URBAN SPACE FOR PEOPLE ON THE MOVE – THE LIVING CITY

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ATTRACTIVE URBAN SPACES, DESIGNED FROM A HUMAN PERSPECTIVE, IMPROVES PEOPLE’S WELL-BEING AND MAKES IT EASIER TO CHOOSE SUSTAINABLE MEANS OF TRANSPORT.
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AN URBAN ENVIRONMENT THAT PROVIDES OPPORTUNITY FOR ALL

More than half of the global population spend their everyday lives in an urban environment. In the EU almost three out of four citizens live in cities. A large part of a country's social and economic activity takes place in its towns and cities. A city is a place where strangers meet and new ideas are formed in the public space.1 Cities represent hope for a better future and remind us of our cultural heritage. They communicate a sense of place and identity. Hence, a city should be planned with respect to the everyday life that takes place there and, in order to achieve a more just and sustainable urban development, it is essential that the city connects us to our individual and collective identity.2 The urban environment is dynamic and in constant change. Good connections enhance choice, support social cohesion, make places vibrant and safe, and facilitate human interaction. Quality urban design considers how transport infrastructure and services can connect and support sustainable neighbourhoods and cities. Places with good connections between activities and careful placement of facilities benefit from reduced travel times and less environmental impact. Residents and visitors can navigate easily in an urban environment where physical layouts and activity patterns are easily understood.3

1) Richard Sennet, professor of sociology at LSE and visiting professor of architecture at Cambridge University.
2) Brusman (2008); Farrar (2010); Hayden (1995); Smith (2006); Zukin (2011)
“THERE IS NO LOGIC THAT CAN BE SUPER-IMPOSED ON THE CITY; PEOPLE MAKE IT, AND IT IS TO THEM, NOT BUILDINGS, THAT WE MUST FIT OUR PLANS.”

Jane Jacobs, urban writer and activist

This Urban Insight report argues that urban spaces designed with great care and from a human perspective both improve people’s well-being and make it easier to choose sustainable means of transport. Holistic urban planning requires the involvement of citizens, different disciplines and other stakeholders, and there are proven methods that can support planners in achieving goals for sustainable city development. In this report we present the transformation of the city over the last 70 years, the modern citizen perspective and inspirational cases, followed by conclusions and recommendations on methods that support holistic planning on the local and city level.
2. THE WAY WE MOVE
THE CAR-DEPENDENT CITY HAS REACHED ITS LIMIT

For the past 70 years, cities around the world have been designed from the car’s perspective. To satisfy the needs of a car-dependent population, the form of the European city has transformed over time from the walkable, people-friendly traditional city into a place where the streets have become “spaces for cars” and public urban spaces “spaces for parking”, ignoring their significance as spaces for interaction, diversity and exchange.4 While car transport provides flexibility, it also makes urban life less effective by causing traffic congestion, inefficient use of space, increased distances between services, air pollution, greenhouse gas emissions and loss of time.5

The use of rapid and motorised means of transport has substituted the walkable city’s need for proximity. Over the last century, increased car dependency has allowed towns and cities to de-densify and implement a spatial specialisation and concentration (areas for working, shopping, living, etc.).

Figure 1: One out of two Europeans uses a car every day, compared with bicycle (12%) or public transport (16%).

5) Interview with Kobe Boussauw, Professor of Spatial Planning and Mobility, Department of Geography, Vrije Universiteit Brussel (2017)
This development has resulted in the substitution of “access-by-proximity” with “access-by-movement”. The upscaling and centralisation of many specialised urban public and commercial functions has contributed to the rapid expansion of urban sprawl and has further increased car dependency.6

Studies have shown that people without access to a car reach fewer activities and services and are more likely to be subject to social exclusion. Age and disability can also prevent people from driving and using public transport.7 There is evidence that accessibility is worsening in urban areas, with travel times to key services steadily increasing over time, often driven by tighter central and local government budgets.8

Some hope that renewable and climate-friendly technology and ICT-driven Smart City development will provide a solution. However, the introduction of more fuel-efficient or electric autonomous vehicles and shared or on-demand private transport is more likely to increase, rather than decrease, traffic congestion in our cities. So, while urgent issues of CO₂ emissions, pollution and noise might be reduced by new technologies, traffic congestion and competition for the urban space will remain a growing problem. While ICT can certainly help make life easier for many, it cannot entirely replace the need for proximity and accessibility for all groups of citizens.

