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1. LIFE BETWEEN BUILDINGS

Three Types of Outdoor Activities
Life Between Buildings
Outdoor Activities and Quality of Outdoor Space
Outdoor Activities and Architectural Trends
Life Between Buildings – in Current Social Situations
Three Types of Outdoor Activities

An ordinary day on an ordinary street. Pedestrians pass on the sidewalks, children play near front doors, people sit on benches and steps, the postman makes his rounds with the mail, two passersby greet on the sidewalk, two mechanics repair a car, groups engage in conversation. This mix of outdoor activities is influenced by a number of conditions. Physical environment is one of the factors: a factor that influences the activities to a varying degree and in many different ways. Outdoor activities, and a number of the physical conditions that influence them, are the subject of this book.

Greatly simplified, outdoor activities in public spaces can be divided into three categories, each of which places very different demands on the physical environment: necessary activities, optional activities, and social activities.

Necessary activities include those that are more or less compulsory—going to school or to work, shopping, waiting for a bus or a person, running errands, distributing mail—in other words, all activities in which those involved are to a greater or lesser degree required to participate.

In general, everyday tasks and pastimes belong to this group. Among other activities, this group includes the great majority of those related to walking.

Because the activities in this group are necessary, their incidence is influenced only slightly by the physical framework. These activities will take place throughout the year, under nearly all conditions, and are more or less independent of the exterior environment. The participants have no choice.

Optional activities—that is, those pursuits that are participated in if there is a wish to do so and if time and place make it possible—are quite another matter.
three types of outdoor activities
This category includes such activities as taking a walk to get a breath of fresh air, standing around enjoying life, or sitting and sunbathing.

These activities take place only when exterior conditions are optimal, when weather and place invite them. This relationship is particularly important in connection with physical planning because most of the recreational activities that are especially pleasant to pursue outdoors are found precisely in this category of activities. These activities are especially dependent on exterior physical conditions.

When outdoor areas are of poor quality, only strictly necessary activities occur.

When outdoor areas are of high quality, necessary activities take place with approximately the same frequency – though they clearly tend to take a longer time, because the physical conditions are better. In addition, however, a wide range of optional activities will also occur because place and situation now invite people to stop, sit, eat, play, and so on.

In streets and city spaces of poor quality, only the bare minimum of activity takes place. People hurry home.

In a good environment, a completely different, broad spectrum of human activities is possible.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality of the physical environment</th>
<th>Poor</th>
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<tr>
<td>Necessary activities</td>
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<td>Optional activities</td>
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<td>&quot;Resultant&quot; activities (Social activities)</td>
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Graphic representation of the relationship between the quality of outdoor spaces and the rate of occurrence of outdoor activities.

When the quality of outdoor areas is good, optional activities occur with increasing frequency. Furthermore, as levels of optional activity rise, the number of social activities usually increases substantially.
social activities

Social activities are all activities that depend on the presence of others in public spaces. Social activities include children at play, greetings and conversations, communal activities of various kinds, and finally—as the most widespread social activity—passive contacts, that is, simply seeing and hearing other people.

Different kinds of social activities occur in many places: in dwellings; in private outdoor spaces, gardens, and balconies; in public buildings; at places of work; and so on; but in this context only those activities that occur in publicly accessible spaces are examined.

These activities could also be termed “resultant” activities, because in nearly all instances they evolve from activities linked to the other two activity categories. They develop in connection with the other activities because people are in the same space, meet, pass by one another, or are merely within view.

Social activities occur spontaneously, as a direct consequence of people moving about and being in the same spaces. This implies that social activities are indirectly supported whenever necessary and optional activities are given better conditions in public spaces.

Street scene, Paddington, Sydney.
The more time people spend outdoors, the more frequently they meet and the more they talk.

Chart plotting the relationship between the number of outdoor activities and frequency of interactions. (Street life studies in Melbourne [20]. See also page 191.)

The character of social activities varies, depending on the context in which they occur. In the residential streets, near schools, near places of work, where there are a limited number of people with common interests or backgrounds, social activities in public spaces can be quite comprehensive: greetings, conversations, discussions, and play arising from common interests and because people "know" each other, if for no other reason than that they often see one another.

In city streets and city centers, social activities will generally be more superficial, with the majority being passive contacts—seeing and hearing a great number of unknown people. But even this limited activity can be very appealing.

Very freely interpreted, a social activity takes place every time two people are together in the same space. To see and hear each other, to meet, is in itself a form of contact, a social activity. The actual meeting, merely being present, is furthermore the seed for other, more comprehensive forms of social activity.

This connection is important in relation to physical planning. Although the physical framework does not have a direct influence on the quality, content, and intensity of social contacts, architects and planners can affect the possibilities for meeting, seeing, and hearing people—possibilities that both take on a quality of their own and become important as background and starting point for other forms of contact.

