Public Realm in European Historic Towns and Cities

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or around Europe in 35 days

- Context
- CABE Space Scholarship
- Aims
- Findings
  - Whistle stop tour of Europe
- Lessons
“A well managed, diverse, properly governed place is a machine of society in it's own right. It is not just the backdrop to events but the enabler and evaluator of them” Tim Stoner, Space Syntax. Planning 18 April 2008

“The spaces between buildings are fundamental to our perception of what makes places special; the proportion of time and effort given to the consideration of the public realm in comparison to historic buildings in disproportionate” Paul Dadson, IHBC. 1999

“The public realm serves a critical function as a uniting feature for cities and must be designed to foster an atmosphere of ‘inclusivity’, of ‘classlessness’ that gives all residents a sense of ownership and a shared stake in their cities” Urban Land Institute

“The essence of the city is the connections provided by the public space” Lord Foster
Place attractiveness is a critical factor in giving a city competitive advantage in a discretionary market. If first impressions are lasting impressions, Glasgow must be an accessible, welcoming, vibrant, and physically attractive city with a unique product which influences the tourist to return time and again.
“European Cities are under threat from, amongst other things, a loss of regional and national cohesion, character and distinctiveness”
Council of European Urbanism, Bruges Declaration, 2003

CEU’s 12 challenges including:
• degradation of public spaces;
• public realm made over from left-over space;
• car-dominated transport;
• indiscriminate road and street design; and
• non-contextual guidelines and regulations in historic areas
The problems
The problems
The problems
The problems
the Why

the case for well designed, distinctive and high quality historic streets

and the How

some examples and guidance on how to achieve them
What it contains

the Why

- the case for well designed, distinctive and high quality historic streets

and the How

- some examples and guidance on how to achieve them
The management and maintenance of streets and squares in historic towns and cities across Europe
### Protection

1. **Protection against traffic and accidents**
   - Protection for pedestrians
   - Eliminating fear of traffic

2. **Protection against crime & violence (feeling of safety)**
   - Lively public realm
   - Eyes on the street
   - Overlapping functions day and night
   - Good lighting

3. **Protection against unpleasant sense experiences**
   - Wind
   - Rain/snow
   - Cold/heat
   - Pollution
   - Dust/noise/glare

### Comfort

4. **Possibilities for Walking**
   - Room for walking
   - Interesting facades
   - No obstacles
   - Good surfaces
   - Accessibility for everyone

5. **Possibilities for Standing / Staying**
   - Edge effect / attractive zones for standing / staying
   - Supports for standing
   - Facades with good details that invite staying

6. **Possibilities for Sitting**
   - Zones for sitting
   - Utilizing advantages: view, sun, people
   - Good places to sit
   - Benches for resting

7. **Possibilities to See**
   - Reasonable viewing distances
   - Unhindered views
   - Interesting views
   - Lighting (when dark)

8. **Possibilities for Hearing / Unfolding / Activities**
   - Low noise levels
   - Street furniture that provide “talkscapes”

9. **Possibilities for Physical Activity, Exercise**
   - Play and street entertainment
   - By day and night
   - In summer and winter

### Enjoyment

10. **Scale**
    - Buildings and spaces designed to human scale

11. **Possibilities for enjoying positive aspects of climate**
    - Sun/shade
    - Heat/coolness
    - Shelter from wind/breeze

12. **Aesthetic quality / positive sense experiences**
    - Good design and detailing
    - Good materials
    - Fine views
    - Trees, plants, water

**Source** - Gehl Architects
Types of Cities

- European Liveable City project
- UNESCO World Heritage Cities
- “New Public Spaces”
- Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona
- Fussverkehr Schweiz
## The Cities

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**Germany**

- Bamberg
- Nuremburg

**France**

- Bordeaux
- Dijon
- Lyon
- Besencon

**Belgium**

- Brussels
- Gent
- St Niklaas
- Mechelen
- Antwerp
- Namur
Strategy
Design
Detail: Enabling Movement
Detail: Shared Surfaces

Bamberg, Germany
Nuremberg, Germany
Berne, Switzerland
Visby, Sweden
Detail: minimal markings

Bamberg, Germany

Dijon, France

Odense, Denmark
Detail: public art
Kalmar, Sweden

- Walled Town
- Listed Square
- Pedestrian streets

Storteget
Kalmar, Sweden
s’Hertogenbosch, Netherlands

- Strategy since 1990’s
- Clear direction
- Emphasis on managing traffic before works
- Long term investment on major projects
Odense, Denmark

- Use of Hans Christian Andersen theme on street furniture
- Modern street furniture in historic settings
- Use of public art
- Blurring the edges
- Respecting history
Trondheim, Norway

- Managing traffic
- Catering for ease of mobility
- Natural materials
- New spaces
St Gallen, Switzerland

- Painting the town red
- Care in the historic core
- Maintenance costs
Visby, Sweden

- Walled Town
- World Heritage Site
- Managing traffic
- Natural materials
- Local design of seats
Motorfordonsförbud

VISBY HANSE STAD

14/6 - 10/8

På grund av stora event varit nödvändigt att införa motorfordonsförbud i Visby och området under sommaren.

Detta gäller även hjulbockar.
Bamburg, Germany

- World Heritage City
- Investing to improve viability
- Limited road markings
- Smooth and rough setts
- Problem square
Bordeaux, France

- Major investment in transport system
- Improvement of walking environment
- Squares
- Lighting
Place Pey Berland
Berne, Switzerland

- World Heritage City
- Pedestrian domination
- Shared surfaces
- Underground recycling bins
- City cycle hire
Federal Square, Berne
St Niklaas, Belgium

- Europe’s biggest square?
- Car parking issue
- High student population
- Events strategy
Namur, Belgium

- Decking on a grand scale
- Strategy
- Private – public conflict
Dijon, France

- Place de la Liberation
- Creating a new grand square
Conclusions

“The design should not be teleological, as I formulate this, i.e. it should only be a functional intermediate phase in a continuous process. Never a final solution, since these do never have a long lifetime, but a single step in an evolution. So it attains a functional durability.

The design has to be made at eye-level. Most town planning is done from bird’s eye view.

What I like most coming to Sint Niklaas is the fact that nobody seems to hesitate even in this enormous space. It seems to be intelligible immediately to all.”

Michiel Cohen – Cepezed Architects
Lessons Learned

- Recognition of value of investing in quality
- Car is subservient in pedestrian streets
- Keep it simple – we are not planning for the end
- Public art has a functional role
- Shared Space is happening – without it being “Shared Space”!!
- Why can’t we protect streets and squares as well as buildings
Thank you

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