

Public Realm in European Historic Towns and Cities

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Historic Towns Forum
for prosperity and conservation in historic towns



St Edmundsbury
BOROUGH COUNCIL

or around Europe in 35 days

- Context
- CABE Space Scholarship
- Aims
- Findings
 - Whistle stop tour of Europe
- Lessons



Streets and Spaces

“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

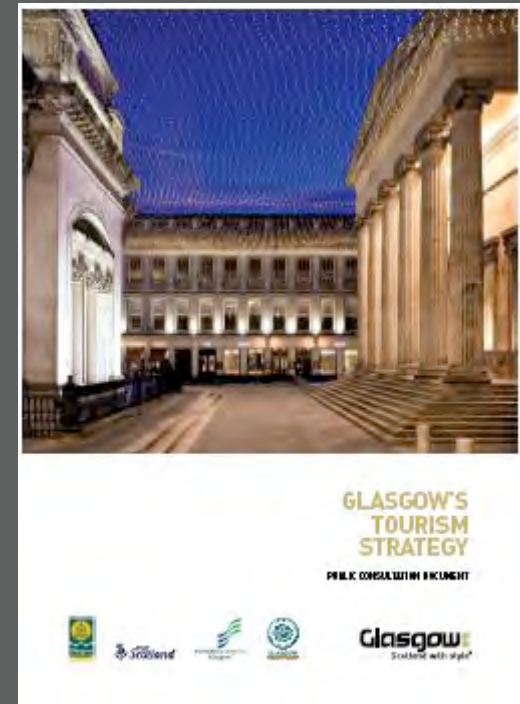
“The spaces between buildings are fundamental to our perception of what makes places special; the proportion of time and effort given to the consideration of the public realm in comparison to historic buildings in disproportionate” Paul Dadson, IHBC. 1999

“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

Streets and Spaces

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.



The Problem

“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



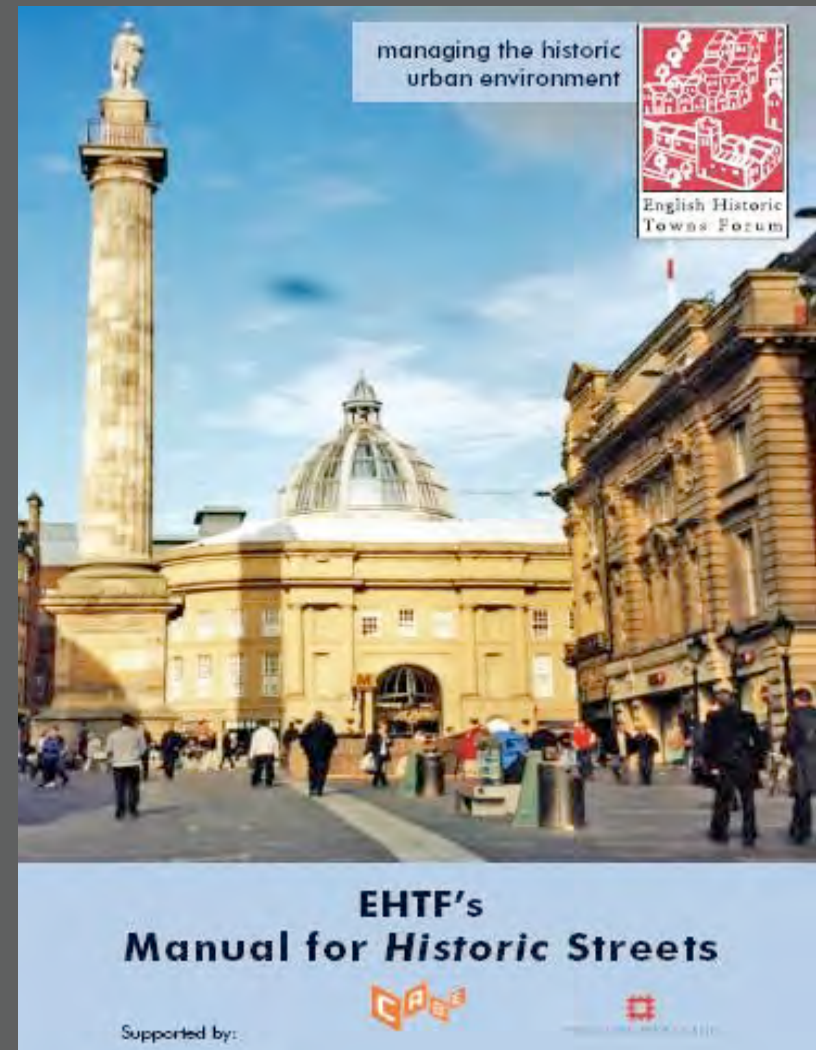
Reference

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 Scholarship



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 / TALKING

- Low noise levels
- Street furniture that provide "talkscapes"

