Based in - The Copenhagen Lab
A tradition of pride and investment in the public realm
As **designers** we are concerned with the form of the built environment in response to people’s uses and needs.
As **social scientists** we investigate how people use their environments and how they contribute to people's quality of life.
You look like you have a lot on your mind.
Spend money, time, & energy on things that are good for PEOPLE.
Good News!

“It is so cheap to be sweet to people in city planning. Compared to other investments it costs next to nothing”

- Jan Gehl
"we measure what we care about" - Jan
Observation & analysis help us understand public life.

Pedestrian Activity on 53rd Street, New York

Weekday 23,950/Day
Weekend 5,250/Day
why do we study PUBLIC LIFE?
to find human stories
to inform strategy & design
to provide evidence
to make objective choices
to benchmark progress
to discover opportunities
How do we study PUBLIC LIFE?
we measure people MOVING
# WALKING

# CYCLING

AGE + GENDER
WALKING AND
CYCLING
Pedestrians cross City Hall Plaza in only one direction, from north to south and from south to north, using the above mentioned passage. The tower and the bleachers block any other direction of movement across the space, considerably reducing the activity and the consequent possibility for more human interaction. As such, more often, City Hall Plaza remains a place to walk by (along Santa Clara Boulevard) rather than to walk through, especially during weekdays.
Test Walks

Interrupted pedestrian desire lines

Desire line interruptions and “island hopping” by side streets in 33% of side street intersections at northern side

Seary and Kearny Streets intersection

Desire line interruptions in 11% of side street intersections at northern side

Seary and Kearny Streets intersection
we measure people STAYING

Hint: Vibrant places invite more people to stay longer
STANDING
WAITING FOR TRANSIT
BENCH SITTING
CAFE SITTING
SECONDARY SEATING
BYO SEATING
LYING DOWN
PHYSICAL ACTIVITY
CULTURAL ACTIVITY
COMMERCIAL ACTIVITY
CHILDREN PLAYING
AGE + GENDER
we measure public space QUALITY
Quality Criteria

*Shameless plug for our Walkshop at 1:15

Gehl
Public Space - Public Life Studies
STRATEGY
What kind of Life? and Where?

FRAMEWORK

PLAN

PILOT PROJECTS

EARLY ACTIVATION

TACTICAL
Where and How do we start?

What kind of Life? and Where?
STRATEGY

FRAMEWORK

PLAN

• Establish Public Space Public Life Metrics
• Develop Gradient of Public to Private Spaces
• Create a Street Hierarchy and Network Plan
• Create a Toolkit of Public Space Types to be Deployed Incrementally
• Develop a Public Space Investment and Phasing Plan
• Learn By Doing & Reduce Risk with Near Term Pilot Projects
• Dynamically Engage People and Build Consensus through Action
• Make Magnets and Build Buzz through Early Activation
• Create Critical Mass at Strategic Locations
You measure what you care about.

Not everything that can be counted counts, and not everything that counts can be be counted.

- Albert Einstein
Based on the human dimension

People-oriented design

Gehl Studio
Data + Observation
HEJ CYKLIST!
Du er nummer 21415
dag
og nummer 2094123
år
der cykler forbi her
og tak fordi du cykler i byen!
GOD TUR
I DAG
og i år der cykler forbi her
Observation at All Scales
How does public life data inform design?
New Outcomes Require New Processes

This is a Process

- Working with the City and Stakeholders

Gehl
The Process

Build partnerships around common challenges

Invite new actors to test ideas

Learn and adopt solutions for a better city

Gehl

City Government

Standard Process

Prototyping
Measure. Test. Refine
Sao Paolo Public Life

Gehl
GOAL

Supporting existing city life
Attracting more life to the city center
Introducing more diverse activities
Attracting a broad variety of user groups
CHALLENGES

Not a plaza but parking, ventilation and ‘pass through’ area

Little activity despite many potential users in the area. University with 3360 students

Perceived as unsafe, little nighttime activity

Poor connection between Largo São Francisco and Praça Ouvidor Pacheco e Silva – causing jaywalking
Largo São Francisco and Praça Ouvidor e Silva, two adjacent squares in downtown São Paulo
Remove grate, create invitation to relax, perform
Remove grate, create invitation to relax, perform
Remove grate, create invitation to relax, perform
The deck is very busy at lunch time!
Free Wi-Fi helps a lot inviting more people to stay
Yesterday there was birthday lunch on the deck!
The Story

Before

Average activity = 58
Majority people standing
Seating is limited to secondary seating

After

Average activity = 129
122% Increase in people spending time
More commercial activity
Folding chairs are popular
Waiting for transport

2013 BEFORE IMPLEMENTATION

PRIMEIRO MÊS [OUTUBRO 2014]
New crosswalk to protect pedestrians
New crosswalk to protect pedestrians
New crosswalk to protect pedestrians.
New crosswalk to protect pedestrians
The Story

Before

100%

Crossing street at desire lines, without crossing

After

9%

Crossing outside of new designated crossing area (and 228% increase in pedestrians)
The Story

Before
No story

After
Community-generated memes

Aê SãO Paulo!
Yes, we have praia!

