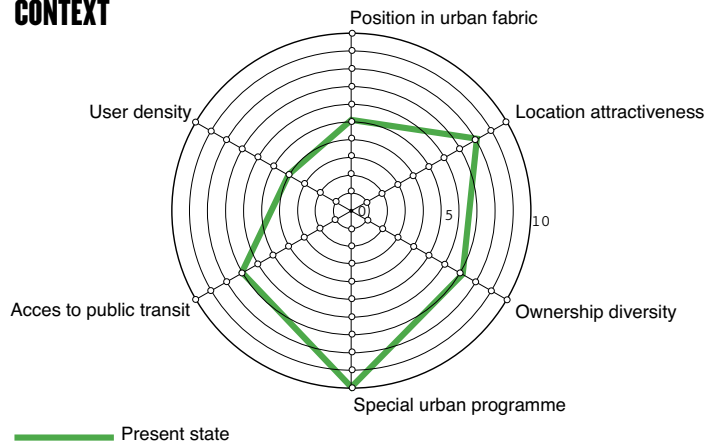
**BUILDING**



**STREET**



**CONTEXT**



Example of a spider graph in the plinth game.

## EXAMPLE: STOCKHOLM AT EYE LEVEL

The plinth games we held in Stockholm are a good example of making a quick start at developing a strategy for the whole city—all in four days. The Stockholm City Plan, *The Walkable City*, states that ‘the overall aim is to create a denser, more cohesive, more versatile and more dynamic urban environment with opportunities for a broader range of homes, businesses, services, culture, experiences and so on.’

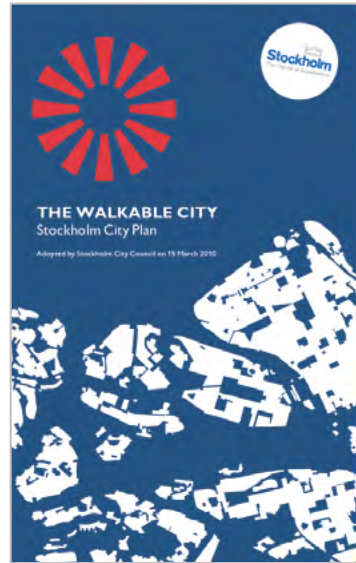
A very important driver for Stockholm is the growth of the city, and the city aims to increase the number of built units from 100,000 to 140,000 in the next years (from 5,000 to 7,000 per year). This will be a major challenge, especially combining the new built areas and densification with The City at Eye Level. There is a strong historic sense and a drive not to repeat the mistakes of the past.

Putting words into action became an important topic; a resident remarked: “It is called Walkable City, but what is it more than words?” The idea needs a more concrete translation, requiring concrete street changes, but also the development of new tools and strategies. We set up a two-day plinth game, during which we held interviews with stakeholders and walked streets in 12 areas of the city, analysing the current plinths and exchanging ideas of ways to develop new criteria and tools. The game led to a highly condensed energy and many new insights.

With the help of the spider graphs, we analysed three street archetypes in Stockholm: 1. Low density post war suburbs, 2. Recent block developments and 3. Traditional city centre.

Each of these archetypes has such a different context that they require different approaches. The modernist archetype needs reuse and reopening of ground floors that are often shut or garages. Plinths can be reused for local start-ups and ethnic shops, for instance, the way it already happened in Rinkeby in Stockholm.

Newly built areas need sets of criteria and mechanisms for actual delivery by property developers. This can be achieved partly by, as Alan Jacobs calls them, ‘non-negotiable rules’ and partly by tempting market parties



Stockholm City Plan: The Walkable City



Modernist archetype street



Recent development street



Traditional city centre street

and rewarding good behaviour, for instance letting them building higher if they provide good plinths.

The traditional centre is more about restructuring existing plinths, and obtaining a type of management on the street level, instead of on the level of individual buildings. This leads to different behaviour, perhaps allowing for nicer functions with a somewhat lower rent for individual buildings, thereby reassuring the image and the income levels of the street in the long run.

During the two-day plinth game, four diverse groups analysed 12 streets—both within the city centre and in the suburban areas chosen by the City. The process led to the development of new criteria for good residential plinths in the specific context of Stockholm, good mixed-use plinths, and criteria for future newly built areas.

## **FROM GAME TO PLACE AND PLINTH MANAGEMENT**

The games and workshops are a great way to get started. However to really make change, a mix is needed of:

- ‘Carrot & Stick’: both strictly implement and maintain guidelines, and tempt new initiatives by rewarding good behaviour and showing best practice;
- ‘Think & Act’: in a networked city, take concrete action and develop knowledge and strategies
- ‘Existing & New’: The Walkable City addresses both the houses to be built, and finding and implementing the secrets behind making gradual changes in the existing structures.

The first focus is to make things happen now, to create energetic anchors of activity in key locations at peak, and to crowd-source ideas, allowing for surprise along the way. A ‘movable feast’ is created, bringing life on the streets and bringing the inside of buildings out. As the first actions lead to success, the community can start to take on bigger challenges. After the networks, places, and the streets further develop, the initial actions gradually shift to some kind of street, area or place management. It’s an organic process. This does not deal only with broken tiles and cleaning, but also with a constant management of inviting new activities, testing, learning from actions and improving.

*Looking for more? Workshop materials can be downloaded at :*

*The City at Eye Level - [www.thecityateyelevel.com](http://www.thecityateyelevel.com)*

*Project for Public Spaces - [www.pps.org](http://www.pps.org)*

# TAKE ACTION #2 - DISTRICT: BOTTOM-UP MEETS TOP-DOWN AT EYE LEVEL

Jeroen Laven, Gert Jan te Velde & Paul Elleswijk

## ZOHO ROTTERDAM

The Zomerhofkwartier in Rotterdam, better known as ZoHo, is a former industrial/business area on the edge of the city centre of Rotterdam. Throughout the last decade, housing corporation Havensteder purchased most of the real estate in the area with the intention of redeveloping the area into a residential zone. Havensteder already owns over 10.000 houses in adjacent areas and ZoHo is located between their current properties and the city centre. The future of ZoHo directly influences the social and economical value of their existing property portfolio.

Recently we see a trend emerging among light industry: they are moving out of the mono-functional city edges and want to be present in the vibrant city centre. The housing redevelopment plans of ZoHo were postponed, partly due to the economic crisis in The Netherlands, and partly because of this trend. Perhaps it was a good idea from the start to transform ZoHo into housing, but maybe better alternatives exist for such a central area where few people live.

In 2013, Havensteder decided to take a risk with ZoHo and give 'slow urbanism' a chance. For a period of 10 years, the area has the opportunity to redevelop *itself*. Unless a party would come with a financial offer we can't refuse, ZoHo could give itself new meaning for the city. The area could rediscover its own future. During these ten years, it will become clear what the future has in store for the area: housing, commercial functions, in existing or new buildings. Whatever fits the best.



## **SLOW URBANISM**

The approach in ZoHo is called *slow urbanism*. It can be described as an organic process where the traditional public planning partners (in the Netherlands, the housing corporation and government) give room to other parties to urbanise themselves.

In ZoHo, Havensteder teamed up with Stipo, a local public developer, who agreed to move to the area. In close co-operation with the local government and new and existing tenants, they started the process. During the first year (2013) they managed to fill almost all of Havensteder's vacant real estate. The area has become known as a place for urban planning experiments and revitalising the city in the professional world in Rotterdam, the country and even internationally. The experience at eye level plays a key role in this revitalisation.

### **WHAT KEY FACTORS LEAD TO THIS SUCCESSFUL START?**

#### *Havensteder*

- Havensteder decided not to redevelop their property in the area for 10 years themselves.
- The incoming rent and expenditures for the property in the area as a whole needs to break even (at least) during this period. Havensteder does not lose money; prices are moderate.
- Havensteder does not have any, or very little, financial investment for the area.
- Tenants from Havensteder benefit from flexible lease contracts, maintenance, choosing co-tenants, etc.
- Havensteder invites tenants to pitch ideas that improve the social welfare of adjacent neighbourhoods, where Havensteder owns most of the property.

#### *Government*

- The government focuses on facilitating, not providing money but creating more leeway in rules and speeding up processes, where the area (corporation and/or tenants) asks for it.
- Using maintenance as a chance for investing in public space. For example, the drainage system in ZoHo needs updating. The government invests in public space, and combines this with a climate adaptation strategy. The government invites local parties to team up in this process.

#### *Tenants*

- Tenants in the area take initiative to lead and co-make the area's vision and strategy.
- Tenants invite potential future tenants to advise Havensteder on which potential new tenants should (not) be given space.
- Tenants think with Havensteder and the government about a strategy for the public realm, both the public space and the buildings.
- Tenants program the area, have a website and their own marketing strategy.
- Tenants are active in the social improvement of the area.

By itself, ZoHo clearly had a lot of potential. The progressive and flexible approach of Havensteder and the government initially attracted tenants who felt co-responsible for the area. The total combination created a winning start: open-

mindful management and the presence of interesting front runners (such as Stipo) who not only moved to the area, but also brought their expertise to improve it.

We are proud to say that ZoHo can be described as an area with 100 unofficial owners. Parties are working together to give ZoHo a new future that will be good for individual parties, for the area, and for the city.

## ZOHO AT EYE LEVEL

As a former industrial/business area the public space was designed for the car with wide streets, too much parking spaces, and mundane paving. Furthermore, the plinths of the oversized buildings were often used for storage and indoor parking and were closed with no public functions on the ground floor.

