"Changes, dysfunctions and conflicts of uses in the public space"

Copenhagen, 18th -19th April 2013

FINAL REPORT

Main ideas, findings and   learning's

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Introduction

This report just wants to highlight the main ideas, findings and learning's of the Copenhagen thematic seminar. It is only focused in the thematic issue of the seminar: **Changes, dysfunctions and conflict of uses in the public space**. Thus, it doesn't touch aspects linked to other topics as procedures and organization of the seminar. Likewise the report entails a sort of selection or choice lead by the author, the lead expert. The report wants to highlight and emphasize those aspects and dimensions of the theme that are relevant for the collective learning within the USER network.

As it was evoked in the previous "Position Paper" the seminar becomes an opportunity to achieve a better knowledge of the type of conflicts and dysfunctions that are taking place around the different USER cities. Different type of urban areas and the nature of users and uses in each one should be identified and analysed to achieve new findings and knowledge as a result of the exchange process. They are summarized in the present report.

Inputs coming from outside the USER community

"Types and needs of uses are not always in coherence with allocated public spaces"

Camilla van Deurs, (Gehl Architects, Denmark)

People first: what do they do and need, what kind of public spaces are needed, what kind of buildings should support those public spaces.

The public life is changing and the public spaces should change. City is increasingly used and we need flexibility of uses. Types of uses are not in coherence with allocated public spaces. We need free cars areas, for leisure, traffic calming.

We have to distinguish between public spaces that are frequently used by necessity, independently from the urban shape and quality (streets for walking and move), and public spaces that have no compulsory use, that are optional. In this case frequentation will depend on its quality and attractiveness.

Three main questions are the following:

> ➤ Can you measure what you care about? Cities have not departments for pedestrians in public life. Cities collect data on traffic not pedestrians. We

should observe and study people's behaviours and needs. We have to distinguish between using and occupying the city.

➢ How can we promote new public spaces among users, boosting and nudging uses? We need to invite people, not to force them, inducing behaviours change.

➢ Can we do more with less (financial issues)? People, links between people and urban mobility are resources that we have to "invest" in achieving good public spaces.

➢ Temporary uses in those places that have a long term planning process become a very important issue.

➢ The relevance of conflicts: if there are no conflicts, there are no different interests, and therefore a lack of vibrancy.

"Building coalitions of interests to improve public spaces"

Peter Williams, (The Means, UK - Better Bankside Business Improvement District in London)

Acceleration of urbanization is taking place all over the world. Globalization is a key element to analyse public spaces. Therefore, we need to exchange at different scales defining vocations of different public spaces (international, regional, local...).

Privatization is a real threat and risk for public spaces. It doesn't deal with an ideological approach.

To improve public spaces avoiding privatization, coalition of interest should be built. Strong partnerships involving local authorities, private firms, residents associations, developers, think tanks.

Green infrastructures, gardens, temporary public art installation, temporary facilities built by developers, could be implemented through local partnerships. Corporate social responsibility should be invoked to involve private companies.

When we work in small neighbourhoods, there are big opportunities if we link the small area with the larger area it belongs to. Improving small public spaces, spaces between buildings, is not contradictory with economic development.

Peter gave examples of a partnership model with the private sector, which has helped to fund both large and small projects such as a pedestrian footbridge, an urban forest, and an urban orchard. Better Bankside has also pioneered temporary uses of public spaces, such as platforms for performance and making books about local history.

Using public spaces in Copenhagen. Site visits.

Sundholm: How to ensure conviviality and mixed uses with affirmative action for vulnerable social groups.

Historically the area was a labour camp for undesirables, set up in 1908 for the city of Copenhagen to send its destitute, vagrants and beggars to live on a self-sufficient farm.

This was the city planning solution to marginalised groups of that era. Over the years the area in Amager West has become more integrated with the city, with a social housing estate, schools, public transport connections and cycle tracks. In 2004 an Improvement Plan was created with the message of WIMBY 'Welcome in My Back Yard'. The idea is to better connect Sundholm to the rest of the city, to encourage more Copenhagen residents to live in or visit the area. Sundholm's history was to lock in the problems, away from the city. Now they are trying to make bridges and open windows between these worlds.

Building on the farming history and Copenhagen's culture of urban gardening a new field has been created with raised boxes inviting all locals to come and plant flowers and food. One of the innovations is a bee keeping enterprise involving local schoolchildren and homeless people

There is a political wish to build middle-income apartments for families – this is now done in Sundholm between a so-called

ghetto and Sundholm as a historical social institution for disadvantaged groups. The challenges are: can the newcomers cope with the life that is lived between the buildings in Sundholm? Can changes in public space create a safer area for both new inhabitants and for people living in the streets? Can involvement and social organisation minimize assaults made by youngsters towards the homeless?