This is the background for the investigation in this book of meeting possibilities and opportunities to see and hear other people. Another reason for a comprehensive review of these activities is that precisely the presence of other people, activities, events, inspiration, and stimulation comprise one of the most important qualities of public spaces altogether.
If we look back at the street scene that was the starting point for defining the three categories of outdoor activities, we can see how necessary, optional, and social activities occur in a finely interwoven pattern. People walk, sit, and talk. Functional, recreational, and social activities intertwine in all conceivable combinations. Therefore, this examination of the subject of outdoor activities does not begin with a single, limited category of activities. Life between buildings is not merely pedestrian traffic or recreational or social activities. Life between buildings comprises the entire spectrum of activities, which combine to make communal spaces in cities and residential areas meaningful and attractive.

Both necessary, functional activities and optional, recreational activities have been examined quite thoroughly over the years in different contexts. Social activities and their interweaving to form a communal fabric have received considerably less attention.

This is the background for the following, more detailed examination of social activities in public spaces.
It is difficult to pinpoint precisely what life between buildings means in relation to the need for contact [14].

Opportunities for meetings and daily activities in the public spaces of a city or residential area enable one to be among, to see, and to hear others, to experience other people functioning in various situations.

These modest “see and hear contacts” must be considered in relation to other forms of contact and as part of the whole range of social activities, from very simple and noncommittal contacts to complex and emotionally involved connections.

The concept of varying degrees of contact intensity is the basis of the following simplified outline of various contact forms.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High intensity</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Friends</td>
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<td>Acquaintances</td>
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<td>Chance contacts</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Passive contacts (&quot;see and hear&quot; contacts)</td>
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In terms of this outline life between buildings represents primarily the low-intensity contacts located at the bottom of the scale. Compared with the other contact forms, these contacts appear insignificant, yet they are valuable both as independent contact forms and as prerequisites for other, more complex interactions.

Opportunities related to merely being able to meet, see, and hear others include:

- contact at a modest level
- a possible starting point for contact at other levels
- a possibility for maintaining already established contacts
- a source of information about the social world outside
- a source of inspiration, an offer of stimulating experience
a possible beginning for contacts at other levels
The possibilities related to the low-intensity contact forms offered in public spaces perhaps can best be described by the situation that exists if they are lacking.

If activity between buildings is missing, the lower end of the contact scale also disappears. The varied transitional forms between being alone and being together have disappeared. The boundaries between isolation and contact become sharper — people are either alone or else with others on a relatively demanding and exacting level.

Life between buildings offers an opportunity to be with others in a relaxed and undemanding way. One can take occasional walks, perhaps make a detour along a main street on the way home or pause at an inviting bench near a front door to be among people for a short while. One can take a long bus ride every day, as many retired people have been found to do in large cities. Or one can do daily shopping, even though it would be more practical to do it once a week. Even looking out of the window now and then, if one is fortunate enough to have something to look at, can be rewarding. Being among others, seeing and hearing others, receiving impulses from others, imply positive experiences, alternatives to being alone. One is not necessarily with a specific person, but one is, nevertheless, with others.

As opposed to being a passive observer of other people's experiences on television or video or film, in public spaces the individual himself is present, participating in a modest way, but most definitely participating.
an opportunity for maintaining established contacts
Low-intensity contact is also a situation from which other forms of contact can grow. It is a medium for the unpredictable, the spontaneous, the unplanned.

These opportunities can be illustrated by examining how play activities among children get started.

Such situations can be arranged. Formalized play occurs at birthday parties and arranged play groups in schools. Generally, however, play is not arranged. It evolves when children are together, when they see others at play, when they feel like playing and “go out to play” without actually being certain that play will get started. The first prerequisite is being in the same space. Meeting.

Contacts that develop spontaneously in connection with merely being where there are others are usually very fleeting—a short exchange of words, a brief discussion with the next man on the bench, chatting with a child in a bus, watching somebody working and asking a few questions, and so forth. From this simple level, contacts can grow to other levels, as the participants wish. Meeting, being present in the same space, is in each of these circumstances the prime prerequisite.

The possibility of meeting neighbors and co-workers often in connection with daily comings and goings implies a valuable opportunity to establish and later maintain acquaintances in a relaxed and undemanding way.

Social events can evolve spontaneously. Situations are allowed to develop. Visits and gatherings can be arranged on short notice, when the mood dictates. It is equally easy to “drop by” or “look in” or to agree on what is to take place tomorrow if the participants pass by one another’s front doors often and, especially, meet often on the street or in connection with daily activities around the home, place of work, and so on.

Frequent meetings in connection with daily activities increase chances of developing contacts with neighbors, a fact noted in many surveys. With frequent meetings friendships and the contact network are maintained in a far simpler and less demanding way than if friendship must be kept up by telephone and invitation. If this is the case, it is often rather difficult to maintain contact, because more is always demanded of the participants when meetings must be arranged in advance.