The location itself is superb: at the edge of the city centre, near to the (new) central station and adjacent to an emerging neighbourhood. Large buildings lay on the south and west side of the area, and little through traffic makes it an unknown area for people from the city or even the neighbourhood.

Altogether ZoHo has been known as an unsafe and unattractive area. For the tenants, the city and Havensteder, this was the reason to improve the public realm.

## DIRECT ACTION

Using the lessons from the first edition *The City at Eye Level*, the tenants, the municipality, and Havensteder started working on improving the quality at eye level, the public realm. Examples:

- *Improving plinths*: In contracts with new tenants on the ground floor a deal was made that the plinths must have a public function and appearance. For each plinth, tailor-made contracts were made that fit the need for the owner, tenant and neighbourhood.
- *Improving ZoHo's public realm* Tenants play a role in maintaining and developing ZoHo's public space, facilitated by Havensteder and the city.
- *Improving safety*: Tenants and residents take an active role in improving safety. A neighbourhood corporation was started in which this function takes place.

## SIX EXAMPLES OF IMPROVING ZOHO AT EYE LEVEL

1. *Roodkapje*, a local cultural platform, was the first "new" tenant in ZoHo. Their combination of a restaurant, art gallery and musical venue were given a temporary space in a former supermarket. On their opening night, 1500 people came and put ZoHo on the Rotterdam map. *Roodkapje* was invited with a temporary function for ZoHo as part of a placemaking strategy. After two years *Roodkapje* moved, allowing for a more permanent function.
2. Instead of having a closed façade with dormitories as a plinth, *hostel "De Mafkees"* invited social entrepreneurs in their plinth, from a bike repair shop to a youth information centre. This way, both the building and the area connected on a deeper level.
3. *Restaurant Gare du Nord* is a successful organic vegan restaurant in a former train wagon on a derelict building site. The restaurant added a movable plinth





to the area. The restaurant works with staff from the neighbourhood and adopted the public green space in front of the restaurant, now used as an open-air terrace, public garden and for food production.

4. *Het Gele Gebouw* (“The yellow building”), characterised by a closed façade on ground level, actively opens the plinth. A pop-up cinema is active in the plinth of the building and the former garage was transformed into the Mesh Print Club (a screen-printing club). The next step will be investing a part of the rent in further opening the plinth and adding a restaurant. Only adding two doors and a new window and changing the allocation from office to restaurant would create a totally different use of the plinth: a minimum budget with a maximum result. Van Schagen Architecten, also located in the building, lead the process of outlining the necessary investments for the plinth and improving the quality of the building. Plus, in front of the building, bicycle parking was added and a parklet has taken over an underused parking spot.
5. Rotterdam-based landscape architects, Urbanisten, were asked by the municipality to make a climate adaptation strategy for the *public space in ZoHo*. Together with tenants, local residents and facilitated by the city, implementation started straight away. In a few days, two parking spaces and the adjacent sidewalk were transformed into a small park, symbolising the future of the area. This was only the first step of a broader transformation that also benefits the use of the plinth and the Gele Gebouw.
6. Residents from the Noord district, of which ZoHo is a part, started an *area cooperation*. This cooperation focuses on resident initiative to improve their area in an economic sustainable way. Money should be circulated in the area whenever possible. One of the first goals the cooperation is to improve safety. Together with the police, owners, government and tenants, social and physical analyses have been made of how to improve safety. The analyses now lead to action.

## THE NEXT STEPS

There is a lot of energy in ZoHo. The 100 unofficial owners of the area share responsibility to improve the quality of the area and on eye level. This has led to success, but at the same time, effects are difficult to see to a new visitor. The next step is to make the strategy sustainable.

The stakeholders will further develop a *City at Eye Level* strategy in which bottom up and top down vision and plans meet. A joint strategy will lead to unexpected results, and will fit the area best. The goal is that within a few years all the plinths and the whole public realm will reach another quality level. The government will invest in the maintenance of the public space, but besides that little finances exist. We will still reach our goals. As long as the ZoHo spirit continues, and Havensteder and the local government facilitate the process, then the investment power of local parties will be adequate. The future for ZoHo at eye level is bright.

# TAKE ACTION #3 - CITY: OWNERSHIP IS THE KEY FOR A SUCCESSFUL STRATEGY

Emiel Arends & Gábor Everraert  
(urban planner and manager)

## **THE URBAN FORM OF THE ROTTERDAM'S CITY CENTRE**

The post-war buildings built in the city centre are not known for elements that define a “good plinth”. The public space is car-orientated and many city blocks are mono-functional. Even worse, most buildings have a long footprint, which forms long stretches of streets or blocks, and most façades are stretched in horizontal ways. Also the façades of post-war buildings are not as expressive as 19<sup>th</sup> century buildings (or older) and they have fewer details.

To make high-quality plinths, we created a set of specific criteria that adjusted to post-war buildings. We took the knowledge of many Dutch and international experts and extracted the basic criteria and guidelines of a good plinth in a modern city centre. We combined these criteria with research by the municipality on how people use the city (via extensive pedestrian surveys). The result was a comprehensive study and a strategy. From the initial study, we defined a plinth as a combination of public space, the ground level plus the first floors of the adjacent buildings and the programme (use or activities) it contains.

In 2008, the municipality of Rotterdam introduced a new plan for the inner-city: “Towards a City Lounge”. This plan emphasized the role of the street level and the way we experience the city centre. As a result, we initiated many street and public space improvement projects and launched the citywide plinth strategy “Rotterdam at eye level” in 2011.

## OWNERSHIP IS THE KEY

Although the framework of the plinth strategy provided all the information and all the tools we needed to create good plinths, we quickly noticed that *ownership* is the key for successful plinth transformation. The owners (and actions) regarding sustainable improvement of streets and plinths can be divided into three distinct groups: public space, programme, and building. In our experience this division allows for the right mix of interventions and actors for successful plinth revitalisation. Each group has its own different set of tools, time frames, and owners.

### *Public space*

Good plinths and good public space are two sides of one coin. Together, they make the city at eye level experience. Traditionally, the design and maintenance of the public space is a government privilege. Since 2007, Rotterdam's public space design strategy is shifting towards a focus on pedestrians and cyclists. The eight years since, were wonderful for public space improvements; funding from the municipality was abundant. Recently, however, funds dramatically reduced. Experimental or temporary methods for transforming streets are now at the top of the agenda. Examples include "parklet" installation in parking spaces to increase the use of the sidewalk, mobile greenery, and fewer restrictions for the use of a street.

A new trend is allowing private parties to design and (especially) maintain public space, only when the party owns a large amount of real estate adjacent to the space. This tactic seems to be a win-win: the city saves money and the public space is enhanced. Plus, the private parties are in for the long haul; there is no "hit-and-run" development; they understand that the value of their property will increase if the public realm is well designed and maintained.

### *Programme*

The success of a street, and how the plinths function, depends on the right programme. Listening and anticipating the demands of its users are key. Two trends are shaping the way our streets are used: the internet and the sharing economy. Because of the ever-growing influence of the internet on our daily life, shopping is becoming more of a leisure activity than a daily need, resulting in decreased commercial revenues and increased vacancy. The sharing economy is also a culprit. The younger generations tend to prefer *use* above *ownership*: owning a device/good is less favourable, while lending or leasing is becoming more popular. The sharing economy is driving new ideas for uses and activities on our streets, such as co-working spaces.





Entrepreneurs dictate the type and variety of programme, but also tend to focus on their own business. Running a small business costs time and revenues are often slim, and due to lack of time and funds they are unwilling or unable to make changes to contribute to a better street/plinth. After several meetings with entrepreneur associations we learned a valuable lesson: success lies in small, easy to implement, and low-cost actions. Also simplify the (sometimes technical or spatial) information and break it down in comprehensive parts. For example, with the city maintenance department and a lighting specialist, entrepreneurs could install lighting themselves with the right parameters for intensity, colour and the positioning of spotlights. Within a couple months over a third of the entrepreneurs in the street made adjustments themselves.

A more traditional example: rolling shutters are often used by businesses during closed hours. The shutters are metal, invite graffiti, and are plain ugly. Through legislation, the local government incentivized shop owners and entrepreneurs to exchange these shutters for more pleasing alternatives. For a given time, the new shutters were partly paid for by the municipality; afterwards, the legislation forced the remaining shop owners to change their rolling shutters, but without the subsidy.

### *Buildings*

For large-scale street and plinth improvements, real estate investors (and other building owners) are the major players. Of course, investors are looking out for their own real estate. The more owners on one

block, the more competition exists for the same programme. More competition means more eyes on the price: profit. This turns out to be a deadly strategy for streets and it leads to repetitive, generic programme and higher vacancy. Thus: the fewer the owners, the better. With fewer owners it's easier to understand that having a good and pleasant street is crucial for long-term business. A diverse and unique programme will not generate the desired m<sup>2</sup> price for a particular building in the street, but the street as a whole will benefit of this program and will boost income for the shop owners and building owner, and they will enjoy much lower turn-over and vacancy rates in the long haul. In the streets in Rotterdam with a shared vision, the success is evident.

### **IT COMES DOWN TO WHO CARES**

There is no blueprint for a successful plinth strategy. It all comes down to the question: *who is really caring about a street or place?*

Entrepreneurs? With entrepreneurs, be prepared for a process with an uncertain outcome. New initiatives will be focused on either cosmetic changes or new programme (inside and outside). The role of the municipality is restricted to (mostly small interventions in) the public space and aiding in legislation for temporary programme, activities, or new formulas. Changes are possible but take much longer and the municipality needs to organise and help establish a common ground. For the most success: simplify the information, break it down in to easy steps. Provide actions that are low-cost and easy to implement. Communal branding of the area or street is important and usually done by a retailers association.

