

HEALTHY URBAN PLANNING

— designing for people

Preface

This publication covers the way that design of the immediate environment affects health and well-being. The report is directed to those dealing with urban planning as well as executives and all others that are involved in designing physical environments. The overall goal is to see healthy and secure inhabitants in these spaces. The report consists of a theoretical part followed by a second part with examples and illustrations. It could be used as a compliment to an architectural quality program with the objective of reaching social quality.

Experts within different fields have contributed in compiling this report – above all, a project group formed within the Department of Urban Planning. In addition, the Department for Sustainable Development and the local Council for Crime Prevention have participated in reviewing the contents of the report. Valuable views have also been put forward by Gerd Cruse Sondén of “Tryggare och mänskligare Göteborg” (The Committee for a safer and more humane Gothenburg). The Municipal Housing Enterprise *Helsingborgshem* and the tenants of four housing blocks have contributed by serving as a good example and a valuable sounding board.

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City Council, Department for Sustainable Development.



Summary

Context and environmental design affect our well-being and feeling of security. All of us can tell about places that make us feel good and involved but also about places that give us a feeling of insecurity, lack of control and lack of context. The objective of this report is to increase the knowledge with regard to the factors behind these feelings and encouraging a physical planning that puts the focus on the well-being of the citizen.

The entire society is affected

It is not only the individual that benefits from feeling good and secure. It is natural that the whole social structure is affected. Secure and healthy people contribute to positive encounters and a good social climate. The opposite situation is experienced by the individual that – due to fear – avoids jogging in the park or attend an evening class. If anyone feels forced to abstain from participating in social activities, this represents a threat against democracy and freedom of choice. Since women are over-represented within the group abstaining from activities due to fear, this also becomes a matter of gender.

The security and health connection has been inspired by the WHO Healthy Cities project. Their thoughts around Healthy Urban Planning and Healthy Ageing have been adopted in the Healthy Urban Design concept; to design locations that promote good public health and good environments. A key word when connecting different disciplines in order to achieve a total concept is *togetherness*. Depending on which field of competence is used, new exploitation or existing locations can be highlighted from different angles. No single actor can encompass the different factors that influence the way we experience our surroundings. It is a matter of combining emotional experiences with practical and functional aspects. Not least, we must remember to cooperate with the real local experts – the people who live and work in each environment.

Design that facilitates control

To feel good and safe is a matter of every-day control - a feeling of security and active participation in different matters ranging from the situation in individual residential areas to the questions involving society as a whole. Personal engagement is the solution of many social problems. Urban planners cannot give the citizens control and commitment but they can *facilitate* the process.

The illustrated examples show situations of physical encounters and physical activities. They represent different angles of approach and show how a conscious planning can enhance the individual's feeling of control. The illustrations do not cover all aspects in the achievement of an environment that guarantees secure and healthy individuals but the purpose is rather to increase the interest and awareness of questions that do not have any single given answers. Every environment is unique and there is no checklist capable of covering all the potential possibilities within a set environment and all the questions that arise. What history do we want to preserve and highlight? Where do we want people to circulate? Where do we want to avoid a stream of traffic? Where do we want people to meet? Which are the best locations for entrances? How do we define and mark the areas of responsibility? How do we secure safe crossings of roads and parks? There are seldom any single given answers when it comes to the final solution. Maybe it is more important to raise the correct questions than to answer them. And if the relevant questions are raised and highlighted by different professions with regard to different aspects at an early stage, it is more likely that they will be taken into consideration.

The economic aspect

Naturally, the social benefit of creating environments to make people feel good also has an economic aspect. It is easy to understand that the societal economy is favoured by a reduced rate of illness and criminality. It is not necessarily more expensive to plan and build areas that pay consideration to each individual's need for control. It may turn out to be more expensive if compelled to make changes in an insecure area.

Designing for people

Objective

Many studies have been published dealing with the factors that affect our health and feeling of security but, so far, no summary - easy to access - covering these two factors has been made to particularly reach people working with physical environments. The purpose of this report is to cover this need and encourage knowledge concerning the design of new and existing physical environments with the objective of creating good living environments and good public health.

This report is based on two fundamental facts:

- A conscious environmental design will contribute to peoples well-being.
- A society with secure and healthy people will make citizens that are able to be involved and care about their fellow citizens.