This is the underlying reason why nearly all children and a considerable proportion of other age groups maintain closer and more frequent contact with friends and acquaintances who live or work near them—it is the simplest way to stay “in touch.”
information about the social environment
The opportunity to see and hear other people in a city or residential area also implies an offer of valuable information, about the surrounding social environment in general and about the people one lives or works with in particular.

This is especially true in connection with the social development of children, which is largely based on observations of the surrounding social environment, but all of us need to be kept up to date about the surrounding world in order to function in a social context.

Through the mass media we are informed about the larger, more sensational world events, but by being with others we learn about the more common but equally important details. We discover how others work, behave, and dress, and we obtain knowledge about the people we work with, live with, and so forth. By means of all this information we establish a confidential relationship with the world around us. A person we have often met on the street becomes a person we “know.”

In addition to imparting information about the social world outside, the opportunity to see and hear other people can also provide ideas and inspiration for action.

We are inspired by seeing others in action. Children, for example, see other children at play and get the urge to join in, or they get ideas for new games by watching other children or adults.

The trend from living to lifeless cities and residential areas that has accompanied industrialization, segregation of various city functions, and reliance on the automobile also has caused cities to become duller and more monotonous. This points up another important need, namely the need for stimulation [14].

Experiencing other people represents a particularly colorful and attractive opportunity for stimulation. Compared with experiencing buildings and other inanimate objects, experiencing people, who speak and move about, offers a wealth of sensual variation. No moment is like the previous or the following when people circulate among people. The number of new situations and new stimuli is limitless. Furthermore, it concerns the most important subject in life: people.

Living cities, therefore, ones in which people can interact with one another, are always stimulating because they are rich in experiences, in contrast to lifeless cities, which can scarcely avoid being poor in experiences and thus dull, no matter how many colors and variations of shape in buildings are introduced.
If life between buildings is given favorable conditions through sensible planning of cities and housing areas alike, many costly and often stilted and strained attempts to make buildings "interesting" and rich by using dramatic architectural effects can be spared.

Life between buildings is both more relevant and more interesting to look at in the long run than are any combination of colored concrete and staggered building forms.

Inevitably, life between buildings is richer, more stimulating, and more rewarding than any combination of architectural ideas.


Below: Everyday scene.

activity as attraction

The value of the many large and small possibilities that are attached to the opportunity of being in the same space as and seeing and hearing other people is underlined by a series of observations investigating people’s reaction to the presence of other people in public spaces [15, 18, 24, 51].

Wherever there are people – in buildings, in neighborhoods, in city centers, in recreational areas, and so on – it is generally true that people and human activities attract other people. People are attracted to other people. They gather with and move about with others and seek to place themselves near others. New activities begin in the vicinity of events that are already in progress.

In the home we can see that children prefer to be where there are adults or where there are other children, instead of, for example, where there are only toys. In residential areas and in city spaces, comparable behavior among adults can be ob-
activity as attraction
served. If given a choice between walking on a deserted or a lively street, most people in most situations will choose the lively street. If the choice is between sitting in a private backyard or in a semiprivate front yard with a view of the street, people will often choose the front of the house where there is more to see (see page 38).

In Scandinavia an old proverb tells it all: “people come where people are.”

A series of investigations illustrates in more detail the interest in being in contact with others. Investigations of children’s play habits in residential areas [28, 39] show that children stay and play primarily where the most activity is occurring or in places where there is the greatest chance of something happening.

Both in areas with single-family houses and in apartment house surroundings, children tend to play more on the streets, in parking areas, and near the entrances of dwellings than in the play areas designed for that purpose but located in backyards of single-family houses or on the sunny side of multi-story buildings, where there are neither traffic nor people to look at.

Even when well-developed systems of parks and pedestrian routes are available, children of all ages spend most of their time outdoors in or alongside the access roads. (Survey of children’s play habits in single-family house areas in Denmark [29]).
activities and seating preferences

Below: All over the world sidewalk café chairs face the street life.
(Lijnbaan, Rotterdam, Holland.)
activities and seating preferences

Corresponding trends can be found regarding where people choose to sit in public spaces. Benches that provide a good view of surrounding activities are used more than benches with less or no view of others.

An investigation of Tivoli Garden in Copenhagen [36], carried out by the architect John Lyle, shows that the most used benches are along the garden’s main path, where there is a good view of the particularly active areas, while the least used benches are found in the quiet areas of the park. In various places, benches are arranged back to back, so that one of the benches faces a path while the other “turns its back.” In these instances it is always the benches facing the path that are used.

Comparable results have been found in investigations of seating in a number of squares in central Copenhagen. Benches with a view of the most trafficked pedestrian routes are used most, while benches oriented toward the planted areas of the squares are used less frequently [15, 18, 27].