Building owners? If building owners care, funding for investments, renovations, and space restructuring (inside and outside) is easier to accomplish. Street management can make real change with a dedicated "street manager", who makes the street more attractive, physically and economically. This way all the stakeholders have a voice in the public space, programme, and building contexts. New entrepreneurs will follow. Street management gives stakeholders confidence that all parties are taking action as agreed. Furthermore, branding by a street manager is more objective and consequently lasts longer. General interest is placed above individual interest and short- and long-term possibilities are thoroughly examined.





Local government? When the municipality is the only responsible party to improve the quality of a street, we strongly believe *no effort* should be undertaken (yet). The cooperation and willingness of entrepreneurs and/or building owners to embrace an improvement process is absolutely vital. If none of these parties are in the coalition chances are that substantial public funding is needed and the execution of the plan is limited to a short period of time. After completion of the project the decay might easily return. At this point, only legislation can prevent further decay of the street or space.

Regulation remains one of the most important tasks of the municipality. Next to zoning plans, aesthetic policies form the base of the plinth strategy. When people started investing in their buildings we noticed an increase in requests for public space beautification. Two other emerging elements are research and what we call brokership. Our earlier research about pedestrian flows gave vital insight into the dynamics of plinths and streets and reshaped policies and actions. Brokership is the quick exchange of information about vacant shops or trending activities. The municipality still remains a connecting element between owners, residents and entrepreneurs.

These three types of ownership all provide a different pace of development. Programme can change within a year; public space changes every 20 to 40 years; and buildings have an even slower rate of change. By connecting specific ownership to a need for change will define short-term success, structural adjustments, and long-term ambitions. The main lesson from executing the plinth strategy these last couple of years comes down to the necessity of a good analysis of ownership at the beginning of a transformation process before taking initiative. It all comes down to who cares the most.

# 80 LESSONS TO A GOOD CITY AT EYE LEVEL

Hans Karssenbergh, Jeroen Laven & Mattijs van 't Hoff  
(public developers and urbanist)

We have structured the main lessons throughout the experiences, insights and approaches from each chapter and case within this collaborative book. From the interviews, case studies and stories we found eighty lessons that can be applied to many cities around the world. We distinguished several categories. First we will look at two entirely different situations—new areas and existing areas—and both require a different approach.

## **NEW AREAS**

Public space should be the backbone of each new development plan – not the space that is left over after everything else was planned. Good planning deals with the functional and rational side, but if there is one lesson we can draw throughout all the contributions in this book, it is that planning should take into consideration the pedestrian's experience, human behaviour and emotions.

In new areas, it is important to use the criteria *from the start* as requirements for building and street design for a good city at eye level. Equally important is to develop a strategy, placing these criteria as non-negotiable on the one hand and to reward good behaviour on the other. New York and Seoul have developed similar bonus systems: if an owner creates public plinths, he is allowed to build more. The strategy ideally involves simultaneous (place) management on the level of the entire street or district, instead of each building managing plinths and spaces for itself.

By splitting the ownership of plinths from the rest of the building, and make them into one portfolio for specialized owners. This way, the tenant mix can be regulated and managed, getting the right balance of functions in the right zones and in relation with the pedestrian flows; and this way, in public space, activities and activating places can be programmed.



## EXISTING AREAS

Quick wins, building trust, gradually allowing for multi-layered use and involving diverse ownership are crucial elements for plinths and placemaking. Changing existing areas is a matter of combining a hands-on, 'lighter quicker cheaper' approach with a long-term change strategy. In terms of regulation, changing an existing situation calls a 'carrot and stick' strategy: rewarding good behaviour, but also intervening if necessary.

When it comes to the strategy for existing areas, the most important element is to build community networks: active property owners, entrepreneurs, visionaries, residents, experts and 'zealous nuts'. With this community, campaigns and great communication can shape a different type of street or place than is normally used.

In existing urban areas, change begins with a shared interdisciplinary analysis (as described in the chapter on workshops and games). Sharing ideas for solutions, creating a strategy to deal with diverse ownership, and establishing co-creation and networks are crucial. Each area has its own context, and requires a different strategy. For example, take a look at the buildings around a space. Some buildings have a good relation with public space already; others may have good façades but need better programming or are vacant; and yet other buildings need a complete physical makeover and a longer term approach to enable a better relation with the street.

## SCALE: FROM STREETS AND PLACES TO ENTIRE DISTRICTS AND CITY CENTRES

Next to the difference between new and existing areas is the matter of scale. Changing a place, a larger building or a street is different than building a new area of several thousands of residential units, or transforming the experience of a complete city centre or city district. Working on streets

and places requires concrete interventions, workshops, shared street visions, place or street management in networks with the community, developing coalitions of owners, and using instruments such as Business Improvement Districts (BID).

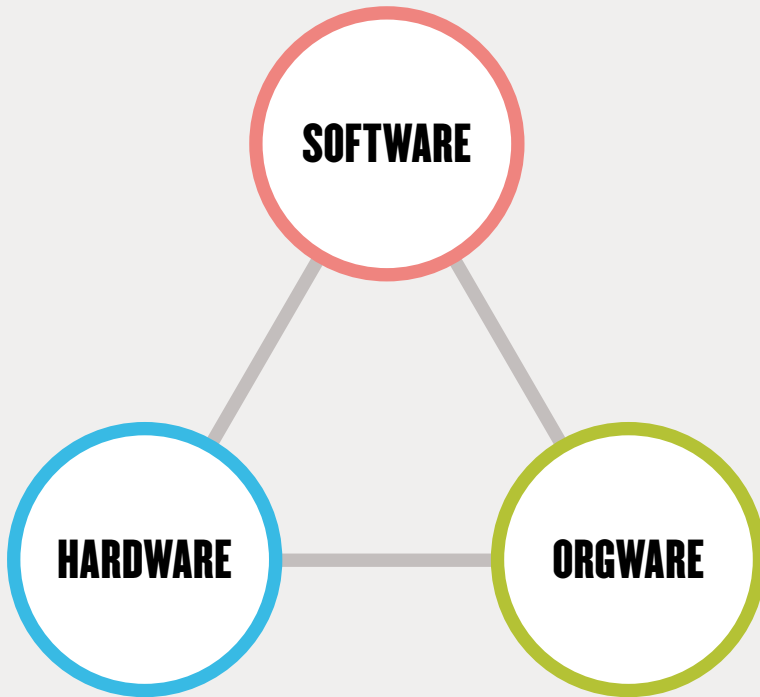
Working on larger areas involves a deeper level of analysis on a larger scale beforehand. For instance, obtaining a better understanding of pedestrian flows through the entire city centre (day and the night) and the source points for pedestrians; analysing ownership of land and buildings and the development of property value as an indicator of change; examining the 'softer' qualities of various meeting places. In-depth mapping of plinth functions, vacancy, and current and future projects for the next twenty years will deepen the understanding of future needs. Short-term actions can then bridge missing links, for example, in the network of pedestrian flows. The long-term strategy can, for example, develop a finer street grid with each development taking place over the next decades.

## FUNCTIONS: RETAIL, RESIDENTIAL, WORK AREAS

The strategy will also be different for areas with different functions. For retail areas: create a great and rich experience for pedestrians by street, place, and portfolio management, and develop coalitions of entrepreneurs. For residential areas: create a good connection between the house and the street on the ground level, allowing great "homey" hybrid zones where residents personalise their space with a table, chairs and plants, creating great sidewalk experiences. In areas where businesses and offices are dominant: create diversity and avoid (or change) long and boring façades by creating smaller units and bringing the inside out.

A sense of place is at the heart of each of these. In the long run, it is important to reach

experience	pedestrian flows
programme	markets as places
placemaking	wayfinding



flexibility	plinths
streets as places	the hybrid space
residential plinths	the sound scape

long term strategy	street coalitions
reuse vacant plinths	place management
quick wins experiment	costs and benefits

more mixed, flexible area, that can ‘breathe’ throughout the decades and centuries. True sustainability comes into being when areas can adapt to the ever-changing desires of society and the economy throughout each decade. When successful, these areas are well-loved by their users for their public space quality and their unique ‘soul’, and when the users feel invited to make a range of small and large investments throughout time, creating a sense of ownership.

## **LESSONS: SOFTWARE, HARDWARE AND ORGWARE**

New or existing, street or city, shopping or residential; however different these situations are, creating a great city at eye level is always dependent on the triangle of use (software), built environment (hardware) and coalitions and tools (orgware).

We have taken the lessons throughout all the great contributions in this book and divided them in these three categories. To read more about a certain lesson, just follow the number behind it to the list of the chapters and cases. Some lessons refer to chapters from the first edition that can be found at the city at eye level website [www.thecityateyelevel.com](http://www.thecityateyelevel.com).

## **SOFTWARE**

The first and most important part of the triangle is the software: the users, their movement patterns, the experience of the city at eye level and the programme, land use, or zoning.

### Experience

We are not only rational beings, we need the emotions of the city’s experience as well. Experience is important for the city’s users, and for the local economy. Sense of place and good plinths are crucial for this experience.