Sundholm shows that in certain cases, a vulnerable social group should be positively discriminated ("affirmative action"), giving them some kind of preferences to use (or to occupy) a specific public space, because in the rest of the city they have been usually discriminated and aggressed. Despite this political choice, conviviality and mixed users remains as a value that should be addressed, (by definition a public spaces is an opened space without restrictions to get in) perhaps in other time, once initial practices of mixed uses has been developed. Nobody wants to create ghettos. In other words Sundholm experience shows that building a convivial space with mixed users is not something to be quickly reached, and that not always the lack of mixed uses becomes a failure.

Prags boulevard: Urban connections and sense of belonging through a new civic axis.

Prags Boulevard project has created a civic axis between an industrial zone and a residential area in Copenhagen. Participatory workshops were performed to establish the specific characteristics of the different sections along this axis.

The citizens involved in the process wished to change the road into a recreational park like space connecting the neighbourhood from the shopping area, through the residential area to the industrial site. Distributed along the strip is a series of different uses that are like bulges along the path. They attempt to provide a pause in movement along what otherwise is a transit space. These functions include planting areas, seating areas, playgrounds, a couple of community buildings and, at the termination, a skate ramp.

The park has been divided into 7 areas with names that tell a little story of the use: for example the garden, the stage, the court. Special lamps and park furniture has been designed to add a special feeling of belonging – 700 steel chairs with the park name inscribed has been given to cafes, shops and business in the area, to put in front of their own building – still connecting the different bits of the park in one long green spine. The park is 1.8 km, build in 2005 and had a cost around 2.7 meuros.

While Prags Boulevard is undoubtedly a linear project, like a Boulevard, it could just as easily seem to be a bike or pedestrian path at the back of housing. Much of the project seems to be about trying to recast its "back-ness" as "front-ness", through an intensity of activity and elements.

A methodological contribution from <u>Barbara Allen</u> (CSTB – France):

Observing and analysing public spaces.

<u>Observing and analyzing / First step</u>

WHAT?

Design of the place
- Organization of the place
- Streets organization
- Buildings: size, design, first floor attributes (nice, welcoming, quality)
  Empty spaces, ambiguity of uses.
- Etc…

Urban Layout (how do they look like, appearance, diversity, quality…)
- Facilities (schools,
- Amenities (Shops, Banks,
- Green yard
- Benches
- Lights
- Water fountains
- Subway or buses stops
- Garbage's disposal (pertinence, functionality
- Etc…

Urban management
- Garbage disposal, (frequency et quality of pick up)
- Cleanliness and maintenance of streets and sidewalks
- Cleanliness of the whole space
- Maintenance of urban furniture
- Maintenance quality of greenery, trees…
- Quality of lighting
- Water flow systems
- Marking of parking places
- Etc…..

Users
- Who is using
- When are they using
- What do they do, how do they practice this space

WITH WHOM?

With different users

- Shops keepers, facilities manager, amenities manager etc…
- People working there (offices, shops), taxi drivers, bus conductor,
- People practicing the place (because they have to, because they live there, because they like to be there, because it's a specific spot …..
- Agents taking care of the place (urban management services)
- Any private or public actor having a part or wished to have a part in the project of improving the public space.
- Etc.

HOW?

- Walking diagnosis
- Visits

Observing and analyzing / Second step

- Deepening the analysis of the urban layout and design
- Analyzing the causes of urban management problems
- Observing uses and practices:
- Observing and analyzing who is using the place (people passing through, people coming to visit, people coming to work, people living there, tourists, etc.)
- At what time of the day, of the night,
- Are there specific uses, practices?
- are there specific conflict spots
- at what period of the day, the week, the year are there problems
- Are there dominant uses, marginal uses?
- Are there dominant types of users, groups etc.....
- Inquiry on uses and practices , proceeding to a light and street inquiry about what is wished to be known, understood
- Investigating the history of the place, how it was before, trying to put actual problems in a historical perspective to improve the understanding