At sidewalk cafés, as well, the life on the sidewalk in front of the café is the prime attraction. Almost without exception café chairs throughout the world are oriented toward the most active area nearby. Sidewalks are, not unexpectedly, the very reason for creating sidewalk cafés.
attractions on a pedestrian street

Below: No one stops in front of banks and prestigious showrooms. Quite a few people stop to look at children's toys, photos, and other items related more directly to life and other people. By far the greatest number of people stop to watch other people and events.

The opportunity to see, hear, and meet others can also be shown to be one of the most important attractions in city centers and on pedestrian streets. This is illustrated by an attraction analysis carried out on Stroget, the main pedestrian street in central Copenhagen, by a study group from the School of Architecture at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts [15, 18]. The analysis was based on an investigation of where pedestrians stopped on the walking street and what they stopped to look at.

Fewest stops were noted in front of banks, offices, showrooms, and dull exhibits of, for example, cash registers, office furniture, porcelain, or hair curlers. Conversely, a great number of stops were noted in front of shops and exhibits that had a direct relationship to other people and to the surrounding social environment, such as newspaper kiosks, photography exhibits, film stills outside movie theaters, clothing stores, and toy stores.

Even greater interest was shown in the various human activities that went on in the street space itself. All forms of human activity appeared to be of major interest in this connection.
Considerable interest was observed in both the ordinary, everyday events that take place on a street – children at play, newlyweds on their way from the photographers, or merely people walking by – and in the more unusual instance – the artist with his easel, the street musician with his guitar, street painters in action, and other large and small events.

It was obvious that human activities, being able to see other people in action, constituted the area’s main attraction.

The street painters collected a large crowd as long as their work was in progress, but when they left the area, pedestrians walked over the paintings without hesitation. The same was true of music. Music blaring out on the street from loudspeakers in front of record shops elicited no reaction, but the moment live musicians began to play or sing, there was an instantaneous show of lively interest.

The attention paid to people and human activities was also illustrated by observations made in connection with the expansion of a department store in the area. While excavation and pouring of foundations were in progress, it was possible to see into the building site through two gates facing the pedestrian street. Throughout this period more people stopped to watch the work in progress on the building site than was the case for stops in front of all the department store’s fifteen display windows together.

In this case, too, it was the workers and their work, not the building site itself, that was the object of interest. This was demonstrated further during lunch breaks and after quitting time – when no workers were on the site, practically nobody stopped to look.

A summary of observations and investigations shows that people and human activity are the greatest object of attention and interest. Even the modest form of contact of merely seeing and hearing or being near to others is apparently more rewarding and more in demand than the majority of other attractions offered in the public spaces of cities and residential areas.

Life in buildings and between buildings seems in nearly all situations to rank as more essential and more relevant than the spaces and buildings themselves.
Life between buildings is discussed here because the extent and character of outdoor activities are greatly influenced by physical planning. Just as it is possible through choice of materials and colors to create a certain palette in a city, it is equally possible through planning decisions to influence patterns of activities, to create better or worse conditions for outdoor events, and to create lively or lifeless cities.

The spectrum of possibilities can be described by two extremes. One extreme is the city with multistory buildings, underground parking facilities, extensive automobile traffic, and long distances between buildings and functions. This type of city can be found in a number of North American and "modernized" European cities and in many suburban areas.

In such cities one sees buildings and cars, but few people, if any, because pedestrian traffic is more or less impossible, and because conditions for outdoor stays in the public areas near buildings are very poor. Outdoor spaces are large and impersonal. With great distances in the urban plan, there is nothing much to experience outdoors, and the few activities that do take place are spread out in time and space. Under these conditions most residents prefer to remain indoors in front of the television or on their balcony or in other comparably private outdoor spaces.

Another extreme is the city with reasonably low, closely spaced buildings, accommodation for foot traffic, and good areas for outdoor stays along the streets and in direct relation to residences, public buildings, places of work, and so forth. Here it is possible to see buildings, people coming and going, and people stopping in outdoor areas near the buildings because the outdoor spaces are easy and inviting to use. This city is a living city, one in which spaces inside buildings are supplemented with usable outdoor areas, and where public spaces are allowed to function.
quality improvements – in city streets

Each quality improvement in the city of Copenhagen has been closely followed by an increase in the use of the public spaces. The improvements have – literally speaking – given room to a much wider range of human activities. While the city population has not increased the interest in using public spaces passively and actively definitely has.
It has already been mentioned that the outdoor activities that are particularly dependent on the quality of the outdoor spaces are the optional, recreational activities, and by implication, a considerable part of the social activities.

It is these specially attractive activities that disappear when conditions are poor and that thrive where conditions are favorable.

The significance of quality improvement to daily and social activities in cities can be observed where pedestrian streets or traffic-free zones have been established in existing urban areas. In a number of examples, improved physical conditions have resulted in a doubling of the number of pedestrians, a lengthening of the average time spent outdoors, and a considerably broader spectrum of outdoor activities [17].