THE WAY WE MOVE AFFECTS OUR WELL-BEING
People’s choice of transportation is related to the quality of urban space. If urban spaces are designed from the people’s perspective, they create not only a deeper sense of place and comfort, but also tend to promote the choice of more sustainable means of transportation. Research and Sweco’s own experience in sustainable urban planning provide many examples of how good urban design can promote sustainable urban mobility. Read more in Urban Insight Report Urban Mobility on a Human Scale.

The two most sustainable ways to move around the city are cycling and walking, which also seem to have a positive impact on how we feel. Several studies have shown that people who choose an active way to commute evaluate their lives as more satisfactory than those who choose to travel by car.9 A recent study from Sweden shows that active travel (cycling or walking) has an obvious positive effect, as compared with passive travel (car or public transport), on our “satisfaction with daily travel”, “emotional well-being”, and “life satisfaction”.10

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6) Rode & Floater, (2014); Haugen (2012)
8) House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee, UK (2013)
9) e.g. Gatersleben and Uzzell (2007)
10) Margareta Friman et al, “How does travel affect emotional well-being and life satisfaction?”
Walking and cycling also offer greater opportunity to achieve a sense of place while moving through the urban landscape. The effect of spatial quality on people’s choices has been studied in the Netherlands, and it was found that bikers with access to dedicated, upgraded bike paths often chose to take a slower route. The reason given by most travellers was that they preferred alternate routes where they could enjoy the surroundings.

**STATEMENTS FROM BIKERS ABOUT ROAD SELECTION**

“Route A is fantastic – I take it practically every day. It’s much more enjoyable, straight through nature, no other roads, no traffic (...). Route B is a bit shorter but that doesn’t matter to me. I prefer to take the scenic route.”

“On Route B you cycle next to the road the entire way. There’s two metres between the bike path and the road, where the speed limit is 80, 90 km/h. (...) It’s not very nice. And I think it’s quite dangerous. The separation between bikes and cars is minimal. (...) Also the bike path is a bit lower than the road and you’re blinded by the lights (...) It was upgraded a couple of years ago, and the path itself is fine. But to me it is a functional route, for using in bad weather.”

Another study found similar effects when comparing car travel with public transport. Public transport users reported higher “life satisfaction over time” than car users. One explanation is that public transport often includes active elements, such as walking back and forth to the bus stop.

Your physical surroundings as you wait for or transfer between different means of transportation play a vital role. People prefer to be in pleasant, safe surroundings. In one recent study, the physical and external environments were identified as two of the six crucial factors that affect the experience of the public transport traveller. The other factors are the processes of the provider, the processes of the traveller, contact with personnel and contact with other travellers. Studies show that those who regularly travel to work have lower than average satisfaction with their lives as compared with those who work from home, and that people with long commutes to and from work are less satisfied on average with their lives. This is most likely partly due to the lack of positive stimuli during the commute.

This perspective was also identified as an important factor in the report “Running to stand still – the role of travel time in transport planning”.

11) Paul A. Plazier et al., “Cycling was never so easy!” (2017)
12) Martin et al., (2014)
SPATIAL PROXIMITY AND SUSTAINABLE TRAVEL

People’s proximity to services is influenced by urban form, range and scale. Daily amenities should be easily accessible by foot, bike or short-range public transport. The figure below illustrates accessibility standards and shows the relationship between services and walking distance. Clustering facilities together at locations well served by metro, bus, bike and pedestrian routes (preferably in linear clusters) promotes more sustainable modes of transport.

Linda, 42 years old, lives with her husband and two children in a house 13 km outside a large city. She commutes daily, and the most sustainable alternative for her is to take her bike. The second-best choice is to use public transport. While her choice of travel mode depends mainly on factors such as time, weather and after-work activities, it also depends on the feelings she has about her various alternatives.