9. Possibilities for PLAY / UNFOLDING / ACTIVITIES

- 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

Types of Cities

- European Liveable City project
- UNESCO World Heritage Cities
- "New Public Spaces"
- Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona
- Fussverkehr Schweiz



The Cities

Netherlands

Delft

Utrecht

Zutphen

Arnhem

S'Hertogenbosch

Drachten

Germany

Bamberg

Nuremburg

Scandinavia

Odense – Denmark

Copenhagen – Denmark

Trondheim Norway

Visby – Sweden

Kalmar – Sweden

France

Bordeaux

Dijon

Lyon

Besencon

Switzerland

Zurich

St Gallen

Berne

Biel – Bienne

Belgium

Brussels

Gent

St Niklaas

Mechelen

Antwerp

Namur

Strategy



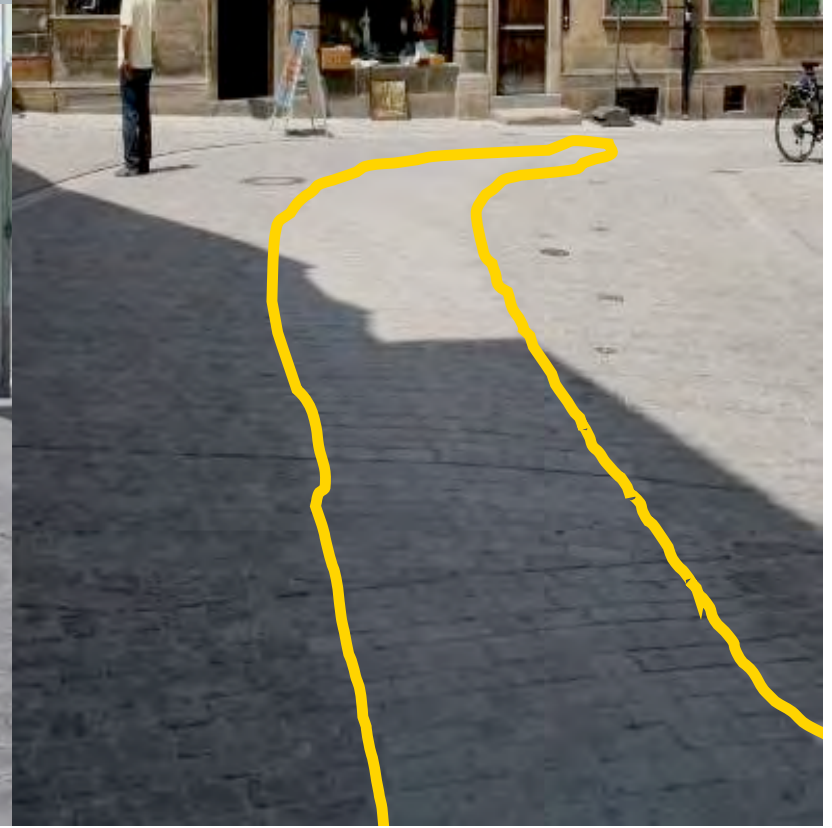