In a survey recording all activities occurring in the center of Copenhagen during the spring and summer of 1986, it was found that the number of pedestrian streets and squares in the city center had tripled between 1968 and 1986. Parallel to this improvement of the physical conditions, a tripling in the number of people standing and sitting was recorded.
In cases where neighboring cities offer varying conditions for city activities, great differences can also be found.

In Italian cities with pedestrian streets and automobile-free squares, the outdoor city life is often much more pronounced than in the car-oriented neighboring cities, even though the climate is the same.

A 1978 survey of street activities in both trafficked and pedestrian streets in Sydney, Melbourne, and Adelaide, Australia, carried out by architectural students from the University of Melbourne and the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology found a direct connection between street quality and street activity. In addition, an experimental improvement of increasing the number of seats by 100 percent on the pedestrian street in Melbourne resulted in an 88 percent increase in seated activities.

William H. Whyte, in his book *The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces* [51], describes the close connection between qualities of city space and city activities and documents how often quite simple physical alterations can improve the use of the city space noticeably.

Comparable results have been achieved in a number of improvement projects executed in New York and other U.S. cities by the Project for Public Spaces [41].

In residential areas as well, both in Europe and the United States, traffic reduction schemes, courtyard clearing, laying out of parks, and comparable outdoor improvements have had a marked effect.

Conversely, the effect of the deterioration of quality on activities in ordinary residential streets is illustrated by a study of three neighboring streets in San Francisco, carried out in 1970–71 by Appleyard and Lintell [24].
The study shows the dramatic effect of increased traffic in two of the streets, all of which formerly had a modest rate of traffic.

In the street where there was only little traffic (2,000 vehicles per day), a great number of outdoor activities were registered. Children played on sidewalks and in the streets. Entranceways and steps were used widely for outdoor stays, and an extensive network of neighbor contacts was noted.

In one of the other streets, where the traffic volume was greatly increased (16,000 vehicles per day), outdoor activities became practically nonexistent. Comparably, neighbor contacts in this street were poorly developed.

In the third street, with middle to high traffic intensity (8,000 vehicles per day), a surprisingly great reduction in outdoor activities and neighbor contacts was noted, emphasizing that even a relatively limited deterioration of the quality of the outdoor environment can have a disproportionately severe negative effect on the extent of outdoor activities.
Two housing areas located next to each other, just south of Copenhagen. Both areas were built 1973-75 and are inhabited by comparable groups. Galgebakken (area G), has a markedly better designed and detailed arrangement of outdoor spaces compared to the area below, Hyldepraellet (area H). All dwellings in area G have a private backyard as well as a semiprivate front yard, whereas the dwellings in area H are provided with a backyard only. A study of all outdoor activities in both areas taking place on Saturdays in the summer months of 1980 and 1991 showed that outdoor activities occurred at a 35 percent higher rate in area G. Front-yard activities in area G were found to be the determining factor for this substantial difference.

Above: Plan of the two areas 1:2,500.
Top: Access lane with front yards, area G.
Bottom: Access lane, area H.
In summarizing the studies, a close relationship between outdoor quality and outdoor activities can be noted.

In at least three areas, it appears possible, in part through the design of the physical environment, to influence the activity patterns in public spaces in cities and residential areas. Within certain limits – regional, climatic, societal – it is possible to influence how many people and events use the public spaces, how long the individual activities last, and which activity types can develop.

The fact that a marked increase of outdoor activities is often seen in connection with quality improvements emphasizes that the situation found in a specific area at a certain time frequently gives an incomplete indication of the need for public spaces and outdoor activities, which can indeed exist in the area. The establishment of a suitable physical framework for social and recreational activities has time after time revealed a suppressed human need that was ignored at the outset.

When the main street in Copenhagen was converted to a pedestrian street in 1962 as the first such scheme in Scandinavia, many critics predicted that the street would be deserted because “city activity just doesn’t belong to the northern European tradition.” Today this major pedestrian street, plus a number of other pedestrian streets later added to the system, are filled to capacity with people walking, sitting, playing music, drawing, and talking together. It is evident that the initial fears were unfounded and that city life in Copenhagen had been so limited because there was previously no physical possibility for its existence.

In a number of new Danish residential areas as well, where physical possibilities for outdoor activity have been established in the form of high-quality public spaces, activity patterns that no one had believed possible in Danish residential areas have evolved.

Just as it has been noted that automobile traffic tends to develop concurrently with the building of new roads, all experience to date with regard to human activities in cities and in proximity to residences seems to indicate that where a better physical framework is created, outdoor activities tend to grow in number, duration, and scope.
In cities throughout Europe, medieval urban spaces are exceptionally well suited to urban outdoor activities by virtue of their spatial qualities and ample dimensioning. Urban spaces from later periods are much less successful in this respect, generally tending to be too large, too wide, and too straight.

Left: Rothenburg ob der Tauber, a well-preserved medieval city in southern Germany.