Healthy people

The way we feel is dependant on a number of different factors. Most of these are possible to influence. Sweden's eleven objective domains in public health policy¹ cover areas whereby the social structure as a whole, in cooperation with each individual citizen, can contribute to improve well-being. We are talking about factors such as the importance of working, the feeling of togetherness, participation, social and economic conditions as well as our eating habits and physical activities.

The physical environment also affects the way we feel. Healthy citizens should be able to move around safely with the possibility of embracing the public environment and feeling that they are part of a greater context. Does the environment invite you to go for a walk, take a trip on the bike or participate in physical activities? Do you dare to go out? Is it clear who is responsible for the space? Are there attractive alternatives to elevators, buses or cars? The answers to these and similar questions add up to reflect how we feel in relation to our immediate surroundings.

The importance of context

The phenomena regarding the environment have engaged many researchers and architects. What is it that creates "good" spaces within a town.? The culture geographer Kevin Lynch², points out that, amongst other things, a clear feeling of orientation with or between spaces is of great importance for the way we experience the locations as "good" in the sense of being interesting, pleasant and secure. This means, for example, that it is positive if the different town districts are experienced as parts of an overall context. There is a great difference between an environment that is well integrated with its surroundings and one that feels peripheral or is blocked in by physical

obstacles. A housing area designed for good contact with adjacent areas facilitates the mobility and flexibility of each individual and the contact between different groups of people.

Other researchers put the focus on cultural and historical connections. The more clearly the memories and history³ are exposed, the easier for the individual to associate with the immediate environment. The structure in which the location is situated is another important factor. In an area with mixed functions, like housing, offices, shops and various service functions, many of the inhabitants can reach what they need by walking or using the bike, thus contributing to the street life of the neighbourhood. People moving around contribute to a safe city. If the pattern of the streets is designed to attract people, this will also contribute to a feeling of security. For the same reason, the main entrances of the buildings should face the streets and the public places. However, in this context it is important to remember that a "street" and a "public place" look very different in a medieval old town as compared with a modern suburban housing area, just to mention one example.



People contribute to create a safe town

The importance of design

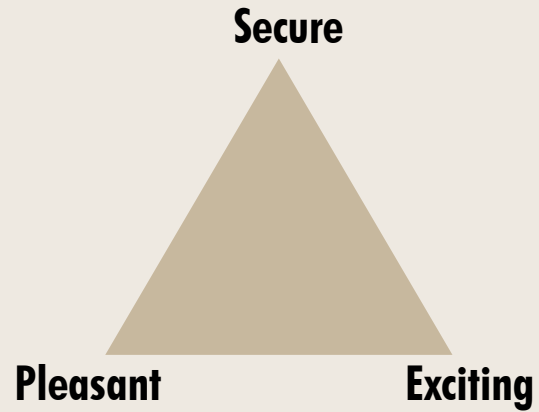
The Danish architect Jan Gehl has shown many examples of environmental design whereby the design of locations affects our social behaviour as well as our feeling of responsibility and feeling of belonging. He shows – sometimes with comical clarity – how the best intentions sometimes result in less successful solutions⁴. It may be benches placed on spots where nobody wants to sit or deserted, large-scale locations that are meant to function as meeting places but that are not situated close to populated public thoroughfares and do not contain any target points. It may be burglary protections that prevent insight and enable the burglar to operate without disturbance, bus stops that can be reached by the bus but are difficult to reach by the passengers, etc. etc.

The English architects Alison and Peter Smithson belong to those who emphasize that an environment is also a matter of identity. The more freedom individuals have to create a personal character in their immediate surroundings, the better possibility to form a pleasant space⁵. It is equally important to be able to participate in decisions concerning the own housing area. This is vital for our confidence in the society and commitment to the environment, which, in its turn, has a great influence on public health.

One can often observe clear similarities between the environments that are designed to prevent crime and those described as good environments. The US organisation CPTED (Crime prevention through environmental design) try to influence criminals from committing crimes by designing environment in such a way so that individuals' meeting places and events are increased as well as defining clear areas of responsibility in architecture and urban planning. For example, the importance of establishing clear borderlines between "private" and "public" is emphasized.



The feeling of well-being is increased by the possibility to add your personality to the space



Bo Grönlund, Swedish Architect at the Academy of Arts in Copenhagen, maintains that a good urban environment is based on a balance between the secure town, the pleasant town and the exciting town⁶. Our need for security must not shadow our experience of the interesting and eventful town. Peter and Alison Smithson express something similar in the sentence "Order is the end of all human activity"⁵.