Design





Detail: Enabling Movement



Detail: Shared Surfaces



Berne, Switzerland



Visby, Sweden



Nuremberg, Germany



Bamberg, Germany



Detail: minimal markings



Odense, Denmark



Dijon, France



Bamberg, Germany



Bamberg, Germany

Detail: public art

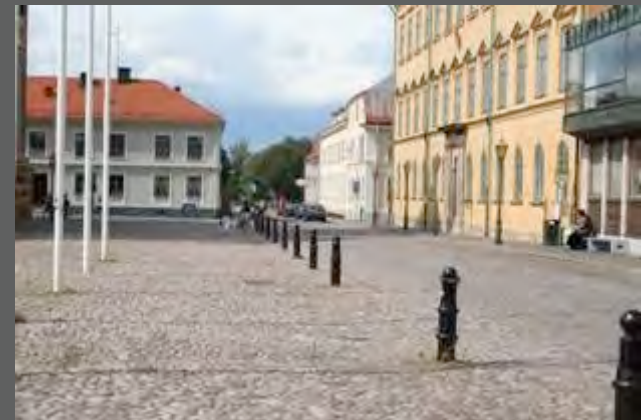


Kalmar, Sweden

- Walled Town
- Listed Square
- Pedestrian streets



Stortorget



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





Bamberg, 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





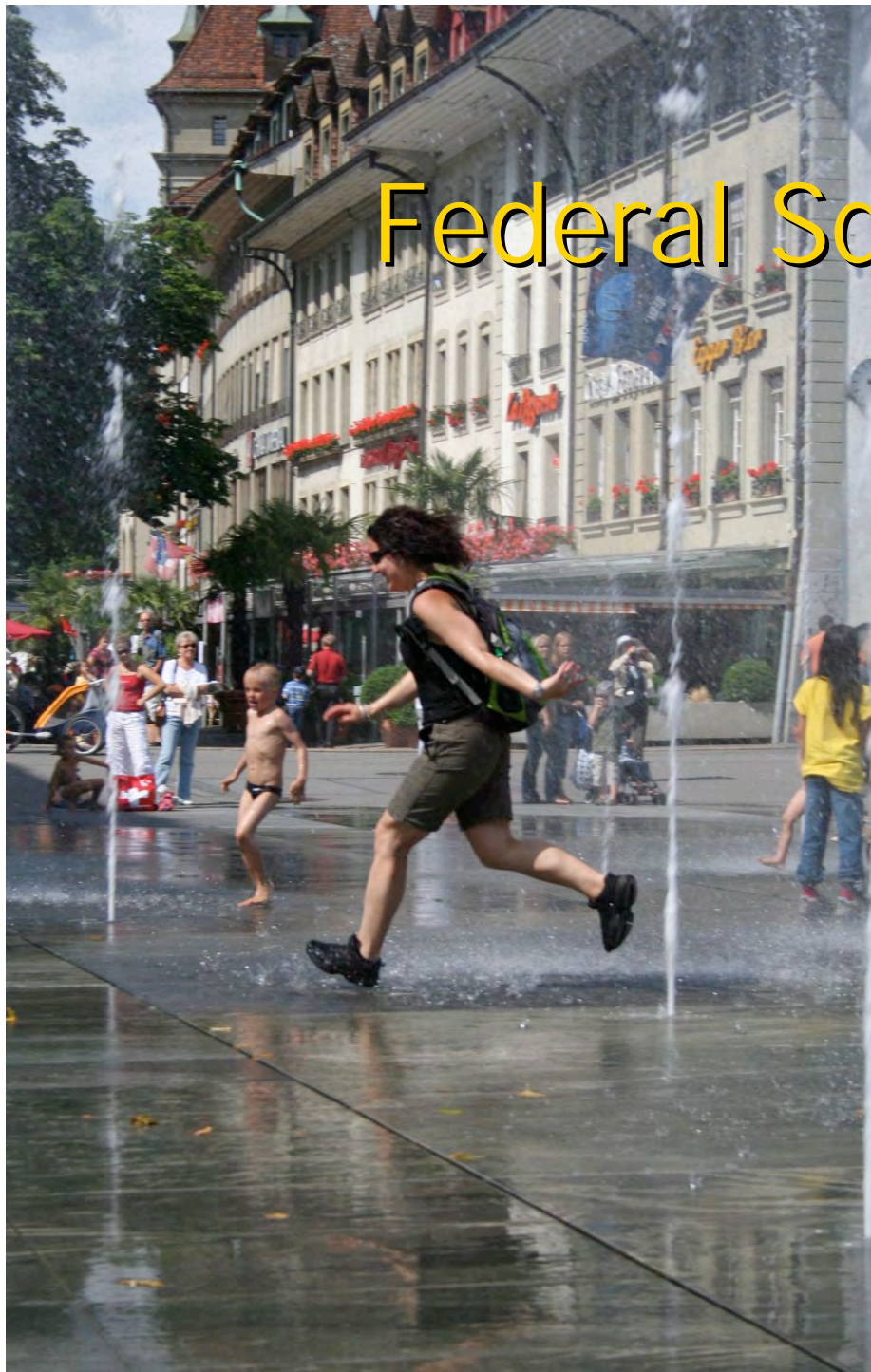
Berne, Switzerland

- 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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www.historictownsforum.org