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GEHL ARCHITECTS – URBAN QUALITY CONSULTANTS IS A MULTIDISCIPLINARY OFFICE LOCATED IN COPENHAGEN, DENMARK. WE ARE INTERESTED IN WHY SOME PLACES END UP BECOMING UNINTERESTING, UNSAFE AND DESERTED ... WHILE OTHER PLACES ARE INCLUSIVE, INSPIRING, SAFE AND LIVELY.

1. Can you measure what you care about?

At Gehl Architects we always focus at people first. Often in cities we know everything about their finances, about the transit systems or cars, but we know very little about the people who actually use cities and how they use public space. Cities are for meeting, for transport, for marketing, but first and foremost they are for people. Cities have traditionally been tailored to "homo sapiens" as an animal that has developed for millions of years with a certain sensory apparatus. Traditional cities are therefore geared for us as a walking, standing animal moving at 5 km/hr and not driving in a car. That explains for much of the differences that we experience in modern cities vs classical cities. We try to work with that and incorporate these ideas on human senses as the most important design parameter when we design cities. So first we work with life in the cities, secondly with the spaces that can support the kind of life we want to encourage and, thirdly, we look at the buildings needed to support the life of the city.

We've been working with New York City from 2007-10. Times Square is a good example of poor prioritization of space. 90% of the area was dedicated to cars even though 400,000 people crossed the space every day – against only 65,000 cars. To

start to change this culture around the city, we did a series of "pilot projects". We set our goals to have a better functioning system even for cars, a solution where cars could go faster and more efficiently. We took out a series of these nodes and more than 40,000 m² of car space along Broadway, and turned them into pedestrian and commercial zones. In Times Square, we engaged in a long process of collaboration with the local building owners and the people who lived in the area. We asked them: "what would you like? How can we support your business? How can the culture in your neighborhood be better? Would you like spaces where you can relax, spaces for cafés? Today the spaces are among the most used places in Midtown Manhattan and the local economy has benefitted immensely.

2. How can we promote or 'nudge' people to align their habits with the needs of the planet?

We address global trends with a people focused approach, utilizing empirical analysis to understand how the built environment can promote human flourishing. The obesity epidemic in the Western world and also in parts of the developing world is really affecting our economy. As individuals and as a society, we need to react to a different way of planning a city. When investing in public transport is only worthwhile if it people choose to use it and a building is only sustainable if it is part of a sustainable network. Another way of getting people in a city to think and act differently in the city is to invite or "nudge" them to behave more sustainably.

After a series of devastating earthquakes, the citizens of Christchurch, New Zealand engaged in a comprehensive public participation process in which 106, 000 ideas were collected. Embedded in the City Council, Gehl Architects synthesized this input into a redevelopment plan for the Central City. This plan will in effect "nudge" a more mobility orientated use of the city with a focus on a denser, greener and vibrant city centre for the reconstructed city. Christchurch has great potential to become an attractive living city for the 21st century.

3. Do more with less - Can we more efficiently utilize our existing space and buildings rather than building new ones?

Gehl Architects are interested in creating holistic sustainability in cities. This means rethinking how we use our cities in a new way. Most cities are characterized by Urban Redundancy – as many public buildings sit under-utilized up to 85% - 95% of the time. This is in our beliefs not an effective or sustainable way of urban land use.

Melbourne is an example of a city we have worked with that has created urban densification through allowing more residential units on top of existing buildings. Through this scheme the city has created more than 28.000 dwellings within the city centre thus utilizing the existing urban networks and strengthen both the economy and public life in the city.

Camilla van Deurs at the international conference »Building the City Anew« on June 21 in Hamburg.