Supervision contribute to secure environments. Ground floors with windows and doors signal a feeling of controlled and well-lit areas. In contrast, high basements or closed, anonymous ground floor walls give a feeling of insecurity, even if the rest of the house is inhabited. Recesses without any function forming dark hollows in the facades also contribute to create a feeling of insecurity.

Common theoretical factors

A common factor for these and all other theories around the phenomena of space is the fundamental fact that the physical design of the environment affects our way of acting and relating to each other.

The societal importance

It is important to feel safe and secure. That is one of the most important health factors. Studies of health and security⁷ show a continued and increased feeling of insecurity amongst people when moving around in their own housing area. Women feel less secure than men. This means that security is also a question of gender and – in its turn – a matter of democracy when people abstain from going for a walk or participate in other activities as they do not dare to leave their home, take the bus or walk from the bus stop to their home.

This feeling of fear, though not always rational, must be taken very seriously. The question is not whether the insecurity is justified or not. The fear as such is unpleasant and there is a risk that different groups are formed and act on their own, for example through vigilance committees with methods that are unacceptable in a democratic society. Not least, there is much to be gained from a socio-economical point of view to create environments promoting well-being and security.



When the individual does not dare to walk or take the bus, insecurity becomes a matter of democracy.

Locks and lighting are only a start

People are generally aware of the necessity of maintaining safety and security by protecting their immediate barriers by use and maintenance of locks and fences, to prevent burglary, and by making sure that the immediate environment can be observed, for example by way of adequate lighting and the removal of bushes and other vegetation. But what must be done if there is still vandalism or if the inhabitants are still reluctant to venture from their homes? Electronic devices such as surveyance cameras do not necessarily lead to a feeling of security. On the contrary, they may even signal that the area is dangerous. The same thing applies if the windows are provided with grids or Venetian blinds. Locks and well-planned lighting provide control but this is not always sufficient. Research⁸ confirms the connection between control and security. In this context, control does not only mean good visual control but also the importance of the knowledge and

confidence in neighbours and the surroundings. Most of the illustrations shown in this report cover examples contributing to create such a high degree of confidence between people so that, hopefully, the use of watchmen or electronic burglar devices will be unnecessary.

No self-evident solutions

Secure and healthy environments make it possible for the individual to enjoy a healthy life with a reasonable control of their immediate environment. This means that public space should convey a feeling of security and encourage the individual to participate in social and physical activities. However, different environments offer different conditions. For example, there is a great difference with regard to the contact between neighbours in a housing area and in a town centre. It is also a matter of paying consideration to different interests. For example, the construction of a pedestrian tunnel under a road with intense traffic will offer security to the pedestrians but, at the same time, the tunnel might signal a risk for assaults. By considering health and security factors at an early stage of the planning, it is possible to identify opposing interests and avoid conflicts.

Complex questions are solved together

In order to handle conflicting interests in the best possible way, an increasing number of actors decide to engage new partners with additional expert knowledge. One example is the cooperation between the architect Bo Grönlund and the Police Authorities that has resulted in a number of very valuable recommendations regarding the design of safe and secure environments⁹.

The department “Tryggare och Mänskligare Göteborg” (Gothenburg –safer and more human)¹⁰ involves a cross-sectional group that represents architecture, sociology, communication and culture. They are dealing with matters that promote contacts, relations, confidence and participation – matters they see as the key factors of the human society. Researchers from the University of Gothenburg are also participating in the project.

The WHO:network Healthy Cities¹¹, with interest in Healthy Urban Planning and Healthy Urban Design encourage team-work that involves broad competence within the fields of medicine, urban planning, architecture, house construction and ordinary tenants with the objective of designing environments that have a positive influence on the health of each individual. The Healthy Cities network also develops tools to be used in dialogs with citizens with the objective of highlighting the health aspects when designing physical environments.

Social control at different levels

The town

The localisation of functions affects availability and street life, thereby contributing to social control. The mixed town is a concept that features environments with different functions, increasing the intensity of people and contributing by providing services within walking or cycling distance.

The housing district

Within the different housing and town districts, social control can contribute to create the integrated town, in which the different units unite to create an entirety without barriers. This promotes eventful, flexible and multi-faceted environments with streets that attract people and encourage social life in controlled and well-lit public thoroughfares/passages.