Queria fazer uma praia na cidade de São Paulo com mar e tudo
We measure how many people and what are they doing in public space...
Observation & Analysis
Help Us Understand Public Life

Pedestrian Activity on 53rd Street, New York

Weekday 23,950/Day
Weekend 5,250/Day
28,000 people passing through between Champa - Stout, (Summer)

1% SPENDING TIME
55,000 people using the free mall ride every day
According to RTD data 2012
(Summer weekday)

one bus every 1.5 mins
Pedestrian heart
Max 8 Block segment: Lawrence - Tremont
Study to revitalize Denver's 16th Street Mall seeks "linger" factor

study finds that the mall has plenty of pedestrians, but few of them stick around

By Steve Russ
The Denver Post

Denver's 16th Street Mall is unparalleled in its ability to move people from one end of downtown to the other. But getting them to hang out? Not so much. As the mall approaches its 32nd birthday, officials are searching for ways to revitalize the 1.5-mile corridor. It attracts thousands of people each day but scares away others because of its urban grittiness.

"It's obviously an incredibly successful transit mall," said Brad Buchanan, executive director of Denver Planning and Community Development. "But the issue is how to create a sense of place that attracts people and gets them to linger."

Linger, if not a part of every planner's lexicon, is viewed as a vital objective in improving the mall's economic health and social desirability.

When city officials and a high-profile outside consultant began last year to study the mall, a surprising revelation came to light.

While thousands of people traverse the mall each day on foot or via shuttle bus, an extraordinarily low number of them stop to enjoy their surroundings.

According to the consultant - Copenhagen, Denmark-based Gehl Architects - vibrant urban corridors such as Broadway in New York City and Covent Garden in London have a common element: one-quarter to one-third of their pedestrians stop to converse, window-shop or even just sit for a few minutes on a bench.

But when researchers last summer observed one of the busiest sections of the 16th Street Mall, the block from Stout to Champa streets, they found that only 2 percent of pedestrians lingered.

"I'm surprised there are not more people spending time on the mall," said Jeff Rison, a Denver native who manages Gehl's U.S. operations from a Copenhagen office. "It's the most important street in the city, but it is surprising how little activity is in...."
We tried a "Walkshop"
A normal day on 16th Street
Meet in the Street 2015

+30% pedestrians overall during MITS compared to baseline
Normally about moving from A to B...
...but during Pilots, people also used the street for general leisure.

The number of people who felt strongly positive about the Mall went up 200%.
From monofunctional usage...
157% Increase in commercial activities when lawn furniture was placed along 16th St.

...to all forms of Staying activities on 16th St during MITS.
The share of 0-14 years old kids increased +77% on MITS Sundays compared to baseline Sundays.
“Why don’t we go for every weekend all summer in 2016,” said Bruce Abel, while he bought us a beer.
Philadelphia / The Swings

Gehl
Who is using public space?
What about social diversity in Public Space?
Our cities are divided...
...public space is where we come together
diversity is core to economic competitiveness, civility, and democracy
How do we measure social diversity in Public Space?
Toolbox Case Study in San Francisco

Three tools working together to measure social life and economic integration in place

1. Survey
2. Observational Analysis
3. Census for City Streets
Census for City Streets

Many people take and post photographs on Instagram every day.

(17% of all users surveyed in local tests)

We collect the 10,000 most recent photos posted in a space.

Each photo-taker’s photos are mapped, and their home location estimated.

Median income and % unemployed data for each user’s neighborhood are estimated.

Data for all photo-takers in this space are aggregated.
Patricia's Green, Hayes Valley San Francisco
Patricia's Green
59% local (bay area)
41% global
Union Square, Downtown, San Francisco
Union Square
Fewer local visitors to Union Square
38% local
(bay area)
62% global
Utilizing the census - Income Diversity

Summary statistics of estimated home census tracts, 10,000 people each
Utilizing the census - Unemployment Rates

Patricia’s Green

Union Square

UNEMPLOYMENT

- < 6%
- 6% +

Summary statistics of estimated home census tracts, 10,000 people each.
Validity of social media proxy

Union Square
51% use Instagram and
15% posted in Plaza

Out of 76 respondents

Patricia’s Green
61% use Instagram and
19% have posted in this plaza

Out of 49 respondents
Community groups apply for the right to receive DOT funding to reclaim public space.

Plazas added in four of five boroughs.

50 plazas reclaimed from roads as public space in six years.
NYC Plaza Program – a simple yet innovative concept

Provides funding through competitive application process

Prioritizes areas with few parks and open spaces

Partners with community groups that commit to operate, maintain, and manage
Public life needs to be an intentional driver in how cities are made

Gehl
How does reclaimed street space - in the shape of NYC plazas - impact public life and urban justice?
People are walking through them
We observed people walking – Afternoons are busy!
People are meeting each other
Do you recognize or know more people since the plaza opened?

Plazas in Queens and Brooklyn foster more social interaction and recognition than those in Manhattan.

Key:
- No, I don’t recognize / know more
- Yes, I recognize / know more

YES!
How do responses vary by income?

Those earning less than $50,000 were much more likely to make new connections.
People are spending more time outside
Do you spend more time outside since the plaza opened?

Plazas in areas with the least amount of open space – Diversity & Corona - have the most dramatic response to time spent outside.

62% across the board said yes!
Plaza Visitors – Income Diversity

A greater share of visitors earn less than $100K than live in the area.

A greater share of visitors earn less than $15K than live in the area.
Gender of Plaza Visitors

More women at plazas with programming.

More men at plazas without consistent seating.
Plazas do a lot for a little, especially in Queens

Flatiron and Corona have similar pedestrian volumes, but drastically different operational budgets.
People feel a sense of ownership
Is this Plaza your Plaza?

Respondents in outer-borough plazas responded YES at a higher %age than those in Manhattan.

Despite only 3% of all surveyed saying they participated in the plaza planning.
What are the qualities that invite social mixing?
what kind of LIFE do you want to invite?
People!