“I love to take the bike, but a lot of times I end up taking the car or the bus instead. I know I feel so much better when I take the bike, especially if I’m able to take the beautiful route along the lake. But sometimes it doesn’t feel right. When I have to bike in the dark, there are a couple of places I don’t feel safe. When the roads are wet the route along the lake gets very muddy and I have to bike along streets with quite heavy traffic. The walk to the bus stop through our neighbourhood is very nice and I usually meet some of our neighbours. But I really don’t want to wait at the bus stop for too long. It’s windy and noisy with all the traffic. And it’s rather lonely since no one tends to walk there and you can’t see any of the houses. When I get off the bus it’s always very crowded and that makes me stressed. I don’t want to start my day like that. Taking the car sometimes drives me crazy. Just sitting there. The road is packed every morning but at least I get some time on my own. I don’t get a lot of that nowadays.”
3. URBAN SPACES THAT PROMOTE SUSTAINABLE MOBILITY
HELPING PEOPLE MAKE A SUSTAINABLE CHOICE
Well-designed and accessible spaces in the urban fabric can promote sustainable transport and quality for citizens. There are many advantages to combining compact and more open types of urban structures, where built areas are blended with blue and green elements to form a mosaic-like pattern.
Mixed land use can promote density, shorten trips and decrease car dependency. It provides people with more sustainable choices when moving between different daily activities such as going to work, visiting family and friends or accessing amenities.18

Creating a place with spatial qualities makes it comfortable, pleasant and easy to choose sustainable ways to travel. Here, the urban nodes are not just an “entrance to public transport”. They are “multifunctional clusters” that combine the connectivity role of the node with a mix of nearby public and commercial services and other unique functions – all within walking distance. This transforms traditional “transport nodes” into integrated and vibrant parts of the city that offer spaces for leisure, shopping, meetings, culture and other forms of social exchange.

CREATING URBAN STRUCTURES THAT PROMOTE SUSTAINABLE MOBILITY

Research has shown that the design of a mixed use urban structure, attractive public spaces and well-dimensioned cycle stands seems to extend the hub’s proximity effect beyond the normally accepted maximum of 600 metres. Reducing or removing barriers and replacing them with continuous and attractive paths between spaces of varying distance from the stations decreases both real and experienced distances.19

There are synergies to be gained by integrating urban nodes and urban links and their connection to an overall transport oriented development (TOD) mobility system. The principle of attractive nodes and places connected with attractive and efficient links applies to different scales of planning, on both the regional and city district level.

Creating a well-functioning urban area that promotes great mobility requires simultaneous work on many scales – from city structure to detailed design of the spaces that people experience in their daily lives. Some of these spaces are more important than others (e.g., urban nodes with heavy travel flows) and need special attention in order to make it easy for people to make a sustainable choice. It is equally important to pay close attention to the overall transport system structure and the urban links connecting the nodes.

There is a large untapped potential in strengthening the use of linkages and nodes and their urban quality to further strengthen sustainable urban mobility. Doing so is cost efficient, has a high impact and creates many positive synergies for the urban citizen.

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This photo from Alicante, Spain, is one example on how to interlink social space with sustainable mobility and urban quality of life.

Figure 3: Principle diagram of urban planning used to identify, develop and utilize urban nodes and urban links.
THE ATTRACTIVE AND WALKABLE CITY

Mobility is not just a function. The importance of urban space as a framework and arena for promoting more efficient urban mobility is often overlooked. Mobility influences our experience and memory of the city. It is a field of urban development where architecture and planning can contribute to understanding and visualising the subsystem of links and places in the city with the synergies between spatial quality, beauty, health, comfort and sustainable mobility. Together with the introduction of innovative technical solutions, an increased attention to the design and organisation of the urban space can be a very powerful tool to enhance economic, social and ecological sustainability in cities.

In the old European cities that still excite millions of tourists from all over the world, neighbourhoods are walkable, filled with activity, attractive urban environments and a fine mesh of different functions. A modern city can learn from the old and offer added value to its inhabitants and visitors through good walkability. The result is not only a more human urban environment but also increased land value, improved neighbourhood attractiveness, increased social interaction and an enhanced variety of land use.

“THE BALLET OF THE GOOD CITY SIDEWALK NEVER REPEATS ITSELF FROM PLACE TO PLACE, AND IN ANY ONE PLACE IS ALWAYS REPLETE WITH NEW IMPROVISATIONS.” Jane Jacobs, urban writer and activist

Walkability is created by a finely meshed, integrated system of pathways, links, and streets where pedestrians and bicyclists are prioritised over cars. Car-free zones and streetscapes with a human scale and a comfortable microclimate promote quality in a multifunctional public space.