Martina Franca, Apulia, southern Italy. The differences between the spontaneously derived and the planned areas are evident. The intimate knowledge of human scale that characterizes medieval cities cannot be found in the newer, professionally planned urban areas.
Having noted in the preceding chapters a number of positive qualities related to life between buildings and having demonstrated that the scope and character of outdoor activities are greatly influenced by the physical environment, it is natural for us to examine the extent to which urban planning principles and architectural trends of different historical periods have influenced outdoor activities and thus the social outdoor activities as well.

In Europe, well-preserved cities from nearly all periods within the last thousand years still exist. Freely evolved as well as planned medieval cities abound. Renaissance and baroque cities, cities from the early phases of industrialization, garden cities inspired by romanticism, and, not least, functionalistic, automobile-dominated cities of the past fifty years are manifold. Today it is possible to compare and evaluate these city layouts on a relatively uniform basis, because they are still in use.

With regard to form, seemingly great variations exist between the different city models, especially from an art-historical point of view, yet in reality only two noteworthy radical developments in connection with the present discussion of urban planning ideologies and outdoor activities have occurred: one in relation to the Renaissance, and one in relation to the modern functionalism movement.

Professional planning as it is known today, in which experts design the city on paper and in models, to build and deliver later complete to the clients, has its historical origins in the Renaissance. Planning and planners did exist in some earlier periods, as evidenced by a number of Greek and Roman cities, but with the exception of a small group of planned late-medieval colonial cities, the cities that grew up in the period from around AD 500 to AD 1500 were not planned in the true sense. They developed where there was a need for them, shaped by the residents of the city in a direct city-building process.
It is important to note that these cities did not develop based on plans but rather evolved through a process that often took many hundreds of years, because this slow process permitted continual adjustment and adaptation of the physical environment to the city functions. The city was not a goal in itself, but a tool formed by use.

The result of this process, which was based on a multitude of collected experiences, was urban spaces that even today offer extremely good conditions for life between buildings.

Many medieval cities and self-evolved small towns are increasingly popular as tourist attractions, objects of study, and desirable residential cities in contemporary times because they have precisely these qualities.

By virtue of their evolution, these cities and city spaces have built-in qualities that are found only in a few exceptional cases in cities from later periods. Nearly all medieval towns illustrate this. Not only are the streets and squares arranged with concern for people moving about and staying outdoors, but the city builders appear to have had remarkable insight concerning the fundamentals for this planning.

An unusually fine example is the Piazza del Campo in Siena. With its enclosed spatial design, its orientation with regard to sun and climate, its bowl-formed section, and its meticulously placed fountains and bollards, it is ideally arranged to function as a meeting place and public living room for its citizens, both then and now.

Twice since the Middle Ages has the basis for city planning been radically changed.

The first radical change took place during the Renaissance and has direct relation to the transition from freely evolved to planned cities. A special group of professional planners assumed the work of building cities and developed theories and ideas about how cities ought to be.

The city was no longer merely a tool but became to a greater degree a work of art, conceived, perceived, and executed as a whole. No longer were the areas between buildings and the functions to be contained in them the major points of interest, but rather the spatial effects, the buildings, and the artists who had shaped them took precedence.

In this period it was primarily the appearance of the city and its buildings - the visual aspects - that were developed and transformed into criteria for good architecture and urban design. Concurrently, certain functional aspects were examined,
The Renaissance – the visual aspects

Left: Palmanova, Italy (1593). City plan in bird’s-eye perspective.
Below: Eighteenth-century royal park in Drottningholm, Sweden, and central axis in a Danish public housing development (1965).
in particular the problems involved with defense, transportation, and formalized social functions such as parades and processions. The most important development in the basis for planning, however, concerned the visual expression of cities and buildings.

In Palmanova, the star-formed Renaissance city built by Scamozzi in 1593 north of Venice, all the streets have the same width – 14 meters (46 ft.) – regardless of purpose and placement in the city plan. In contrast with the medieval town, these dimensions are not determined primarily by use but by other, mostly formal considerations. This is also true of the city square, Piazza Grande, which, because of the geometry, is 30,000 square meters (325,000 sq.ft.) or more than twice as large as the Campo in Siena. For this reason it is quite unusable as a town square in this little town. On the other hand, the city plan is an interesting graphic work that, like so many other Renaissance-inspired plans, bears witness to being created on the drawing board.

The conscious awareness of the visual aspects of city planning during this period and the aesthetics formulated in this context decisively formed the basis for the architectural treatment of these problems in succeeding centuries.

The second important development of the basis for planning took place around 1930 under the name of functionalism. During this period the physical-functional aspects of cities and buildings were developed as a planning dimension independent from and supplementary to aesthetics.

