

# Characteristics and use of everyday public spaces

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# Paradigm-changes to urban streets (pedestrian point of view) \*



Phase 1:

Mainly functional & necessary activities: street as work & market space, relatively free movements



Phase 2:

Loss of space & network marginalization & displacement (car invasion)



Phase 3:

First pedestrian zones, traffic calming; linear movements A-B; walking is transport (too)



Phase 4:

Attractive public spaces; movement & sojourning; "there is more to walking than just walking" (Gehl)



Political space



Pictures: Baugeschichtliches Archiv der Stadt Zürich; City of Schaffhausen; Deutsches Bundesarchiv; Daniel Sauter Tageswoche.ch; J. Labusch, Tages-Anzeiger 15.6.23

\* According to Gehl, Gemzøe, Kirknæs & Søndergaard: New City Life, Copenhagen 2006

«One of the troubles with most pedestrian surveys is that they focus almost wholly on the pedestrian as transportation unit – and how he gets from A to B.

But what he does between A and B is important too. Study the social behaviour of the pedestrian and you find that a significant part of his activity is not moving, but standing, talking, and looking.»

*William H. Whyte: „A Comparative Study of Street Life“, 1977*

# Part 1

A glimpse at some characteristics  
of public space and sojourning

# Easy transitions between walking and sojourning



«Parked» pedestrians

# Multiplicity of motivations, purposes & activities



Public space is the largest REAL social network

# Spaces to play and be active



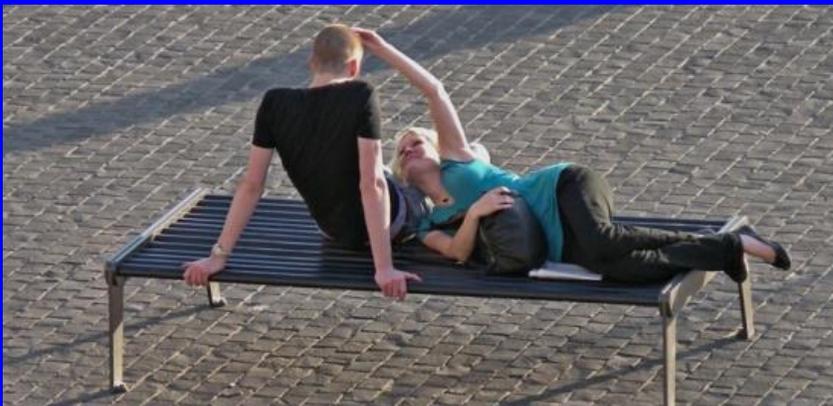
Space in front of the door (in the neighbourhood) is particularly important for small children

# Places to be sociable and to be quiet



A multiplicity of places and spaces is needed

# Places to feel comfortable

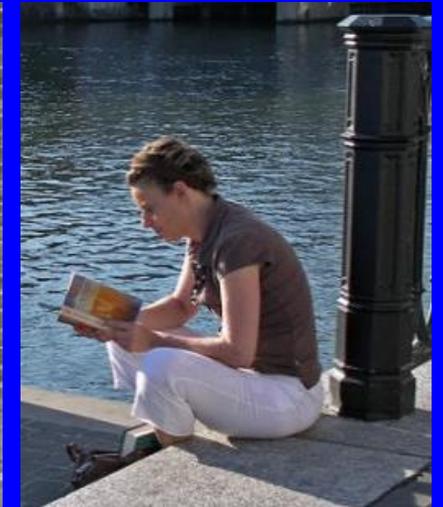


«Measuring the smiles»

# Sojourning also in adverse conditions



... but this way it's nicer ...



# Openness and access for all as basic requirement



Possible problematic effects of upgrading:

- Commercialization, privatization
- Gentrification, displacements
- Store monoculture, mass tourism
- Conflicts, surveillance, disciplining
- Noise, vandalism, violence



Not every corner of every space has to be open to all. But the space in total does.

# Time walking and sojourning



Walking time:  
ca. 20 - 45 minutes per day

(includes walking to/from other modes)



Sojourning time:  
ca. 15 - 45 minutes per day\*

Sources: "Making Walking Count": Data from London, Barcelona, Copenhagen & Stuttgart and the Netherlands (Rob Methorst, 2021)

Any data on how much this is outside of Europe?