The housing block

At a block level, it is important to provide social control by supervision on a scale that is not too large to handle. This makes it possible for the individuals to identify with themselves and their neighbours as members of a common environment. This increases the possibility of commitment to the immediate environment.



The following illustrated examples are valid on all these levels. They are dealing with the same questions of social control that apply to the different levels within the town. The following aspects show what can be done in order to facilitate different solutions.

1 Facilitate understanding

A town should be understandable for inhabitants as well as visitors. Functions, contexts and orientation should be clearly defined and easy to understand.

2 Facilitate every-day street life

Street life gives life to the town. The presence of other people contributes to increased security and safety. To move about in the open air promotes health and a feeling of well-being.

3 Facilitate encounters

Meeting people – spontaneously or planned – increases our understanding and confidence in each other. Meetings create participation, one of the key factors in the definition of health.

4 Facilitate supervision

An open view over a space leads to a feeling of security, since it contributes to control. The awareness of being seen also contributes to individual social expectance.

5 Facilitate responsibilities – define limits

Togetherness requires definition of clear limits. There should be no doubt about who is responsible for a space and who has right of access.

6 Facilitate physical activities

A secure environment attracting open air activities offers options for healthy physical activities.

7 Facilitate maintenance – enable esthetical experiences

The environment must be capable of offering esthetical, exciting experiences and be designed in such a way that it is easy to maintain and difficult to vandalise.

1 Facilitate understanding

A town should be understandable for inhabitants as well as visitors. Functions, contexts and orientation should be clearly defined and easy to understand.

An area with a structure that we know makes it possible to get our bearings and understand how we are expected to act. In the same way that we use grammatical rules in our language in order to express ourselves clearly, we need a familiar structure in the design of town and housing areas in order to make them intelligible.



A familiar structure could be a grid pattern in which the streets belong to the public life and the yards within the town quarters have a more private character. It is possible to find an address by following the numbers marked in the street and to know that the street leads to another street or another district.



The opposite situation makes it necessary to erect orientation maps.



Different districts function at their best when they are experienced as parts of an entirety without barriers. A busy street does *not* necessarily represent a barrier between two areas. It is when it cannot be crossed, or when the sides of the street do not have any entries to different activities, that it becomes a barrier.

Orientation is facilitated by views and landmarks. The central square or the spire of a tower in the line of sight contributes to geographic orientation.



Cultural and historical memories add to the experience of the environment and its deeper context. A windmill preserved close to a housing area contributes to the historical orientation and can also give an identity to the area – something for everyone to be proud of.



Visual and physical bonds make the context of the town easier to understand. Regardless of whether the area is well-known or if one is a stranger, the ability to appreciate the visual and physical relations of an area enable an understanding of the entirety.





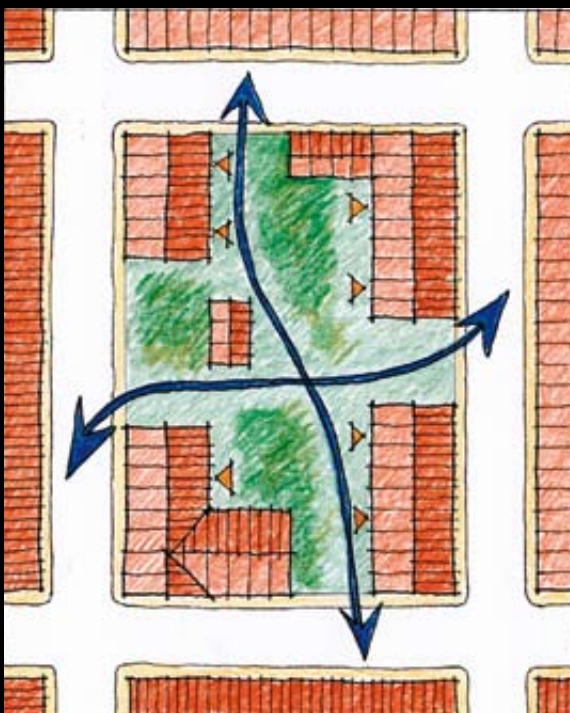
It is difficult to orientate and understand contexts when the pedestrian and cyclist routes between districts are made up by tunnels. It is difficult to know which streets are being crossed.



The structure becomes uncertain and unclear when a housing block has entrances with access exclusively from the back yard. How does one find the right address?