The basis for functionalism was primarily the medical knowledge that had been developed during the 1800s and the first decades of the 1900s. This new and extensive medical knowledge was the background for a number of criteria for healthy and physiologically suitable architecture around 1930. Dwellings were to have light, air, sun, and ventilation, and the residents were to be assured access to open spaces. The requirements for detached buildings oriented toward the sun and not, as they had been previously, toward the street, and the requirement for separation of residential and work areas were formulated during this period in order to assure the individual healthy living conditions and to distribute the physical benefits more fairly.

If we will demand residences of equally high hygienic standard for all, then the requirement of direct access to sunlight for all dwellings will come to give the new residential
Top: Emphasis on sun, light, and open spaces and the elimination of public urban spaces are clearly expressed in the illustrations accompanying the functionalistic manifesto of Le Corbusier. ("Concerning Town Planning" [36]).
Center: Condominiums in Toronto, Canada.
Below: Public housing in Berlin, G.D.R.
areas a completely new character. It is, therefore, a necessity
to have an open building principle with parallel buildings
positioned according to the sun: east-west in the case of
through-going apartments, otherwise north-south. The first-
named type of building has, however, the advantage in that it
permits cross ventilation and gives the residences a truly
effective sunny side [2].

The functionalists made no mention of the psychological and
social aspects of the design of buildings or public spaces. This
lack of interest is also evident regarding the public spaces. That
building design could influence play activities, contact patterns,
and meeting possibilities, to name a few examples, was not
considered. Functionalism was a distinctly physically and mate-
rially oriented planning ideology. One of the most noticeable
effects of this ideology was that streets and squares disappeared
from the new building projects and the new cities.

Throughout the entire history of human habitation, streets
and squares had formed focal points and gathering places, but
with the advent of functionalism, streets and squares were
literally declared unwanted. Instead, they were replaced by
roads, paths, and endless grass lawns.

In simplified form, the aesthetics formulated in the Renaissance
and further developed in the following centuries, and the func-
tionalist teachings regarding the physiological aspects of plan-
ing are the ideologies on which cities and housing have been
built in the years from 1930 and right up to the 1980s. These
concepts have been thoroughly examined in past years and
made specific in regulations and building codes. And it is these
concepts around which an important part of the work of archi-
tects and planners has been centered during those most impor-
tant decades when the majority of all construction in the indus-
trial countries has taken place.

In the 1930s no one could visualize how it would be to live in the
new cities when the architects' aesthetics and the functionalistic
ideas of healthy buildings became realities.

As an alternative to the existing dark, overpopulated, and
unhealthy workers' housing, the new, light multistory blocks
offered many obvious advantages, and it was easy to argue in
their favor.

In the functionalistic manifestos the "romantic languishing"
in the old cities was energetically addressed.
The consequences for the social environment were not discussed, because it was not recognized that buildings also had great influence on outdoor activities and consequently on a number of social possibilities. No one wishes to reduce or exclude valuable social activities. On the contrary, it was thought that the extensive grass areas between the buildings would be the obvious location for many recreational activities and a rich social life. Perspective drawings teemed with life and activities. The extent to which these visions of the function of green spaces as the unifying element in building projects were correct was not challenged or investigated.

Not until twenty to thirty years later, in the 1950s and 1960s, when the big functionalistic multistory residential cities had been built, was it possible to evaluate the consequences of a one-sided physical-functional planning basis.

A review of just a small selection of the most common planning principles from functionalistic building projects illustrates the effects of this type of planning in relation to life between buildings.

The spreading and thinning out of dwellings assured light and air but also caused an excessive thinning of people and events. Differentiation in function among dwellings, factories, public buildings, and so on may have reduced the physiological disadvantages, but it has also reduced the possible advantages of closer contact.

Great distances between people, events, and functions characterize the new city areas. Transportation systems, based on the automobile, further contributed to reducing outdoor activities. In addition, the mechanical and insensitive spatial design of individual building projects has had a dramatic effect on outdoor activities.

The term “desert planning” introduced by Gordon Cullen in his book *Townscape* [10] most accurately describes the consequences of functionalistic planning.

Parallel to the development of functionalistic multistory buildings, low, open, single-family housing areas, made possible by the increased use of automobiles, have been extensively developed in a number of countries, including Scandinavia, the United States, Canada, and Australia.

In these areas desirable conditions have been created in the form of gardens for private outdoor activities; at the same time communal outdoor activities have been reduced to a bare
These examples illustrate how postwar planning has significantly influenced life between buildings. Life has literally been built out of these new areas, not as a part of a well-thought-out planning concept but as a by-product of a long series of other considerations.

While the medieval city with its design and dimensions collected people and events in streets and squares and encouraged pedestrian traffic and outdoor stays, the functionalistic suburban areas and building projects do precisely the opposite.
The post modern revolt against the rigidity of modernism has produced a great number of strained and stilted buildings designed with a greater emphasis on artistic statement than on the usefulness to the inhabitants.