# Appropriation: expected vs. real use



Source: rendering by  
raumgleiter/vetschpartner

Photo left: Dominique Meienberg,  
Tages-Anzeiger, right: D.Sauter



# Appropriation / «adoption» of a space: «movable chairs»



See also William H. Whyte



Make multiple usage and appropriation possible

«It's hard to create a space that will  
not attract people,  
what is remarkable, is how often this  
has been accomplished.»

William H. Whyte

# Part 2

## Data collection: indicators, methods and results

# Methods to collect data in public spaces – to design & improve them

## Qualities of space Offers for users

Assessments  
according to given criteria

Examples:

Gehl: 12 Key Quality Criteria

PPS: what makes a great place?

## Activities Usage

Observations / interviews:  
characteristics of people,  
activities, time spent et cetera

e.g. Burano-/Scanner-Method

e.g. new digital tools:

- TimeUse Study with GPS
- Smart sensors on chairs

## Processes of participation

Personal meetings, focus  
groups, public space audits,  
surveys et cetera.

Community-driven approach,  
inclusive, trans-disciplinary  
with clear vision and scope,  
honesty in the exchange

Smart sensors on chairs  
(Trial in Zurich, September 2022)



## THE 12 KEY QUALITY CRITERIA

Protection

### Protection against traffic and accidents – feeling safe

- Protection for pedestrians
- Eliminating fear of traffic

### Protection against crime and violence – feeling secure

- Lively public realm
- Eyes on the street
- Overlapping functions day and night
- Good lighting

### Protection against unpleasant sensory experiences

- Wind
- Rain/snow
- Cold/heat
- Pollution
- Dust, noise, glare

Comfort

### Opportunities to walk

- Room for walking
- Interesting facades
- No obstacles
- Good surfaces
- Accessibility for everyone

### Opportunities to stand/stay

- Edge effect/attractive zones for standing/staying
- Supports for standing
- Facades with good details that invite staying

### Opportunities to sit

- Zones for sitting
- Utilizing advantages: view, sun, people
- Good places to sit
- Benches for resting

### Opportunities to see

- Reasonable viewing distances
- Unhindered views
- Interesting views
- Lighting (when dark)

### Opportunities to talk and listen

- Low noise levels
- Street furniture that provides 'talkscapes'

### Opportunities for play and exercise

- Physical activity, exercise
- Play and street entertainment
- By day and night
- In summer and winter