- 1.** Focus on life in buildings and between buildings, as it seems in nearly all situations to rank as more essential and more relevant than the spaces and buildings themselves.<sup>(03)</sup>
- 2.** Make your city well-formed, distinct, and remarkable; invite the eye and the ear to greater attention and participation. Improve the fabric of your city through colour, texture, scale, style, character, personality and uniqueness.<sup>(03)</sup>
- 3.** Create small shops with open façades and make users feel at home: they create a warm city and allow for movement between the public and private, which creates interaction, meaning, histories and narratives through which we become attached to the city.<sup>(04 & 10)</sup>
- 4.** Improve walkability. Aim for proven success factors: density of amenities, street connectivity, proximity to large green areas, regional accessibility and building design. Make interaction meaningful and comfortable and enhance the city’s quality of life.<sup>(38)</sup>
- 5.** Create great plinths. The ground floor may be only 10% of a building but it determines 90% of the building’s contribution to the experience of the environment.<sup>(021)</sup>

## Use patterns

“You can’t build a snowman, unless it’s snowing.” We can design the best buildings, plinths, streets and public spaces, but they are nothing without users. If human behaviour and its context are better understood, city centres can be managed in a more strategic way to optimize attractiveness and improve their economies.<sup>(06)</sup> Putting users first means to simply imagine what it would take for women, elderly, children and disabled persons to feel at home at night.<sup>(05)</sup>

6. Develop your *fingerspitzengefühl*, looking at walking routes and busy – but not too busy – streets.<sup>(12)</sup> Link new plinths to the urban route system.<sup>(07)</sup> And base your pedestrian movement strategy on thorough data from customer experience surveys.<sup>(06 & 21 & 24).</sup>
7. Provide users with convenience, but with surprise too.<sup>(21)</sup> Create accessible, open plinths, with a veranda feeling, and attract more people and improve urban economies.<sup>(04 & 06)</sup>
8. Create a balance between pedestrians and car traffic to combine busy pedestrian inner cities with a through-traffic function.<sup>(24)</sup> Do not allow the car to become dominant in important places.<sup>(07)</sup> Work on the overall accessibility of the street for delivering traffic, residents, and visitors by car.<sup>(33).</sup> Living, working, shopping, recreating and traffic, also the car, must be mixed as much as possible; streets where cars have been banned have the problem of being dead at night.<sup>(05)</sup>
9. Create safer and better entrances, not lavish foyers armed with guards, doormen and cameras, but a semi-public space.<sup>(08)</sup>
10. Size is not always the solution. Make shopping streets attractive, not longer: a stretch of 1.6 km can already too long to function as one shopping street, especially outside the city centre.<sup>(30)</sup>

## From space to place

Placemaking is to make places where people want to be, and share life together. Beyond building for everyone, placemaking means building by everyone, rather than by political, or corporate powers and personal egos. Think of public, rather than private interests; add symbolic values to details, and generate outputs for the enjoyment of public life.<sup>(43)</sup>

11. People activate urban spaces and reinforce the identity of place. Develop a programming strategy for urban activation on top of the urban design and the planning framework, both on a macro and micro scale.<sup>(39)</sup>
12. A good street is a series of places.<sup>(44)</sup> A good place has at least 10 good reasons or activities to be there. Create “triangulation” by piling up activities in one place, leading to interaction.<sup>(53)</sup>
13. Aim for solutions that are lighter, quicker, cheaper. They can be temporary. If an intervention doesn’t work, experiment and try again. Placemaking is not about using more money; it’s about getting more return for the money.<sup>(44)</sup>
14. Involve developers: it is also in their interest to attract more people and more money. In the end, we’re all interested in the same thing: to create street life and new types of public spaces.<sup>(44)</sup>

## Programming plinths

The software is made up of the pedestrian’s experience, use patterns, and the programme (land use, function, zoning) inside the ground floor spaces. Shops may be the first things we think about when we work on active plinths, but we simply cannot plan retail everywhere. We need to think about other functions such as small businesses, fashion, leisure, care, food and last but certainly not least, housing.

15. To make a 'Great Street', a new function is needed every 10 meters (maximally). Offices are not the best contributors to active streets. Housing, if not too mono-functional, adds activity and safety at night. It is the mix of functions that creates great streets: shops, cafés, restaurants, school functions, houses and workspaces.<sup>(01)</sup>
  16. Use remnants from the past as identity carriers.<sup>(18)</sup> Learn from examples such as well-loved buildings, photos, historical events, famous people, old shopping fronts, public art or historical elements in the streetscape.
  17. Look at new upcoming functions in areas with vacancy, such as co-working spaces, temporary "meanwhile spaces", restaurants and cafés, social functions such as elementary schools, and most of all residential living on the ground floor. Due to online shopping, it is clear that we cannot solely rely on shops to create a good public realm.<sup>(01 & 13)</sup>
  18. Carefully consider mega-shopping streets. They may lead to monoculture and make the street vulnerable—maybe vibrant but sometimes too crowded during the day, but deserted in the evening.<sup>(07)</sup>
  19. When it comes to shops, select creative retailers for their plinths, and they will invent original ways to display their goods and draw people inside.<sup>(28)</sup> The big chains play a role, as long as they are not allowed to dominate. It's the smaller shops and spaces that are the real image builders.<sup>(21)</sup>
  20. Consider food, fashion, design and authentic ethnic shops to provide interesting plinths in urban regeneration areas. They also draw positive new attention to these areas.<sup>(22)</sup>
  21. The self-employed (freelance) economy is growing, creating a need for meeting places in the city centre.<sup>(12)</sup> Create spaces for entrepreneurs.
 

Start-up operations need a basic space with a flexible contract and some basic facilities.<sup>(34)</sup>
  22. Single-use office locations with poor public transport are a toxic combination resulting in very high office vacancy. Add new uses to the office element to improve the functioning of the location, such as housing, restaurants, fitness centres, food and non-food stores, art exhibitions and leisure.<sup>(17)</sup>
  23. Allow spaces like the Flemish garages to stay a part of the street, as they generate flexibility for unexpected uses such as cafes, shops, car repair garages, start-up spaces for entrepreneurs, workshops, lot sales, parking, import and export—in short, urban life.<sup>(14)</sup>
- Wayfinding
- Use wayfinding to enhance the user experience in the urban environment, to help people reach their destinations in the easiest and most effective ways possible, to promote behaviour by stimulating people to walk a specific route, and support the local economy by attracting people to destinations that need more visitors.<sup>(41)</sup>
24. Work towards intuitive wayfinding, rather than to offer sequences of instructions, which is effective but also inflexible. Offer a fine balance of structure and differentiation. Group space into destination zones, identify local spatial zones, and accentuate elements such as entrances, exits, paths and junctions.<sup>(41)</sup>
  25. Effective wayfinding design cannot be ad hoc installed. Explore what symbols hold special meaning for the users, using insights into ergonomics, local rituals, personalities, cultural heritage and characteristics of place. Use thoughtful, meaningful research and deliberate application of interventions.<sup>(41)</sup>

Street activation: markets as places  
and busking

For street activation, markets and buskers are crucial. Cities have grown from markets and markets have been the ultimate way for people to meet and conduct business. Markets provide a great, human experience for the city at eye level. Buskers (street performers) are a viable tool for rejuvenating public spaces. Busking is high-impact and low-cost. No infrastructure is needed; just an artist, performing for tips. Buskers prompt social interaction on the street level, create intimacy and allow people to feel comfortable and safe. They provide live entertainment that low-income citizens can access and enjoy.<sup>(61)</sup>

solved. To get the best busking talent, cities must make the best buskers want to work there. Develop busking policies and guidelines in cooperation with the city's busking community.<sup>(61)</sup>

- 26.** A good market has a mix of products and people, and above all it is a great place to be. For great markets, introduce a good mix in management groups. Include citizens and consumers with an advisory role in market management.<sup>(57)</sup> It's people who power markets. Create flexible parking lots that can become a market for one day, and add places to eat, and places for musicians and street artists.<sup>(57)</sup>
- 27.** Markets are important for local small-scale vendors. In areas with low income, create a market where the city does not charge the locals to sell their goods nor for the space to sell. Enable local people to earn a living, develop their entrepreneurship, and take a first step on the social mobility ladder.<sup>(57)</sup>
- 28.** Informal markets thrive on public streets. An old tree, a wall, or a bus shelter can be used to hold up the temporary frame of these roadside stalls. Such markets provide cheap buying options to the large lower middle-class population. At the end of the day, they are dismantled, packed and carried away.<sup>(52)</sup>
- 29.** Approach busking as an asset to be encouraged rather than a problem to be

## HARDWARE

The second part of the triangle is the hardware, the shaping of buildings and streets.<sup>(01)</sup> Starting from the users, we can get to a more people-centred approach for public space. Good buildings, plinths and streets cannot be taken for granted. Many post-war areas have been developed from abstract urban and rational design conceptions and housing requirements rather than from the perspective of peoples' everyday needs for good places and plinths.<sup>(19)</sup> As buildings get bigger and bigger, more and more ground floor is taken up by service and security related to the companies inside, and with that come big, blank walls.<sup>(08)</sup> They harm the functioning of a good street. Empty ground floor spaces impact neighbouring businesses and contribute to blight anti-social activity.<sup>(13 & 19)</sup>

### Streets as places

We are changing the question from "How many cars can we move down a street?" to "How many people can we move down a street?" Build the foundations of a good city on human observation – engineering has a very small role in something as organic and human as streets.<sup>(50)</sup>