In this example, a well proven concept has been turned upside down; all the entries are facing the yard and the private open air terraces are facing the street. For the ground floor flat, this means a location close to a street crossing which acts as a solid shield making it practically impossible to utilise the private patio.



Housing blocks with entrances only facing the yard and with many openings to public places easily become through-ways for the general public. For the tenants it is difficult to identify to whom the place belongs and who is just taking a shortcut.

2 Facilitate every-day street life

Street life gives life to the town. The presence of other people contributes to increased security and safety. To move about in the open air promotes health and a feeling of well-being.

The streets and planning patterns distribute the movement within a district, meaning that certain public thoroughfares are more used than the others. If population of a space is aimed at, it must contain target points that attract people or be located close to such target points. Moreover, the space must be part of a network containing other locations and public passages. The design of a space must not be an empty gesture.

The street pattern does not alone promote street life. Naturally, a high degree of exploitation resulting in more individuals within a limited area adds to a lively street life.

On one side...

On one side of the square, there are many entries to various activities. There are different target points and good conditions for creation of a populated environment, which can be illustrated by the establishment of several restaurants.

On the other side...

On the other side of the square the original, only entrance is closed. This side, with its bare façade, is merely a place to be passed by.

To populate a space, it is not enough to provide inviting places to sit. They must be located where people have a goal, where busy routes are crossing and where street life can be observed.



3 Facilitate encounters

Meeting people – spontaneously or planned – increases our understanding and confidence in each other. Meetings create participation, one of the key factors in the definition of health.

The physical environment should contain locations that enable people to meet. It is not enough to create an open area in order to achieve a meeting place or a lively street life. Apart from a good connection with the rest of the town, there must be pleasant places that invite people to take a relaxing break.



When the conditions are good, it is possible to encounter people not otherwise seen or met within squares, parks and other public places.



Even though the town is open for all and created to serve all, it must offer places for private meetings. A well-placed bench in a park where many people pass provides the possibility for unpretentious contacts.



The entrance to a stairwell from a public street can by simple means be designed in an inviting way to enable a spontaneous break in a semi-public zone for a chat with a neighbour. The glass door contributes in a positive way to create light and vision.



In the yard, the encounters can be facilitated by a factor that is common for all tenants. In this case, the washing machines has been moved from the basement to a new house that has enhanced the quality of the yard and created an nice meeting place.

Houses with many tenants must be carefully designed when it comes to meeting places, especially when the public street lies on the doorstep, like in the case of this house with external galleries. A spacious ground floor entrance or a well-defined spot facing the yard can still provide satisfactory solutions for spontaneous contacts with the neighbours.



This leafy yard could be the tenants' meeting place but lacks entrances to the houses. Entrance to "your" yard means first entering the street, rounding house and finally entering the yard from the long side of the block. This would not have been necessary with passages through the houses and the yard would have been a natural place for neighbours to meet.



This yard is only available for the tenants, who have been given the possibility of putting their personal touch on their environment, thus defining their "territories". The possibility for sharing social and practical responsibility is increased.



Contacts between people in housing areas are largely a matter of recognition. An area should contain places where you "happen" to meet. When getting to know neighbours and exchanging a few words, the conditions for mutual understanding increase and so does the commitment to the area.



4 Facilitate supervision

An open view over a space leads to a feeling of security, since it contributes to control. The awareness of being seen also contributes to individual social expectance.

It is positive that the public environment can be controlled by citizens supervision. Control over a space creates a feeling of security but this does not mean that *all* places have to be open for vision without room for surprise.

A well-planned housing area must be designed in such a way and on such a scale that it offers a reasonable possibility to survey not only the own private area but also part of areas belonging to the neighbours. A design that contributes to a feeling of togetherness encourages commitment and social responsibility.



In the public place, active surroundings with shops, working places, schools and clubs, create control. Day and night activities mixed with homes, contribute to the street life and influences security. A diversity of traffic also creates a feeling of livelihood and action.



The pleasant walking street dominated by shops can become frighteningly deserted after closing time....



...particularly if the shops close their illuminated windows by way of Venetian blinds. This kind of solution may possibly signal something dangerous and insecure. Better to provide supervision around the clock and mix shops with homes and offices.

Long facades without doors but with high basements and closed, anonymous ground-floors could signal insecurity even if the building is otherwise populated.