Environment

### Scale

- Buildings and spaces designed to human scale

### Opportunities to enjoy the positive aspects of climate

- Sun/shade
- Heat/coolness
- Shelter from wind/breeze

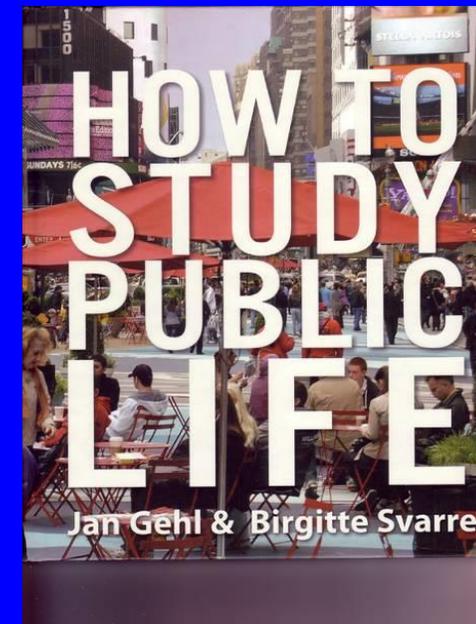
### Positive sensory experience

- Good design and detailing
- Good materials
- Fine views
- Trees, plants, water

# Assessing streets and place qualities

## The 12 Key Quality Criteria to measure public spaces by Jan Gehl

Gehl et al. 2006: New City Life



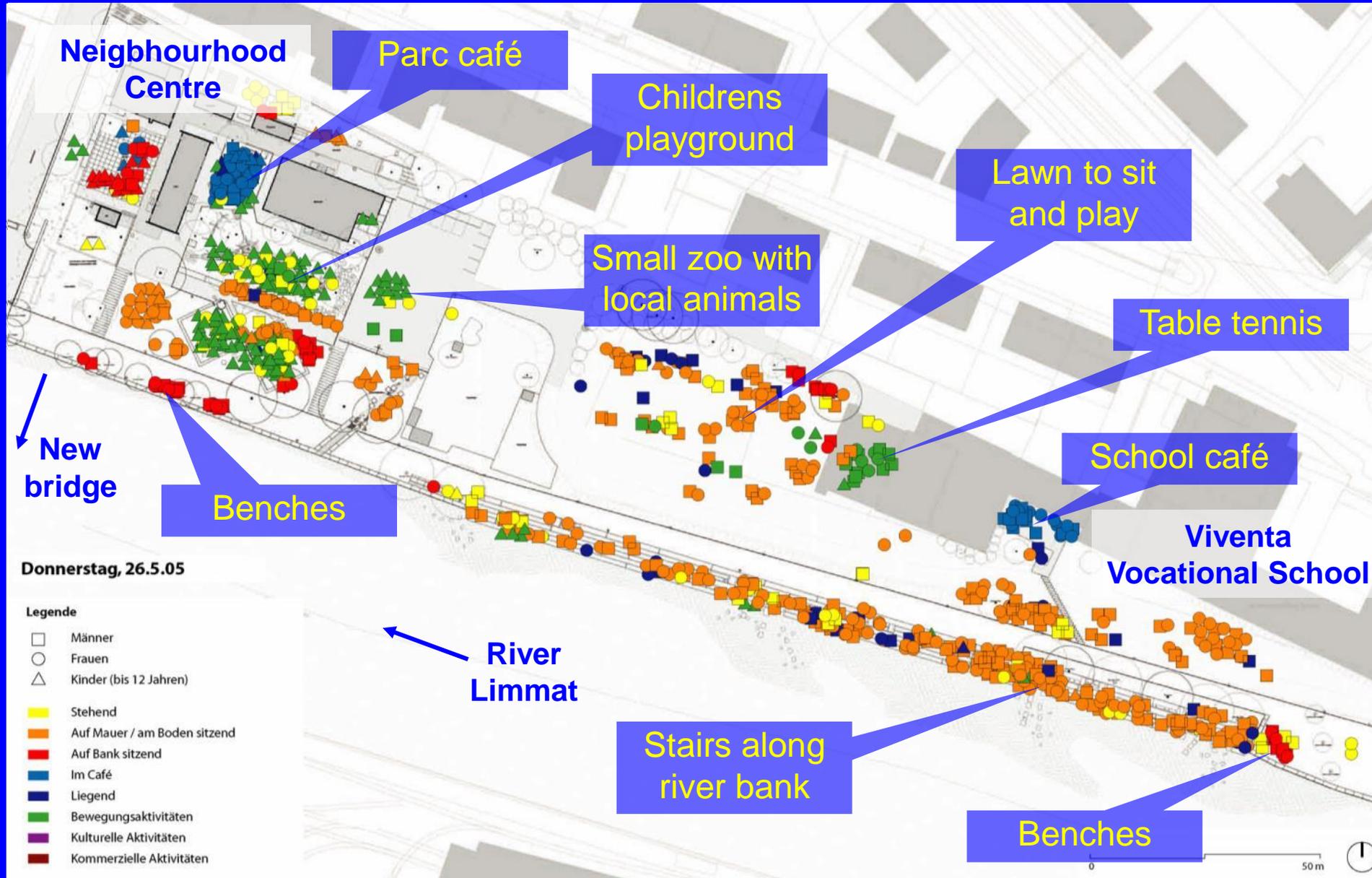


# Main criteria to survey public spaces (according to Gehl et al.)

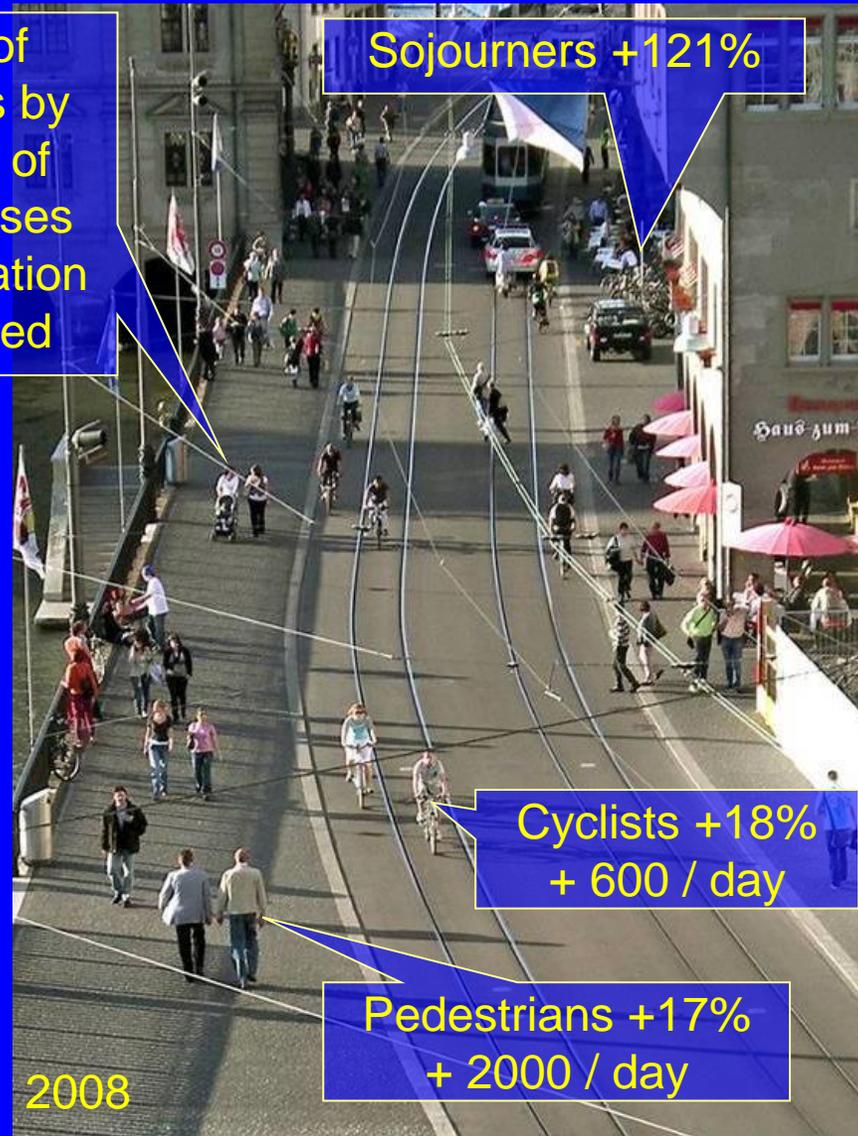
- Formal (primary) sitting on bench/chair
- Street café sitting
- Informal (sec.) sitting/lying on ledge, stairs, ground
- Standing, e.g. in front of store window
- Waiting for public transport (tram, bus)
- Activities: playing, talking, eating/drinking, reading, sunbathing, etc. cultural, political, religious activities
- Gender, age, group size, (non-)presence of specific people/groups, dogs (unleashed)
- Location of the surveyed person
- Conflicts / tensions between users
- Via survey only: socio-economic status, nationality / migrant background; neighbourhood relation, time, frequency of visits et cetera



# Change of use over the day: Wipkingerpark



# Provide and they'll come – measuring the success: Limmatquai



# Conclusions

- Sojourning is part of almost every walking trip: as pedestrians we can switch anytime from walking to standing, sitting, leaning, lying et cetera.
- Measured in time, sojourning is just as important as the actual walking part. In total, the time spent in public space is at least double that of other modes: this has to be reflected in the distribution of space.
- We need to focus on all everyday public spaces – in city neighbourhoods, peri-urban and rural areas – not only in the centres.
- It's worth to do a careful analysis of the spaces that work and those needing improvement. Spend a full day in those spaces & just observe (measure afterwards).
- Adapt the lessons and principles learned from good spaces. They are always unique and inspired by the local culture and not a mere copy of other spaces. Only unique spaces can become iconic – but not every space has to be that.
- There can't be enough (good) public spaces ready to use for the people; we still have a lot of potential everywhere....

Thank you  
very much!