30. Create intimate streets for pedestrians with bold design elements, lighting, street furniture, trees, artistic details in the cement, *parklets*.<sup>(24)</sup> Solve the barriers that block the natural walking routes for pedestrians: traffic, canals, horizontally-oriented buildings, and wide auto-oriented buildings.<sup>(06)</sup>
31. The balance between 'place' and 'movement' in the city calls for improving the balance between fast and slow transport. A main element of success is prioritizing pedestrians and slowing traffic in the city, without eliminating motorized traffic. The pillar is making busy and quiet places at the same time.<sup>(49)</sup>

32. Informal uses in public realm can be stimulated by elements that are just as high as seating elements, but are not designed as such. These can be for example staircases along the water, high edges along planters, or just objects that can be positioned in different ways. Switching on/off water elements creates spaces suitable for organizing events whilst on quiet moments the joy and pleasure of the water element turns these spaces into an inviting place to stay.<sup>(49)</sup>
33. The length of the street should be measured according to the sum of walking along shops opposite each other. If a street entices people to cross while shopping, the experience of the street becomes longer.<sup>(62)</sup>
34. Design bike routes to complement shopping streets; take into consideration that attractive streets attract people and that cyclists use the busiest streets because they are more fun.<sup>(04)</sup>
35. Use the infrastructure constructions for the plinths of the city, and provide new urban spaces and opportunities to interact and gather. At ground level these structures often form a barrier between neighbourhoods and have a blank façade. Redevelop these spaces into public places with markets, parks and playgrounds, and commercial and cultural plinths.<sup>(51)</sup>

### Design of great plinths

The plinth is the most important part for the building's relation with the street. A good design of shops and storefronts, of houses, of office buildings and of entire streets can lead to high quality, effective plinths. Unfortunately, we see a lot of bad examples too. How can we get better buildings, more open to the street?

36. Approach the design process from the outside to the inside, from the street

to transition zone to the building; in designing, the street must be considered as a place to be.<sup>(07)</sup> Let ground-floor architecture play a key role. Lifeless, closed façades pacify while open and interesting façades activate urban users. The overriding planning principle has to be: first life, then space, then buildings. Buildings and city spaces must be seen and treated as a unified being that breathes as one.<sup>(46)</sup>

- 37.** Our senses are designed to perceive and process sensory impressions while moving at about 5 km/h: walking pace.<sup>(46)</sup> Create many different surfaces over which light constantly moves to keep the eyes engaged. Create richness in sensory experience, diversity in functions and vertical façade rhythms.<sup>(06)</sup>
- 38.** Create high ground floors. The height of the ground floor is important for adequate indoor atmosphere and sunlight, and for the flexibility of non-residential functions. The proportions of the building and its façade related to the profile of street matter considerably.<sup>(07)</sup> Demand that the ground floors of all buildings are at least 4 m (13,1 feet) high, to accommodate for commercial, retail, or other business.<sup>(27)</sup> Especially require corner plinths to have high ceilings and transparent windows, and provide them with mixed-use zoning, to allow corners to become a café, restaurant, a dwelling or office space.<sup>(25)</sup>
- 39.** Learn from the 19th century method of transferable retail spaces in the plinths. The small scale, private investments and construction mode of ‘building on demand’ enable urban neighbourhoods to adapt easily and quickly to changing demands in economy and society.<sup>(40)</sup> Reduce ground-floor rent in order to secure small units, many doors (minimum 10 per 100 meters) and an attractive mix of units facing the most

important pedestrian spaces and routes.<sup>(46)</sup> For an attractive storefront, create small shops. Shops that are too broad, such as supermarkets and large retail chains, lead to closed windows.<sup>(33)</sup>

- 40.** Create a mixed urban district or areas with an urban density; no homogenous office areas or suburbia.<sup>(12)</sup> Make ground floors diverse and offer constantly changing, vibrant, engaging, and welcoming environments.<sup>(13)</sup>
- 41.** Anything that takes attention away from the storefronts is problematic. Avoid sudden set-backs in the property line, large-scaled columns or pillars, and “dead zones”. They interrupt the walking route and vision line, creating difficulty for the shops to carry out their goal: inviting people in.<sup>(53)</sup> Supermarkets are a necessity for a residential district, so fit them in the urban block: either on the ground floor with supporting shops around them, underground, or on the first floor.<sup>(07)</sup>
- 42.** Design and build mixed-use, multi-purpose, non-specific buildings and plinths that can absorb many functions over time.<sup>(07)</sup> Adopt a lay-out in which residential space, retail space, shops, and working space were constructed in the same street, even in the same building. The construction method must make quick alterations of property functions in the easiest way possible, in order to meet actual demand.<sup>(40)</sup>
- 43.** The Japanese Machiya is an inspiration for its flexible façade; opening and removing the façade needs to be done easily. Plinths today could offer the same flexibility, allowing for an incredible amount of possibilities and freedom for the user. The openness of the Machiya blurs the lines between the inside and outside, creating a wholesome sense of responsibility and community. When borders get soft, people take care of their environment and stay connected.<sup>(40)</sup>



### Great residential plinths

Special attention must be given to residential plinths. Not every area can be filled with shops and cafes, and still, more residential areas can have great streets too. Embedding residential buildings in the city requires a good plinth, but also a good position in the street, the proper width of the sidewalk, orientation to the sun, presence of a courtyard or garden, and a solution for parking (inside, outside, underneath).<sup>(48)</sup>

- 44.** Involve the public space in the architectural designs to create a place that provides for encounters between its users, the hybrid zone. The entrances of buildings can for instance create inviting gestures towards the city.<sup>(48)</sup>
- 45.** Create a “veranda feeling” in front of the house (a recessed hybrid zone) to strengthen the social climate. For children the sidewalk is an ideal playground because surveillance is naturally present, as already was noted by Jane Jacobs. Intensively used sidewalks generate social control on which parents can trust and children can benefit by.<sup>(48)</sup>
- 46.** In housing projects, don’t use too much glass on the ground floor. Transparency is required in every program, but in practice all large glass surfaces are closed by curtains for privacy. The result is a closed façade. The ground floor can be slightly elevated above the street level by 2 or 3 steps, causing a small difference in elevation and hence privacy.<sup>(48)</sup>
- 47.** The actual use of the transition zone to the street depends on the introvert or extrovert attitude of the residents. Extrovert urbanites who are outside a lot and have lots of contact with their neighbours appropriate even the public area. More private residents use the transition zone to the street less.<sup>(48)</sup>

### Allowing for Hybrid Zone

The hybrid zone is the space between the private and the public realm, or perhaps better said, the place where these two meet. Hybrid zones are important contributors to the experience of the street, perhaps not accessible to enter, but still accessible by sight and smell. They make streets feel personal and intimate, as if the living room was pulled through the window to the street. People use the hybrid zone to increase their privacy, making the hybrid zone some sort of a barrier and creating safer neighbourhoods. Nearly 80% of the informal contacts between neighbours are initiated from the hybrid zone.<sup>(09)</sup>

- 48.** When we are designing the plinth and the street level of the city, the first thing we need to do is design its hybrid zone, the place where it interacts with its user.<sup>(41)</sup> Avoid a clear-cut distinction between public and private in favour of semi-public space: the city is about porosity, the blurring of edges.<sup>(09)</sup> Pedestrians feel more at home if this hybrid zone shows signs of human activity, instead of just hard blank walls.<sup>(09)</sup>
- 49.** On a residential level, people use the hybrid zone to increase their privacy, making the hybrid zone some sort of a barrier.<sup>(09)</sup> Design the plinth so that it offers something to the passer-by and reserves a bit for the resident, for example with small front gardens or private zones along the sidewalk.<sup>(07)</sup>
- 50.** In shopping streets, increase diversity by allowing shop owners to put their goods outside next to the façade. In office areas, locate the public functions on the ground floor as much as possible, for instance with outdoor cafes and terraces.

### The Soundscape

Although the looks of a city are important for its appreciation, sound is more often

responsible for how we feel at a particular location. We can choose what to look at, but not necessarily what we hear. For a good experience, make a strategy for the urban acoustics, the city at ear level.<sup>(55)</sup>

- 51.** It is a common misconception that people prefer silence most of the time. Aim for variation (a lot of different sounds), complexity (no monotonous, repetitive sounds) and functional acoustic balance (the space you are in should not sound bigger than you see it).<sup>(55)</sup>
- 52.** Use three ways to design for sound in public space: absorbance (trees, shrubs, hedges, certain sculptures), diffusion (avoid hard and smooth surfaces, use irregular façades), or masking (mask irritating sounds by introducing less intrusive ones, such as water sculptures).<sup>(55)</sup>
- 53.** A plinth with interesting activities often sounds good. Many modern office buildings have a hard glass surface on the ground level (or even two floors). These are an acoustic nightmare. Use terraces, workshops, open plinths, stores and personalised hybrid spaces, like small front gardens and hedges, to diffuse sound and to generate rich textures of sound.<sup>(55)</sup>

## ORGWARE

The key to good plinths is neither only in design, nor only in an economic approach. Good plinths are obtained when both are linked. Then, the third crucial element is the *orgware*: the organisation of functions; the daily management of shops, plinths and streets; and the portfolio maintenance of plinths.

### Long Term Strategy and Quick Wins

Plinth Strategy requires a combination of short-term, hands-on action and a long-term strategy and perseverance over the years.