“THE WALKABLE NETWORK OF STREETS, LINKS AND PUBLIC SPACES ARE THE CITY’S NERVE SYSTEM AND THE FOUNDATION OF AN INNOVATIVE, TOLERANT, VIBRANT AND ACCESSIBLE CITY LIFE.”

Important public and commercial services express themselves on different scales—from small neighbourhoods within a city to the regional network of cities. On each scale, ideal distance and accessibility are perceived and achieved differently. The city should be planned with such overlapping urban structures in mind. One important element is to prioritise public transport and combine it with the slow and easily accessible traffic systems in a fine grid. On a local scale, problems with access are related to the proximity of services and the quality and safety of the urban space. On a larger scale, some services are physically concentrated, which increases the need for transport. The integration of these community services on various scales is often a difficult balancing act. The more inclusive and efficient access to services is on all scales, the greater the economic, social and environmental benefits that can be achieved.
4. THE PLACEMAKING CONCEPT
To promote sustainable urban mobility, attention must be paid to the structural and spatial quality of the “urban spaces in-between”. This requires a holistic approach. The term “placemaking” is often used to describe the collaborative and evolutionary process by which urban environments can be shaped to maximise shared value.

Placemaking is an approach to urban planning that seeks to strengthen the connections between people and places, with community-based participation and stakeholder ownership of the process and outcomes at its core. In some instances, the community may even take ownership of the space, or manage it as a community resource.

The concept of placemaking is not new. The thinking gained attention in the 1960s, when urban writer and activist Jane Jacobs introduced ideas about designing cities for people, not just cars and shopping centres. The overarching idea of placemaking is to strengthen the connection between people and the places they share. More than just promoting better urban design, placemaking facilitates creative patterns of use, paying attention to the physical, cultural and social identities that define a place and support its ongoing evolution.

To be successful, placemaking should be an intrinsically collaborative process between citizens, urban planners and engineers that shapes the city and results in better urban design.

“AN INCLUSIVE APPROACH TO THE DESIGN OF PLACES CAN GENERATE PRIDE IN OUR CITIES AND ASSIST IN ADDRESSING ISSUES OF SOCIAL EXCLUSION AND ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR.”

With specific reference to the role of sustainable mobility, transportation infrastructures have been built through communities, rather than creating communities through transportation. A useful reference tool – the “Place Diagram” – has been formulated by the New York-based Project for Public Spaces (PPS) and focuses on helping communities evaluate the places in which they live. The diagram is based on four basic qualities shared by public spaces perceived as attractive. These spaces are accessible, people are engaged in activities there, the spaces are comfortable and have a good image, and they are sociable places where people meet each other and take people when they come to visit.

The qualities that make a successful place are varied, but can be characterised as being a combination, or preferably all, of the following:
- Distinctive
- Safe and pleasant
- Welcoming
- Adaptable
- Resource-efficient
- Easy to move around and beyond

20) Jane Jacobs (1916–2006) was an urban writer and activist who championed new, community-based approaches to planning for over 40 years. Her 1961 treatise, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, became one of the most influential American texts about the inner workings and failings of cities, inspiring generations of urban planners and activists. (Source: Project for Public Spaces, New York)
21) Project for Public Spaces (www.pps.org)
22) Projects for Public Spaces. 2016. *What if we built our cities around places?*
Streets have the potential to be places, becoming destinations themselves rather than just a means of linking A to B in the shortest time or distance. The connectivity of streets to urban spaces can be enhanced by designing them principally for walking, cycling and public transport, concentrating development density around public transport hubs and managing car access.

Our cities are complex. The scarcity of space, its commercial value and the sheer density of activity can lead to conflict amongst stakeholders who often have, on the face of it, competing agendas. Ultimately, placemaking requires the active participation, engagement and support of the citizens who use the urban space. The search for authenticity is a goal for much modern urban regeneration, and a truly successful place is one that is multi-functional and attracts different user groups throughout the course of the day.