A practical exercise

USER cities working on criteria and attributes of good public spaces

City	Criteria and attributes of the public space	Urban design	Urban layout	Urban management	Users and uses
Lisbon	Connectedness	urban void, lot of space but lack of public space, lack of proximity equipments, lack of local stores, lack of multilevel functions.	Lots of urban plan, lack of local participation in urban layout options, lack of public-private investment for the implementation phase of urban plan	Lack of commitment of the public sector for regular utilities, unsolved housing property issues, co-management of public space should be solved, lack of infrastructures.	Good links between the local inhabitants / NGOs /administrations.
Malaga (San Pablo place)	Mixed uses	No defined urban design, no car park facilities provided for residents	Lack of facilities	No traffic signs: car parks vs. pedestrian use, problems with waste collection.	Residents, meeting point (church location) transit path due to visibility (church tower), leisure meeting point (children, youth), and Easter very important procession
Pescara (Fontanelle Sambucetto)	Attractivity	Low quality in general (for instance lack of sidewalks)	Lack of public facilities. Private facilities (public uses)	Dirtiness, light system	Users don't identify the area as their own neighbourhood.
Lublin (Rybny square)	Conviviality	Inadequate. A wild square, bad lightening, no social integration, parking	Previously a place where people have to go through to go to another place, over the recent years it is becoming the place where people would like to go.	Quite neglected. Garbage's are collected. Monitoring needs.	Inhabitants, small restaurants (clients and owners, tourists, artists (nights of culture) film makers. Conflict os users: children playing football, car owners, restaurants.
Riga (Livu Square)	Walkability	Insufficient, seasonal	Satisfactory for some	Lack of signs and	Tourists groups, visitors of cafes,

		character, lack of infrastructure and street furniture	functions (i.e. restaurants and cafes, meeting points) but lack of multi-functionality: does not support transit functions, touristic uses.	information, poor quality of street surfaces, uneven pavements, slow snow-cleaning	daily users, transit walkers.
Krakow (Azory housing estate)	**Friendly and welcoming**	Deteriorated, ugly, old buildings, lack of new and well designed furniture (benches, lamps), no designed green spaces, only wild ones. Picture of chaos.	Lack of one central place, no identified point attracting people, bad delimitation of functions: housing, commercial, leisure, walkable or parking areas.	Bad maintenance (green spaces, pavements, roads) due to property conflicts. Lack of information (where am I?).	Elderly people, football fans, inhabitants.
Grenoble (Renaudie)	**Safety**	Closed public spaces without perspectives, complex urban shape that needs to be read, isolated neighbourhood, like and island, circulation of people is not clear, absence of main street, no man's land.	New urban lightening, no panels with street names, closed shops, vacant stores, no more health services	Lack of cleanliness, burning cars, vandalized furniture.	Feeling of darkness (depending of users) but it's changing with the urban renewal, people get lost, gathering of people (dealers, unemployed young people, and alcoholism), ground floors of flats are empty and therefore are fewer users.
Copenhagen (Sundholm)	**Safety**				Residents, meeting point (church location) transit path due to visibility (church tower), leisure meeting point (children, youth), and Easter very important procession

Main findings and learning's.
Key messages coming from the seminar.

We have to highlight that conflicts in using public spaces not always is negative, they give the opportunity to make changes, to question current uses, to avoid social exclusion of vulnerable groups and to find new solutions to ensure conviviality and mixed uses in public space.

We need to look at problems and dysfunctions but considering the potentialities and assets that always exist in public spaces.

There is a previous political choice: Public space is the society space and where citizenship takes place and can be exercised, where people shouldn't be excluded and rejected.

Likewise, regarding urban sustainability and the adoption of a compact city approach, living together and sharing public spaces become even more relevant.

Therefore, it was agreed that there is a common challenge regarding multi-used public spaces, integrating different uses and functions. How to absorb multiple uses (residents, tourists, workers) with variable intensity of uses along the year and along day time? How to balance combination of uses in a public space?

The trend to public space privatization is a big issue. Distinction between private activities and spaces and public activities addressed to achieve public goods, is a crucial point. Increasingly we have to deal with urban spaces where "my public space is not your public space".

In certain cases, a vulnerable social group should be positively discriminated ("affirmative action"), giving them some kind of preferences to use (or to occupy) a specific public space, because in the rest of the city they have been usually discriminated and aggressed. Sundholm urban spaces show the significance of creating and raising social interactions through the layout of a public space and the practices that it can facilitate.

In public space we have to respect other user's rights even if we don't like the way they use it. It was agreed that we need to intervene in civic education and citizen values, through awareness raising and campaigns, to achieve more convivial, comfortable and safer public spaces.

Discussion between partners showed the existence of a clear linkage between the design of public space, its management and the users practices. Dysfunctions can be solved if these different dimensions are addressed in an integrated way.