- 54.** Quick wins are a guide for the long-term strategy, and are needed to demark the new approach and win trust among property owners and tenants. However, without a long-term change policy these quick wins remain window-dressing. The combination involves four elements: regulation, stimulation, changing missing links and a network campaign.<sup>(36)</sup>
- 55.** Make your strategy long lasting: changing and improving plinths in an existing urban structure takes at least three generations and requires a long-term vision for restoring the urban fabric, based on a deep historic understanding of how the city developed.<sup>(95)</sup> Be modest: we must realize that we only deliver small contributions to centuries old systems.<sup>(97)</sup>
- 56.** Use re-imagination as a tool for the process. The ability to imagine that a space can be different already creates a possibility to change it. A street can be a market, a park can function as an open-air cinema, an abandoned alley as a gallery. Imagination is a powerful tool we can use to change.<sup>(43)</sup>
- 57.** Use fun. Create a joyful and fun way of discussing important urban issues and engaging people in the creation of

public spaces. For instance, putting Band-Aids on holes in the sidewalks, introduce games, musical instruments, sports activities for kids.<sup>(56)</sup>

58. Temporarily close off streets for cars at certain moments of the week, for instance Sundays from 6.30am to 11am, like the Equal Streets initiative in Mumbai. The immense amount of people taking their morning walk, mothers strolling with their babies, children skateboarding and cycling, musicians humming in the background are a first step towards more structural policy decisions.<sup>(52)</sup>

#### Co-creation, Coalitions and Self-organisation

Allow communities to become engaged.

The city at eye level and placemaking are about that deep attachment. It's emotional.

It's something that people own; it's their process and their outcomes.<sup>(44)</sup> When the municipality/city is the only responsible party to improve the quality of a street, no effort should be undertaken (yet).

The cooperation and willingness of the community, entrepreneurs and/or building owners to embrace an improvement process is absolutely vital.<sup>(36, 54)</sup> How the city involves itself in the development of the city is crucial; debate and resistance sometimes take a long time, but eventually lead to better urban design.<sup>(05)</sup> We can learn lessons from the informal, self-organised city in terms of how human scale, variety, high density, flexibility and little car use contribute to a pleasant space. Creating a framework for self-organisation should not just be a fashionable concept, but an imbedded planning strategy.<sup>(60)</sup>

59. Create a continuously dynamic process, not a static set of amenities, objects or activities. The process empowers everyone including residents, businesses and local government as co-creators and modifiers of place.<sup>(44, 54)</sup>

60. Look for the (unofficial) leaders, the "zealous nuts", the visionaries with a poorly developed sense of fear and no concept of the odds against them. They make the impossible happen.<sup>(44)</sup>

61. To get started quickly and easily, involve the network into a shared analysis and generating new ideas for the future, organize a place and a plinth game. Walking and talking in smaller groups, analysing the street together based on everyone's intuition, coming back with shared ideas – it all creates a different mind-set. It allows for interdisciplinary acting, and breaks down barriers, bringing people together to start take ownership and create their own places.<sup>(45)</sup>

62. As the first actions lead to success, let the community take on bigger challenges. The initial actions gradually shift to a type of street, area or place management, inviting new activities, testing, learning from actions and improving. To really come to change, a mix is needed of 'Carrot & Stick', including both strictly implemented and maintained guidelines, and tempting new initiatives by rewarding good behaviour and showing best practice.<sup>(45)</sup>

#### Street, plinth and place management

The street, plinth or place manager is the person linking property owners. The manager is a key to successful ground floor spaces, shifting from single buildings to blocks or entire city streets. Independence from project developers and landlords is a precondition to develop a long-term business model and investment strategy.<sup>(32)</sup> The manager must be impartial,<sup>(62)</sup> and think in terms of a process, not a final image or a blueprint; observe bottom-up movement and facilitate it. A street or place should not be seen as a project with a beginning and an end in time, but always as an organism that grows over time and that requires constant attention.<sup>(33)</sup>

- 63.** Shift from a *building logic* to a *street logic* to enable a plinth strategy.<sup>(31)</sup> Single ownership, like at airports, enables smart portfolio strategies, exceeding single unit strategies and creating a holistic experience which customers will not forget.<sup>(21)</sup>
- 64.** A long term vision with regulation, zoning plans and aesthetic policies can be the base of a strategy, but brokership is necessary to take the next step. Brokership is the quick exchange of information about e.g. vacant shops or socially wanted activities.<sup>(36)</sup> Finding the right programme for the plinth is a task for the landlord or for specialised experts, not for developers – it is a special business.<sup>(12)</sup> Landlords usually are very unfamiliar with the special market of plinth functions and are satisfied most of the time if they have contractors for the upper 90% of the building.
- 65.** Create added value by a well-balanced portfolio through a three-point strategy based on revenue, quality and image.<sup>(21)</sup> Individual merchants can make small changes to their storefronts. The very nature of being a merchant is to think about the inside—the products they sell. Take the merchant by the hand, walk outside, and show them their building. In most cases, small, inexpensive additions can be made: a new imaginative hanging sign, a colourful awning, creative window displays, a bench for sitting, or merchandise on the sidewalk.<sup>(53)</sup>
- 66.** To increase impact, cluster plinth initiatives together and launch them at the same time.<sup>(29)</sup>

### Costs and Benefits

Good plinths may come with higher upfront costs, but they also lead to greater benefits. Good plinths are in the best interest of the urban economy, and not only because of consumer spending: those involved in the

knowledge and experience economy require spaces with character, a good atmosphere, a place to meet and to interact.<sup>(01)</sup> The knowledge-based economy is founded on face-to-face contact in breakfast bars, lounge areas, libraries, galleries, pubs and coffee corners.<sup>(10)</sup> Understanding the underlying financial patterns reveals why good plinths do not come about by themselves and the actual interests of different parties involved: the consumers, the citizens more in general, developers, owners of the building, land owners, tenants and designers.

- 67.** Develop an investment strategy based on pre-investment or involve partners who can help. Making a good plinth is expensive due to high construction costs and required pre-investments. Pre-investments are needed to create future value for the street and city.<sup>(12)</sup>
- 68.** Involve partners that allow a mixed-use strategy in your approach. From a developer and investor point of view, mixing uses in one building in particular adds an element of complexity and risk, with higher levels of specialisation required (design, promotion), more intensive management requirements and perceived diluting of investment value. Nonetheless, mixed-use office areas do generally perform better than single-use office areas: the combined vacancy in mixed-use areas is lower.<sup>(17)</sup>
- 69.** Keep properties safe, clean, relaxed and easily understood. If visitors' expectations are met or exceeded, they will remain three times longer and spend more money than in an unfriendly and confusing structure.<sup>(01)</sup>
- 70.** Make it clear that good plinths are in the owners' interest. Property owners benefit economically through the security of active tenancy, reduced costs for empty property, and prospects for future uses.<sup>(13)</sup> Where programming plinths leads to value creation of

neighbouring property, larger landlords, residents and entrepreneurs can be the shareholders for re-development.<sup>(18)</sup>

Project developers and landlords on a speculative base tend not to think in the long term. Often they set for the highest return on their investments, resulting in well-known, run-of-the-mill tenants. Involve real estate owners at an early stage in new plans and strategies in order to convince them that a long-term vision is better for everyone.<sup>(32)</sup>

71. The municipality must consider their financial strategy.<sup>(12)</sup> Short term financial gain and good plinths are often not easy to mix, but good plinths can be part of a sound long term financial strategy that leads to value creation for the property, the area, the users and the local economy. Set the land price of ground floor space rather low, at the level of residential space, to allow for commercial diversity.<sup>(27)</sup>

### Reutilisation

In areas that need reutilisation, reinventing plinths can be one of the new instruments. We have seen many forms of this throughout the book: from changing the image of entire shopping streets to turning garages into small businesses.

72. Monofunctional office areas are not inviting in the long run. If you want to change them, adapt an overall strategy for the whole area, diversify marginal spaces, develop a night-time identity and open up buildings with renters who relate to the street.<sup>(37)</sup> Revive modernist CBDs: add significant numbers of housing, create a finer grain in the street pattern by opening up underutilised alleys, among others, and introduce a place-based policy.<sup>(39)</sup>
73. Slowing down the revitalisation process allows for 'periods of quiet' for all partners, especially existing residents, 'slow urbanism' ensures flexibility and

energy among the partners, as well as a steady stream of investment, staving off impacts of the crisis.<sup>(26)</sup>

74. Shop re-parcelling could create new opportunities to an imbalance of shop vacancy and the demand for large retail space.<sup>(35)</sup>
75. To assist small businesses looking to relocate in laneways and other underused areas, introduce a Fine Grain Matching Grant. Fine grain businesses are small scale, diverse and innovative business engaged in specialist retail, hospitality or entertainment and encourage activation of underutilised spaces such as city laneways and basement spaces.<sup>(39)</sup> Rebuild vacant garages into small, low-rent spaces for entrepreneurs as a way to develop their businesses.<sup>(34)</sup>
76. Generate sustainable entrepreneurship by striking deals for tenants to pay 1€ less rent for each 1€ invested and letting them invest in themselves.<sup>(29)</sup>

### Vacant plinths

Vacancy of plinths is an important new theme to address. This book covered several examples of business models that address this issue. Temporary use, if organized and managed well, has been a successful strategy. Temporary use can improve the financial and social value of a plinth, a building and its surroundings, and can be a useful regeneration tool.