Figure 4: The Place Diagram focuses on helping communities evaluate the places in which they live. Source: Project for Public Spaces (PPS).
5. THE SYMBIOCITY CONCEPT
The SymbioCity Approach is a conceptual framework developed to address current challenges of the urban environment and builds upon a people-centred, inclusive approach and practical experiences and best practices from Swedish local governments. The SymbioCity Approach explores opportunities to strengthen local governments and local institutions and improve their capacity to sustain local development by using existing resources more efficiently, while at the same time identifying ways to reduce poverty and the current negative environmental impact created by our urban areas. The concept emphasises methods and tools for an integrated approach to sustainable urban development, with special focus on the promotion of horizontal and interdisciplinary working procedures in local governments and among key stakeholders.

“SYMBIOCITY IS A DYNAMIC CONCEPT THAT OFFERS SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE.”

It can be applied within a range of development processes, such as formulation of city-wide strategies for short-, medium- and long-term development, or preparation for urban infrastructure investments. It can be utilised in areas ranging from single blocks to entire urban areas, regions or countries and for projects spanning redevelopment schemes to greenfield initiatives. SymbioCity works equally well for developed, developing and transitional economies.

These areas are central to the SymbioCity Approach:
• Community participation and multi-stakeholder collaboration
• Leadership for sustainable development
• Shared visions and strategies for all stakeholders
• Holistic and integrated urban planning
• Innovative solutions to urban challenges
• Utilising synergies between urban systems
• Analysis of impacts and optimisation of outcomes
• Implementation and management of urban change

SymbioCity can be used by public and private actors alike – local government, utilities, private business and other stakeholders. The approach is open – and beneficial – to all. SymbioCity pinpoints key urban systems – from energy and IT to water and waste – that are the foundation for good living conditions, prosperity and welfare in any city. Unlocking the synergies within and between these systems can make all the difference as cities strive to curb environmental impacts and deliver social and economic benefits to citizens.

24) The Symbio City Approach Sida and SKL International
6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS
Cities provide opportunities, connect people and often make everyday life more practical. But in order to fully take advantage of the great potential of our cities it is vital that we actively design our cities with the citizens’ best interests at heart. Through holistic planning we can promote sustainable modes of travel, facilitate interactions and improve quality of life.

After studying examples of successful city planning around the world we can conclude that:

- Peoples choice of transportation is related to the quality of the urban spaces they meet during their travel.

- Taking a holistic approach to modality is key to helping inhabitants and visitors feel positively about their sustainable travel options. Attractive urban spaces that are designed with great care and from a human perspective improve people’s well-being and makes it easier to choose sustainable means of transport.

- Urban nodes, with heavy travel flows, are very important spaces and require special care to make it easy for people to make a sustainable choice. By creating a good accessible distribution of well-designed urban nodes within the city and by designing transport nodes as places for public services, leisure, shopping, meetings, culture and all kinds of social exchange, they become more than dull industrial transport facilities.

- In order for the transport system as a whole to work well, attention must be paid to the overall structure and the urban links connecting the nodes. The perception of places as being “closer” or “further away” is highly dependent on the design of these links.

- Holistic urban planning requires the involvement of citizens, disciplines and other stakeholders. Proven methods support planners in achieving goals for sustainable city development:
  - Placemaking is an approach to urban planning which seeks to strengthen the connections between people and places, with community-based participation and stakeholder ownership of the process and outcomes at its core.
  - SymbioCity supports the integration of perspectives from different disciplines regarding technical and policy aspects of sustainable urban development.

- A key to success is the continuous development of city planners’ expertise and capacity to adopt new methodologies and to prioritise broad participation of citizens and disciplines in their daily planning work.
7. INSPIRATIONAL URBAN SPACES
URBAN INSIGHT 2018
URBAN MOVE
URBAN SPACE FOR PEOPLE
ON THE MOVE – THE LIVING CITY
Here are some of the places which demonstrate the ethos of placemaking, even in cases where they were not developed using this specific theme.

**GROENPLAATS, ANTWERP**
As part of the redevelopment of the area vehicular traffic was removed from the square and environmental and public realm improvements implemented. It is now home to a number of events which occur throughout the year and popular as a place to meet.

**STATIONSSTRAAT, ST NIKLAAS**
The street used to be dominated by traffic, but thanks to re-planning and the reallocation of space, it is now a busy pedestrian boulevard with vehicular access strictly controlled. Consequently businesses are now thriving and the street regularly hosts events and footfall has increased significantly.