The street facade is impoverished when street activities are few and far between. The housing block also becomes less flexible for future changes. How is it possible to introduce public activity on the ground floor?



Other actors (like shops, pre-schools and clubs) that are localized in the housing area contribute to a controlled situation, even during hours when many tenants leave their homes. Windows facing locations and bays with lateral views help enable a controlled atmosphere even when there is no-one around.



The location of these garages makes visibility impossible from the houses. This compact shield facilitates matters for anyone with dishonest intentions.



Many pedestrian and cycle tracks run between housing areas within shrubbery that makes supervision practically non-existent. Instead stretches passing through the centres of housing areas would have attracted street life with tenants as well as by-passers. Why not contribute to increased street life and security by building new homes along the tracks without supervision?





The ground-level balconies offer a view but no access to the yard, alienating the building from the yard. It has been necessary to use the shrubbery as demarcation of the protective zone between the private balcony and the "public" yard.



In this case, the availability of the yard has been underlined by patios belonging to the ground floor apartments. The private access to the yard conveys a feeling of control.



Environments that seem safe in daytime can be experienced as frightening at night. Good illumination contributes to security and supervision.



If the tunnel still feels insecure, it is a good idea to offer an alternative route for those who need to have the possibility of human control.

5 Facilitate responsibilities – define limits

Togetherness requires definition of clear limits. There should be no doubt about who is responsible for a space and who has right of access.

Different rules apply for public and private spaces. By marking the limits between these areas, we facilitate an awareness of which rules and conditions that apply. The feeling of responsibility amongst those living and working in the environment is enhanced when these limits are clearly defined.

In order to mark a limit, it might be sufficient to provide a different ground surface. This street is broad enough for a car but the surface signals that it is reserved for pedestrians.



A gate does not need to be shut or locked in order to indicate entrance to another area of responsibility. The locked gate might rather be experienced as a sign of inhospitality.



In this case there is, despite the lack of a gate, a clear demarcation between private and public environments. Identity and responsibility are well defined.



Simple steps can satisfy the individual's need for control. It could be something that marks a border of property or a difference between private and public, but keep in mind that excessive walls and fences make it easy for burglars to operate freely.





When building in a park where the houses do not follow the town's normal grid pattern of houses, entries and street life, the borders must be particularly well defined. In this case, the hedge and the gateway contribute to underline the difference between the public street and the private area.



Before:

The tenants experienced a problem with people taking short cuts over their yard which made it difficult to enjoy a feeling of privacy.



After:

Simply by mounting a protective trellis over the crossing path has made it clear that the yard belongs to the property.



There are better and more pleasant ways of marking ownership than by signs.

This green space belongs to the block.

Don't walk your dog here.

6 Facilitate physical activities

A secure environment attracting open air activities offers options for healthy physical activities.

Urban planning cannot alone encourage people to increase their physical training but a conscious planning can facilitate the choice of the right physical activity. For example, this can be achieved by offering services within walking and cycling distance, to create open air environments that are secure and easily available and making sure that the busy road is not the only safe or comfortable option when travelling to school or when shopping. Above all, it is important to offer attractive choices so that the best alternative is also the healthiest one.

Close access to different facilities increases the possibility of making physical activity a natural part of everyday life. With a shop at walking or cycling distance it is much easier to make a healthy choice and leave the car at home.



To facilitate physical activities, pedestrian and cycle tracks must be attractive and easy to access. Traffic separation must not mean that these lead to detours that will increase the risk for taking roads not designed for pedestrians and cyclists.



In this case, the entries and facades of the house are facing the yard. Therefore, it has been considered that there is no reason for the sidewalk to continue along the street. Streets without sidewalks do not encourage walks. This design rather infers that the area belongs to the car.





An attractive and well kept park attracts visitors.



If a massive stairway is the first thing you see, and not an elevator, it will be more natural to use the stairway. (Notice the hidden entrance to the elevator “hiss” to the left of the picture!)



This pedestrian and cycle track does not offer attractive experiences. The long stretches are only framed by bushes that obscure lateral vision...



...the parallel and peaceful street feels much more pleasant. Why not guide pedestrians and cyclists to this street?

7 Facilitate maintenance – enable esthetical experiences

The environment must be capable of offering esthetical, exciting experiences and be designed in such a way that it is easy to maintain and difficult to vandalise.