77. Meanwhile use is a good way to test new uses on a high street<sup>(15)</sup> and through meanwhile use we can help our high streets to adapt to an uncertain future.<sup>(13)</sup> If a building is for rent, the temporary plinth function should cast the message of availability.<sup>(15)</sup>
78. Without proper policy, temporary use is delivered to the good will of the property owner.<sup>(15)</sup> Good vacancy management is knowing the property

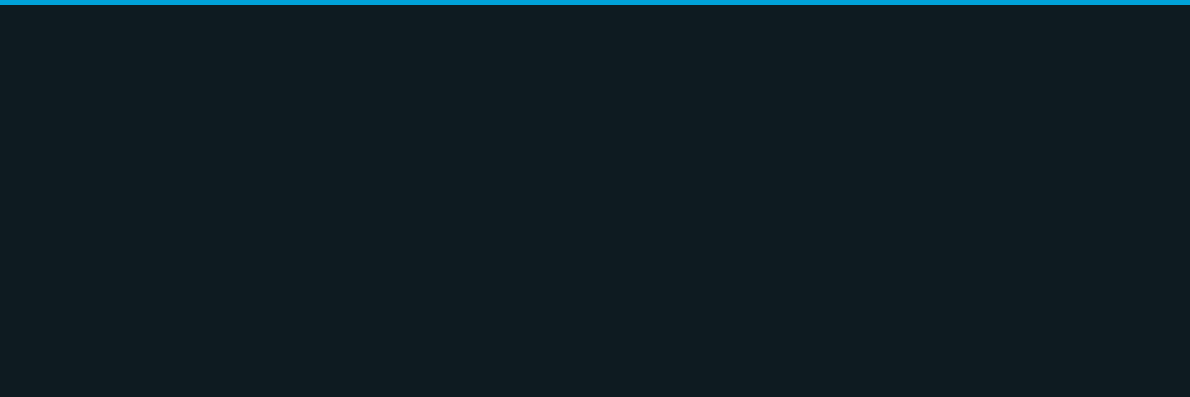
owner's strategy, seeing the building's unique possibilities and limitations, and knowing many end-users and initiatives with a good idea to fill a plinth.<sup>(15)</sup> Learn from the vacancy legislation in the United Kingdom where landlords of empty property have to pay 100% of business rates once the property has been vacant for three months.<sup>(13)</sup>

- 79.** To solve vacancy develop networks among potential renters as well as policy makers and property owners. A festival of empty shops can be a great start to raise awareness in these networks, and test what works.<sup>(47)</sup> Acquire close contact with both policy makers, property industry, creative industries, social enterprises and local government to reuse vacant plinths.<sup>(13)</sup>
- 80.** To regenerate an entire area, including the area's eye level, develop a shared ownership with the tenants, take at least 10 years, create an atmosphere of experiment among the key stakeholders (building owners, city, tenants), and use contracts with new tenants that the plinths must have a public function and appearance.<sup>(63)</sup>

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# APPENDIX

# BIOGRAPHIES

## ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS

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**Mishkat Ahmed-Raja** resides and practices in Mumbai, India, and studied urban design at the University of California, Berkeley. Her master's thesis received the 2nd prize in the 2011 Asia-Pacific Holcim Award for Sustainable Construction in the "Next Generation" category. Her current work involves development feasibility studies, master plans, public space guidelines, and place-making strategies to public and private clients. She is also visiting the faculty for Urban Design at Kamla Raheja Vidyandih Institute for Architecture, Mumbai.

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**Hans Appelboom** is the owner of Duikelman, a shop specialized in kitchen and cooking supplies, located in

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**Emiel Arends** studied Urban Planning at the Rijkshogeschool IJsselland in Deventer and Urban Design at the Rotterdam Academy of Architecture and Urban Design. Since 2001, Emiel is an urban planner/designer for the municipality of Rotterdam. He has worked on several city-wide strategies and policies, which includes the latest city-centre master plan, the plinth strategy, the high-rise vision, the sustainable agenda, the parking strategy and the residential policy for the entire city.

**Frank van Beek** is the director and co-owner of Lingotto in Amsterdam. Lingotto specializes in transformation and redevelopment of existing buildings and sites in an urban context. Their strength lies in inventing and realizing effective concepts. Lingotto develops projects at own account and risk, and as managing developer on behalf of a client. [www.lingotto.nl](http://www.lingotto.nl)

**Frank Belderbos** has nearly 30 years experience with project management and urban renewal. He studied Town Planning and Political Sciences at the University of Amsterdam. He worked for the city of The Hague in Urban Renewal, and specialized in the programme Urban renewal as cultural activity. For the last three decades he has worked in the city of Rotterdam specialising in urban renewal and cultural-economic activities. Latest, Frank was the project manager for revitalising the Nieuwe Binnenweg, financed with European EFRO-money.

**Emily Berwyn** has a broad background in the creative industries and the built environment. She is founder Director of Meanwhile Space - a Community Interest Company specialising in 'Meanwhile use' of vacant buildings or land for social gain until they can be brought

back into commercial use again - breaking new ground, generating a zeitgeist to re-imagine commercial use of property and the untapped opportunities that vacant spaces present in the UK. [www.meanwhitespace.com](http://www.meanwhitespace.com)

**Willemijn de Boer** is owner of ANNA Vastgoed & Cultuur (ANNA Real Estate & Culture), a company that manages vacant real estate. ANNA reactivates locations and buildings for short periods of time with functions that complement the different needs of the surrounding neighbourhood. [www.annavastgoedencultuur.nl](http://www.annavastgoedencultuur.nl)

**Nick Broad** is a busking advocate based in the UK who has filmed street performers in 40 cities in 30 countries on 5 continents. He runs [buskr.com](http://buskr.com), a busking-based tech start up, has been quoted on busking in the House of Lords, and has commissioned research on busking policy...but he is not a busker. [www.buskr.com](http://www.buskr.com)

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**Mikael Colville-Andersen** is a Danish-Canadian urban designer and urban mobility expert. He is the CEO and founder of Copenhagenize Design Co. the go-to consultancy for bicycle culture, planning, traffic and communications. The firm advises cities and governments around the world towards becoming more bicycle friendly. He is a sought-after keynote speaker on the subjects of urbanism, liveable cities and bicycle urbanism. [www.copenhagenize.eu](http://www.copenhagenize.eu)

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**Richard Dobson**, an architect by training, worked for over ten years for the eThekweni Municipality in Durban as a project leader, first of the Warwick Junction Urban Renewal Project and then for the inner city renewal programme. He left the Municipality in 2006 to establish the NPO Asiye eTafuleni that focuses on offering design and facilitation services to those working in the informal economy. His professional technical, design and project work has been recognized through various national and international awards and citations.

**Vivian Doumpa** is an urban planner and geographer from Thessaloniki, Greece, and living in Utrecht, the Netherlands. Since a young age she has developed a deep interest and love for arts & culture and especially for music, therefore she's combining her passion for urbanism with that for arts in the research field of Creative Cities. Currently she's working as a freelancer, collaborating on projects in culture and creativity, public space & placemaking, urban & spatial development, as well as research on issues related to street performers.

**René Dutrioux** worked as a project manager at the planning department of the municipality of Rotterdam.

Later he became the square manager of the Vereniging Verenigd Schouburgplein in Rotterdam.

**Gábor Everraert** studied Human Geography at the University of Amsterdam with a major in Urban Geography. His field of interest lies specifically in placemaking and acupuncture development of city streets and neighbourhoods. He is currently a project manager at the department of urban development in Rotterdam and over the last 4 years he has been involved in many projects to embellish the city-centre, including a inner-city plinth strategy.

**Jos Gadet** is an urban geographer. He works for the Urban Planning Department of the City of Amsterdam. Gadet wrote on the rise of successful Amsterdam neighbourhoods in the collection of essays "De levende stad" (2009), which accompanied the first Dutch translation of Jane Jacobs' masterpiece "The Death and Life of Great American Cities". In 2011 his book "Terug naar de Stad" was published, in which he describes the development of various districts of Amsterdam.

**Jan Gehl** is a Danish architect and urban designer based in Copenhagen, and founder of Gehl Architects. His career has focused on improving the public realm especially for pedestrians and cyclists. His influential work *Life Between Buildings: Using Public Space* (1971, English translation 1987) documents human social interaction and perception, urban recreation, and sensory experience of public spaces. Since then he has published many books and articles on public space and city life. Gehl Architects works on several projects in cities worldwide. [www.gehlarchitects.com](http://www.gehlarchitects.com)

**Meredith Glaser** is an Amsterdam-based urban and mobility strategist, working on both a freelance basis and on international projects with Copenhagenize Design Co. and blogs for Amsterdam Cycle Chic. She hosts international delegations and holds a guest appointment at the University of Amsterdam, conducting research on mobility learning. Meredith was part of the editors editing team for the coordination of the research, interviews and production for this and the first book. She lives in Amsterdam with her husband, 3 bikes, and no car.

**Arjan Gooijer** studied architecture at Delft University of Technology. Since 1998 he has been working at Van Schagen Architecten as a project architect of a number of larger projects, from design to realisation. Arjan is also a researcher involved in studies and publications. [www.vanschagenarchitecten.com](http://www.vanschagenarchitecten.com)

**Peter Groenendaal** was born, raised and educated in Amsterdam, The Netherlands, and has also lived in Canada, USA, and the Caribbean. He is currently an active conduit for placemaking in communities around the world, beating the pavement in search of zealous nuts. He is the founder of Placemaking Plus, co-founder of Urban Space Agency, and proud member of the Placemaking Leadership Council and UN-Habitat's Future of Places. [www.urbanspaceagency.nl](http://www.urbanspaceagency.nl)

**Sander van der Ham** works as an urban psychologist for Stipo, exploring the reciprocal relationship between humans and the environment. Behaviour, thoughts and feelings of each person are affected by his environment, and vice versa. He explores this theme in great detail in his recently published book (in Dutch) "De Stoop."