**TORGGATA, OSLO**
The street scene has been revised to downgrade vehicles in the hierarchy of users in favour of pedestrians and cyclists. The use of a consistent palette of materials, limited vertical separation and the positioning of street furniture provides the impression of a shared-surface space.
MAYFIELD, MANCHESTER
A former railway station, the 10 ha site is being regenerated as a new mixed-use community and business district. This first phase opened in 2017 and includes events and performance space plus semi-permanent offices for the development bringing life back to a derelict area of the city.

KINGS CROSS, LONDON
As part of a major regeneration of the iconic station and surrounding area a masterplan has been implemented to improve the public realm and make the environment more people friendly and safer. As a result there has been a major attraction of businesses and investment into the area.

POTSDAMER PLATZ, BERLIN
One of the most well-known squares in Berlin has suffered over time due to the degradation of its environment and function. It had become an area to be passed through quickly on the way to somewhere else. As part of the commercial regeneration of the area as a technology hub it has been reimagined as a as a ‘place’ with covered courtyards and streets created with bars and restaurants. It is now a popular destination for Berliners.

BOSTON, USA
The roof of a metro station converted into an amphitheatre for street performers. This is a good example of how innovative urban design can combine transport infrastructure and urban life to the benefit of the urban environment.
Reviewing examples of placemaking, we see that the process brings benefits for citizens. Urban planning frameworks consider development as a process informed by the community and the place’s history, and this is reflected in design outcomes. The best cities are remembered as much for their iconic streets as for their buildings. One of the best examples of this in Europe is Las Ramblas in Barcelona.
AMSTERDAM
Amsterdam is an example of a city with a mix of urban functions and a mix of transportation modes. The city is pleasant to move through and provides a rich variety of impressions, clustered around a city core that preserves the integrity and coherence of the city’s open spaces. There is no urban sprawl here, as there is in American cities. Mobility by foot or public transport is favoured, which brings services closer and avoids an excessive level of greenfield development. Land use is multifaceted within areas and combines work, residence and leisure to create a diverse, complex urban lifestyle. The city is home to people from diverse backgrounds, which reduces the tendency towards formation of income-, origin- or race-based ghettos and improves social integration.

BARCELONA SEAFRONT, SPAIN
One main challenge in European cities is to overbridge infrastructure barriers. One example of successfully bridging barriers and reclaiming the city for citizens can be found in Barcelona, where the city has been reconnected with the Mediterranean seashore. Other cities have bridged barriers on a smaller scale in strategic places and created urban links using eco-corridors, building clusters and fine grids of bicycle and pedestrian bridges.
PARQUE MANZANARES, MADRID SPAIN
The city of Madrid transformed the motorway in the middle of the city into a park by digging 43 km of tunnels to incorporate the exit routes and carriageways of the 6-km-long section running alongside the River Manzanares. The project was completed in spring 2011.

On the surface of the motorway tunnel there are now 8,000+ pine trees. By relocating one of the most important roads into the centre of Madrid to an underground tunnel and providing underground parking for 1,000 vehicles, the space was transformed into a garden to benefit local residents. Adorned with cherry trees and a cherry motif, the result is the creation of a brand new public space.

The 6-km-long park in the middle of Madrid has bike and pedestrian routes that connect the city in new ways. The environment offers great spatial quality to the cyclists and pedestrians passing through the park on their daily travels.
KLYDE WARREN PARK, DALLAS USA
Uptown Dallas, with its cluster of hotels, has been connected with downtown Dallas, with its museums and opera house. The two sections of the city were previously entirely separated by the eight-lane 366 motorway, but there is now excellent urban potential for pedestrians in a city designed primarily for cars.

Built on decking that spans the highway, Klyde Warren Park packs numerous amenities into its three-block length, including a large performance stage, a children’s play area, croquet and putting greens, a restaurant, table tennis, and plenty of movable tables and chairs. Curved paths lead visitors through allées of trees, but keep most of the park open for civic gatherings.