The safe, secure and healthy town is not only a matter of the localisation of parks, houses, entrances, streets, as well as cycle and walking paths. The town should also offer esthetical experiences and variation. Pride in the housing area and the town must be generated. The security factor must not dominate to such an extent that it erases exciting and unexpected events.

No big gestures are needed to create a positive feeling. This flower bed signals consideration and care.



Suddenly an arch opens up from the street and exposes a beautiful interior environment.



Experiences and decorations can be expressed in many different ways.





In this case one has even succeeded in transforming the household waste shed to an esthetical experience.



Litter collects more litter. Using sturdy easy-to-maintain material contributes to create a secure and well-kept environment.



For design of the environment to be up to your expectations, maintenance and care must be kept up. With flaking paint, pride disappears as well as the incentive to contribute to a clean and tidy environment.



Last but not least: experiences that invite open air activities add up to create the liveable town.

Illustrated examples

The purpose with the illustrated examples is to highlight the different factors that affect our feeling of security and well-being. This enables us to visualise new plans and improve existing solutions. The illustrations and the text are meant to function as “food for thought” and inspiration. They do not pretend to give a complete coverage of the factors that create security and increase well-being but are rather intended to convey understanding with regard to environments designed for individuals and their needs for control of their immediate surroundings. The illustrations are meant to inspire to the creation of spaces putting the focus on the health and well-being of the individual, while highlighting thoughts regarding opposing interests.

Do the right thing from start

Introducing aspects creating security and good health at an early stage of the planning can eliminate conflicts with other quality factors. The best and most economic solution is to find the best alternative from the start. Still, it is important to remember that even existing areas can be changed. It could be a matter of small details, like the change of the ground surface in order to mark a border between private and public environments. But it might also be a comprehensive project, like converting houses with one entrance into through-passages with access to the garden¹². Or it could be a matter of building new homes along walkways that are experienced as deserted.

Citizen dialogs

As previously pointed out, the experience of social participation is an important part of the general health condition. When planning to make changes, it is vital that the inhabitants involved are informed about the plans and the factors behind them. Citizen dialogs make it possible for each individual to put forward viewpoints and receive feedback.

Taking walks together with people living and working in a town district or housing area is *one* way of developing

Notes

1 www.fhi.se Link: Public Health targets

2 "The image of the city" Kevin Lynch 1960, ISBN 0 262 12004 6

3 Expressed by Christian Norberg-Schulz in "Genius Loci" 1979, SBN 85670 700 7

4 www.gehlarchitects.dk

5 "Ordinariness and light" Alison and Peter Smithson 1970, ISBN 0 262 19082 6

6 <http://bo.gronlund.homepage.dk> (Urbanity, a central issue for town life and security)

7 "Hälsöförhållanden i Skåne - Folkhälsoenkät 2000 & 2004. Socialmedicinska enheten, Region Skåne". (Health conditions in Scania -

The Public Health enquiries of 2000 & 2004. Socio-medical Unit of the County of Scania) www.skane.se

8 See for example: Anita Heber, "Var rädd om dig!" (Take Care!) 2007, The Institute of Criminology, Stockholm University.

(Kriminologiska institutionen, Stockholms universitet) www.crim.su.se

9 www.botryggt.se

10 www.tryggaremanskligare.goteborg.se

11 www.euro.who.int/healthy-cities

12 Example: Markbacken, ÖrebroBostäder AB, www.obo.se

a citizen dialogue. Those who are living in an area are also those who have the best local knowledge. Walking together is also a free and relaxed way of meeting. The coffee break that finally ties up the walk is important because this is when it is possible for everyone to gather and be informed about everything that has been observed and recorded during the walk.

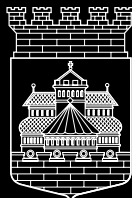
Districts that are not yet populated

One rarely knows who will be moving into a newly planned area. When there are no local experts it is difficult to know with whom to build up a dialog. In such cases fictive walks can be a good help. In particular, one can focus on the way that the conditions are experienced by someone with limited ability. It could be a child that is too young to cope by himself, someone without a car who has to rely on public transports or someone who is functionally disabled. An environment has to be suitable for many categories of people at different stages of life.

Architect students in the university town of Lund, Sweden, were asked to design places for people with defective vision and hearing. The result showed spaces that expressed clear borders, clear responsibilities and offered enriching experiences.



Clearly defined borders are important but they must never cause obstacles for functionally disabled people.



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