**Jeniffer Heemann** is the co-founder and executive director at Bela Rua, a non-profit organization in Brazil that develops urban projects and solutions focused on

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**Mattijs van 't Hoff** is an urbanist, graduated at the Delft University of Technology. He has worked for the city development department of the City of Rotterdam on various projects in urban design and transformation. Since 2013 he works as an urban designer and researcher, independent and in cooperation with Stipo team for urban strategy. In addition he is a visiting lecturer in urbanism at Delft University of Technology.

**Paulo Horn Regal** is an architect and urbanist, and professor at the PUCRS in Porto Alegre (Brazil) since 1977, and is currently Director of the Faculty of Architecture and Urbanism. He is a member of the Council of International Federation for Housing and Planning and leads of the Research Group on Graphical Expression and Creativity – CNPq-Brazil.

**Nel de Jager**, educated as an urban sociologist, works with a passion for the city. Since 1987 she has been shopping street manager of the Haarlemmerbuurt in Amsterdam, and since 2005 operates as an independent adviser on shopping streets and management. She regularly gives lectures at schools, and advises organizations with solicited and unsolicited comments.

**Jeroen Jansen** graduated as urban planner and is currently the head of Research and Consultancy in the Netherlands of Savills, a global real estate services provider. He has previously worked for residential investor Vesteda and for leading Dutch retailer Ahold, for which he worked in the Netherlands, the Czech Republic and Poland. [www.savills.com](http://www.savills.com)

**Birgit Jürgehake** is an architect, researcher in architecture and residential housing, and co-founders of *startruimte010*, an incubator for starting talents in spatial design in Rotterdam. She now is an Assistant Professor at the Department of Architecture at Delft University of Technology, where she works on her PhD on the façades of residential housing and its social filter. [www.startruimte010.nl](http://www.startruimte010.nl)

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**Fred Kent** is the founder and president of Project for Public Spaces (PPS), based in New York. He is a leading authority on revitalizing city spaces and one of the foremost thinkers in liveability, smart growth and the future of the city. In addition to US and international projects, Fred leads trainings around the world, and is intimately involved with the expansion of Placemaking into a global agenda. [www.pps.org](http://www.pps.org)

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**Joep Kladders** is founder of *zoarchitecten*. He is a lover of places: places in the city and inside buildings. Places with meaning, beautiful places beauty, atmospheric

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**Jeroen Laven** is partner at Stipo. He was the project manager for the three plinths pilots Stipo worked on in Rotterdam. He is an urban planner, working on diverse projects in the Netherlands and abroad. Jeroen is active in revitalising ZOHO Rotterdam, a board member of the Vereniging Verenigd Schouwburgplein and Architecture Film Festival Rotterdam. In all his projects he has a love for co-makership, good public space and plinths, and combining long term long-term vision and short term short-term action. [www.stipo.nl](http://www.stipo.nl)

**Tine van Langelaar** studied urbanism at TU Delft and is now a researcher at the Chair of Innovation Sustainable Design and Construction Process at the Knowledge Centre for Sustainable Solutions, Rotterdam University of Applied Science. Tine is project leader for the benchmark and measurement program in a residential district in Rotterdam, and currently works on a worldwide identification of existing measurement systems for vegetated roofs.

**Willie Macrae** is an urban planner in the Community Planning Division at the City of Toronto. He is responsible for new development applications and planning studies in the King-Parliament area of downtown Toronto, which includes the historic Distillery District. Prior to working in Toronto, Willie was a land use planner in Whistler, British Columbia.

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**Camilla Meijer** studied Applied Psychology at the University of Amsterdam, including specialized coursework environmental psychology and technology at the Technical University of Eindhoven and completed an internship at the department of environmental psychology at the City University of New York. Her work focuses on the unique interaction between humans, their behaviour and well-being, and the built environment.

**Norman Mintz** is one of the pioneers of the Main Street movement. With over 40 years of experience, he specializes in providing Urban Design, Organization and Management solutions while encouraging community participation in all aspects of the downtown revitalisation process. He wrote the book *Cities Back From The Edge: New Life For Downtown*, teaches at Columbia University and Pratt Institute, and serves as a Senior Associate for Project for Public Spaces (PPS).

**Eri Mitsostergiou** is a qualified Architect and in 1999 joined Savills, a global real estate services provider. After working from and within both Greece and the UK, she is currently based in the Netherlands. Here she coordinates Savills' European research and gives direct external advice to Savills clients with their European projects, especially in the South East region. [www.savills.com](http://www.savills.com)

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## ABOUT STIPO

Stipo is a multi-disciplinary consultancy team for urban strategy and city development. Its operating area consists of spatial planning and strategy with economic development, culture, urban anthropology, community planning and placemaking. Stipo, based in Rotterdam and Amsterdam, is affiliated with the international network Inspiring Cities and has extensive experience in international exchange settings. Stipo works for cities, housing providers, regions, ministries, private developers, knowledge and innovation centres, international networks and universities.

Stipo stands for Strategy, Innovation, Process development and Open-source. Stipo started at the University of Amsterdam in 1995, and is based on the principle to create stronger cities and stronger societies. Stipo's core values are the breathing city (long lasting quality), the public city (public realm quality) and the soul city (identity). Stipo approaches the city as a whole with connecting spatial, social, economic, and cultural components. The Stipo team works by the innovative and strategic Stipo approach on urban development. Stipo works in collaborative networks, involving partners and co-makers from both the 'planned city' and the 'lived city'. The Stipo approach ensures that results are not shelved, but used. It is only by integrating content, process, and management that we can safeguard real innovation, improvement, and production - and this is the ultimate objective. Often the Stipo approach leads to new ideas for cities. As a public developer we make ourselves co-responsible to bring these ideas from the strategic level to implementation, always with the co-makers we involve in the projects.

Stipo has an extensive experience in innovative projects, both in The Netherlands and internationally. Stipo shares its knowledge through training programmes, concept development, complex project management in urban practice, knowledge exchange, and social media. The Stipo Academy shares knowledge and insights in the what and how of urban development. Recent themes are the shift from making to being a city, new investment strategies, smart cities, urban development after the crisis, collaborative urban development, co-creation, incubator strategy, organic renewal, urban anthropology and urban psychology, cultural clusters, social enterprise, public squares, area coalitions, child-friendly areas, co-working, vacant buildings, temporary use, the future role of housing providers, synchronicity, soul and plinth strategy.

[www.stipo.nl](http://www.stipo.nl)

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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The history of this book lies in Rotterdam. After the bombing in World War II, Rotterdam has been busy reinventing the city ever since. The focus has been on rebuilding the inner city. High-quality and successful buildings, plinths and public spaces can be found side-by-side to places and buildings with little quality and little success. The building production was sometimes more important than the quality of the buildings and streets. From the mid-90s, the emphasis in Rotterdam shifted from quantity to quality. The expertise of international experts like John Worthington inspired civil servants and market forces. Driven professionals such as Jan van Teeffelen embraced the inspiration, and made the lessons applicable.

In 2011, the inner city planning department of Rotterdam asked Stipo to help invent a plinth approach. We started with three pilots, and ended up developing a plinth strategy for the whole inner city. The great plinth team we created made it all possible: Renate Veerkamp, Gábor Everraert and Emiel Arends still play an important role in implementing and further developing the strategy. We were privileged to have support from the Economic Development Board Rotterdam, who stressed the urgency of good plinths.

The development of Rotterdam's plinth strategy led to a mild form of professional deformation. Suddenly we saw bad plinths everywhere, and complex and simple ways to improve them. At the same time, by looking around, we discovered many inspiring examples of good plinths from around the world. This was good enough reason for us to compile this book, as an inspiration for all those people working on good plinths and for those who would like to.

Since we published our book the international attention for the importance of public space and plinths has grown. We have travelled to many countries to discuss the subject and work together with local partners on making their cities better places. Three years since our first book we have gathered so many new stories that we felt it was time for an updated edition, with more stories and more perspectives.

We are extremely grateful for the dozens professionals from around the world who contributed to the book, by writing an article, partaking in an interview, or developing content. We are indebted to the multitalented designer and architect Paola Faora who helped us with the beautiful design of this book.

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The editors / Stipo



## THE CITY AT EYE LEVEL Lessons for street plinths

Public space quality is the backbone of a sustainable city. Great streets, places where you intuitively want to stay longer, human scale interaction between buildings and streets, ownership by users, placemaking and good plinths (active ground floors) and a people-centred approach based on the user's experience - that is what The City at Eye Level is all about. It is a book, an open source learning network, and a programme for improving cities, streets and places all over the world. The second edition was written by over 80 co-authors, edited by Stipo and put together in partnership with UN Habitat, Future of Places, Gehl Architects, PPS Project for Public Spaces, the Faculty of Architecture and Urbanism of PUCRS - Porto Alegre, and Copenhagenize.

With the knowledge as fundament, we help cities and their partners to develop strategies to create and improve their own great City at Eye Level. With our local and worldwide network partners, we

- set up rules and strategies for new city development;
- help change existing streets and districts;
- set up place and plinth games to co-create with the local network;
- set up street coalitions and place management;
- give public lectures and organize training programmes and master classes.



[www.eburon.nl](http://www.eburon.nl)