GELDERLAND’S ATTRACTIVE BICYCLE ROUTES, NETHERLANDS
In the previous chapter we discussed the relationship between distance, functions, space, walkability and spatial quality. As we have seen, our mobility needs will increase and some new types of city features will appear. There is a good chance that efficient bike lanes and routes will play a major role in our city transformation towards sustainable mobility. Several fast bike routes have been built in Holland’s Arnhem-Nijmegen region, connecting residential, work and shopping areas in the region’s towns and cities. These are fast, direct, comfortable and safe routes that cover longer distances, and are also pleasant and attractive.

The province of Gelderland is promoting the bicycle as an attractive mode of transport to encourage people to travel by bike rather than car.
STENPIREN TRAVEL CENTRE, GOTHENBURG SWEDEN
Connecting bus, tram and ferry transport in central Gothenburg, Stenpiren Travel Centre enables new ways of moving through the city. The space, which accommodates daily flows of 15,000 pedestrians and bicycles, is designed as a sequence of spaces to maximise flows while also creating a space with strong character where people can rest. With this well-designed urban space, it is now easy for people to cross the river and combine tram, boat and bike on their way to work. Stenpiren is a good example of an urban node that promotes identity and quality of space, and it serves as the catalyst for the city-wide development project Norra Älvstranden.

ISRAELS PLADS, COPENHAGEN DENMARK
Israels Plads in Copenhagen is another European example of an urban multifunctional node functioning as a district centre – a cohesive urban space that connects streets, square and parks. The new space resembles an elevated granite floor that flows into H.C. Ørstedsparken. The park’s green character is echoed in the square in the form of solitary scattered trees. Two folds in the square’s floor serve as seating.

The site accommodates Copenhagen’s everyday life and provides space for many activities, including a ball field and playgrounds for nearby residential areas. Three schools in the area also have an agreement to use the premises for school activities.
HYLLIE SQUARE, MALMÖ SWEDEN
Hyllie Square in Malmö is a district square connecting to the commuter train station, with significant architecture and spatial quality. The square itself bridges the railway tracks and connects both sides of the new city district with its many different functions, residential areas, sports arena and shopping mall. A social place to meet and connect.

RIESENFELD CITY CENTRE DISTRICT, FREIBURG GERMANY
Slow traffic system connecting to the city centre, a safe and vibrant environment. A multifunctional urban node with culture, shops, cafés and a public transport tram. A place for children to meet after school at the district square, with a safe car-free zone and easy access to the slow traffic system and public transport.
8. ABOUT THE AUTHORS
MATHIAS AHLGREN is a senior chief landscape architect and urban planner with 20 years’ experience in leading urban planning and landscape projects with synergies in the urban systems. He is specialised in sustainable multidisciplinary planning and design, urban integrated transport solutions and sustainable infrastructure, SymbioCity approach. Mathias has extensive experience in early strategic planning and processes in a range of countries. His work spans comprehensive planning schemes to the detail design process, with integrated planning focused on public spaces, people’s daily lives, and urban qualities. He works at the interface of Smart City solutions, the citizen perspective and inclusive processes.

NIGEL ROBSON is a development planning expert with over 25 years’ experience providing transport and traffic planning advice on major urban development and masterplan projects. He has extensive experience across the commercial, residential, retail and leisure sectors and has led the transport planning input to many successful schemes requiring client representation at the highest level, including as an expert witness at Public Inquiry and in the Lands Tribunal, Upper Chamber.

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– Jane Jacobs (1916-2006) was an urban writer and activist who championed new, community-based approaches to planning for over 45 years. Her 1961 treatise, The Death and Life of Great American Cities, became one of the most influential American texts about the inner workings and failings of cities, inspiring generations of urban planners and activists. (Source: Project for Public Spaces, New York).
– Project for Public Spaces (www.pps.org).
– Projects for Public Spaces “What if we built our cities around places?” (2016).
  http://www.snelletroutesgelderland.nl/
– The Symbio City Approach (Sida report)  
– SymbioCity (SKL International) 
  http://www.symbiocity.se/
Urban Insight is an initiative launched by Sweco to illustrate our expertise – encompassing both local knowledge and global capacity – as the leading adviser to the urban areas of Europe. This initiative offers unique insights into sustainable urban development in Europe, from the citizens’ perspective.

The theme for 2018 is Urban Move, describing various facets of sustainable mobility and accessibility.

In our insight reports, written by Sweco’s experts, we explore how citizens view and use urban areas and how local circumstances can be improved to create more liveable, sustainable and mobile cities and communities.

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