On the other hand it has been demonstrated in a number of cases that contemporary architecture can cater to and enhance the daily life in and between buildings. Care and consideration in the design process make all the difference.

These new areas reinforce the reduction and spreading of outdoor activities that over the same span of years resulted from changes in industrial production and from a number of other social conditions.

If a team of planners at any time had been given the task of doing what they could to reduce life between buildings, they hardly could have achieved more thoroughly what has inadvertently been done in the sprawling suburban areas, as well as in numerous “urban” redevelopment schemes.

Above: New housing project, Rotterdam, Holland.

Below: Kreige College, Santa Cruz, California, built around a carefully laid out street. (Architects: Charles Moore and W. Turnbull.)
It is hardly a coincidence that criticism of functionalism, of the new urban areas, and of the sprawling suburbs primarily has been directed specifically toward the neglected, the destroyed, and the missing public spaces.

The telephone, television, video, home computers, and so forth have introduced new ways of interacting. Direct meetings in public spaces can now be replaced by indirect telecommunication. Active presence, participation, and experience can now be substituted with passive picture watching, seeing what others have experienced elsewhere. The automobile has made it possible to replace active participation in spontaneous local social activities with a drive to see selected friends and attractions.

Abundant possibilities do exist for compensating for what has been lost. Precisely for this reason, the fact that there is still widespread criticism of the neglected public spaces is indeed thought provoking.

Something is missing.

That something is missing is illustrated emphatically by widespread popular protests against physical planning as it is practiced, evidenced in debates on city and residential environments and the organization of residents around demands for improvement of the physical environment. Typical demands include better conditions for pedestrian and bicycle traffic, better conditions for children and the elderly and a better framework in general for recreational and social community functions.

That something is missing has been expressed by a new generation of architects and planners in a strong clash with modernism and the sprawling suburbs. The very revival of the city as a major architectural objective, including the careful planning of public spaces – streets, squares, parks – interprets and channels the wave of popular protest.
That something is missing has been further emphasized in recent years by a number of developmental trends in western industrial society [9].

Family patterns change. The average family size has decreased. In Scandinavia it is down to 2.2 people. The demand for easily accessible social opportunities outside the home is growing accordingly. The composition of the population is changing as well. In general there are fewer children and more adults. The situation in which 20 percent of the population is composed of old people, in good health, with ten, twenty, or even thirty years to enjoy after retirement, is becoming common in many industrial countries. In Scandinavia, this population group, which has a great deal of free time, is the most frequent user of city spaces. If the spaces are worth using, they are used.

Finally, the situation in the workplace also is changing rapidly. Many jobs have been emptied of social and creative contents by technology and efficiency measures. And technological development usually means a reduction of both the work load and the amount of time spent at work. More people have more time, and at the same time a number of social and creative needs must be satisfied through outlets other than the traditional workplace.

The residential area, the city, and the public spaces— from the community center to the main square—form a possible physical framework for satisfying a number of these new demands.

The changed conditions in urban societies are expressed most clearly by recent changes in street life patterns.

Throughout the world automobile-dominated city centers have been transformed into pedestrian street systems. Life in the public spaces has increased markedly, well above and beyond the extended commercial activities. A comprehensive social and recreational city life has developed.

In Copenhagen, for example, the transformation began in 1962. Since then, more and more pedestrian streets have been created. City life has, year by year, grown in scope, in creativity, and in ingenuity [16]. Various folk festivals and a huge, very popular carnival have emerged. Nobody had believed such events were possible in Scandinavia. Now they exist because they are needed. Even more important, everyday activities have grown in scope and number. A 1986 survey of street life in downtown Copenhagen reveals a tripling of social and recreational activities over the past fifteen years. The city has not grown in this period, but definitely street life has. (See page 35).
Comparably, public spaces in new residential areas are used more when these spaces have the requisite quality. The public spaces are needed. The need for spaces of all types and sizes is obvious – from the little residential street to the city square.

Criticisms, reactions, and visions concerning the improvement of living conditions and cities form the basis for the following examination of the physical framework for life between buildings.

As a starting point, no comprehensive, ambitious program will be outlined. On the contrary, it is a prime concept that everyday life, ordinary situations, and spaces in which daily life is lived must form the center of attention and effort. This concept is expressed by three modest, yet fairly broad requirements of public spaces:

- desirable conditions for the necessary outdoor activities
- desirable conditions for the optional, recreational activities
- desirable conditions for the social activities

To be able to move about easily and confidently, to be able to linger in cities and building complexes, to be able to take pleasure in spaces, buildings, and city life, and to be able to meet and get together with other people – informally or in more organized fashion – these are fundamental to good cities and good building projects today, as in the past.

The importance of these requirements cannot be overestimated. They are modest demands that aim for a better and more useful framework for everyday activities. On the other hand, a good physical framework for life between buildings and for communal activities is, in all circumstances, a valuable, independent quality, and – perhaps – a beginning.