Likewise urban design and urban management need a strong involvement of stakeholders, clarifying who does what… And, obviously, we have to conceive and to implement public policies regarding public spaces in a context of reduction of public budget. It should be an incentive to value other kind of resources, (innovation, working with people, bottom up approach, etc.). It was pointed that the lack of communication between users of public space, urban designers and managers, is a major issue. Involvement of users is a key challenge.

Regarding local public policies and urban governance, working on public spaces and achieving good public spaces is an open door to go through other issues: social cohesion, economic development, cultural animation… The integrated approach arises as a crucial aspect to improve public spaces .

Annex

Highlighting uses (conflicts and solutions) of public spaces in 3 USER cities

KRAKOW

- Azory Housing Estate

Conflicts and dysfunctions:

- ➤ **Residential & commercial uses**: deteriorating condition of the buildings and municipal infrastructure, insufficient network of services, lack of separated "local centre"
- ➤ **Private, public and hybrid ownership**. Lack of effective regulation of land ownership issues has negative effects on the use, management and ongoing maintenance of the public areas
- ➤ **Intergenerational conflicts of uses:** space arrangement is not favourable to the elderly and the disabled
- ➤ **Different ways of displacement and transport, vehicles, pedestrians**: shortage of parking spaces, lack of bicycle lanes

- The Old Town "Cultural Park"

Conflicts and dysfunctions:

- ➤ residential, commercial, leisure and touristic uses
- ➤ schedule of uses (night time / day time)
- ➤ different ways of displacement - area generally excluded from vehicular traffic, at the same time excessive number of vehicles supporting tourist traffic leads to conflicts
- ➤ resident's interests vs. newcomers (toursists, students) or new uses
- ➤ ownership - a conflict between the private owners' interests (condition of the facade, advertising revenue) and the interests of all - the shape and design of the space

Solution: establishing the Cultural Park Old Town in 2010 with appropriate regulations concerning the development and use of public space improvement of the aesthetics of space: reducing the nuisance related to the organization of outdoor events, increase in the number of legal elements: signs, booms, cabinets, tables and awnings from 22% to 53.3% (comparing data from the end of 2011 and 2012) in the Main Market

- The Vistula River Boulevards

Conflicts and dysfunctions:

- ➤ leisure and touristic uses: the limitations resulting from flood protection lead to limited use of space

- different ways of displacement and transport, vehicles, pedestrians: the existing communication system is based on five road bridges, with near zero suitability for walking and cycling
- spatial and functional disintegration: river with boulevards is a barrier separating the two parts of the city; noticeable disproportions in functionality and use of each of the side resulting from lack of sufficient number of cross connections

Solution - footbridge for pedestrians and cyclists
Results:
- increase in the intensity of walking and cycling between the two banks
- a new tourist and leisure string connecting two districts: Kazimierz and the old Podgórze
- significant changes in the use of public space along the pedestrian string - new shops, restaurants and barges at the bank of the river
- change in function and appearance of the Podgórze district space - previously "neglected" and underinvested spaces and objects have been subjected to modernization

RIGA

Līvu Square

Conflicts and dysfunctions
- Divided ownership of properties – fragmented urban situation
- Temporary uses of historic plots in public space
- Legislation and regulations are not enough inter-realated
- Conflicts between different ways of displacement and transport - pedestrians, cyclists, aggressive bicycle rickshaw movement (noise, cross main pedestrian flows), vehicles
- Insufficient accessibility of public space (quality of surfaces, accessibility, signage)
- Impact on residents (schedule of different times of season/week/day)
- Various kinds of disturbances (noise, smells from restaurants etc.)
- Poor quality of urban design solutions
- Demand for public space exceeds its limits (physical space, benches, divided and various functions)
- Gathering place for Homeless and other excluded persons
- Not enough co-ordinated cleaning/maintenance works

Possible steps
- Private initiative SIA "Vecrīgas vīzijas"
- 2012 open architectural competition for urban and architectural proposals
- 2013:Discussion is still open for further decisions and development of square
- USER approach "feel free to imagine"

Spīķeri Block

Conflicts and dysfunctions

- Closed "Island"

- Temporary uses of empty spaces
- Lack of multi-functionality
- Embankment of Daugava - overburdened by traffic (transport cross main possible pedestrian flows)
- Insufficient accessibility of public space (functions, quality of surfaces, accessibility - connections)
- Parking plot nearby riverside of Daugava
- Social diversity
- Homeless and other excluded populations using the public space
  o Involves municipality, state and private owners (need of cooperatation

SUCCESS KEY FACTORS:
  o Large private inputs and investments
  o Private initiative "creative industries block" + activity
  o Riga City Council financial input for reconstruction

PESCARA

Fontanelle Sambuceto

Conflicts and dysfunctions
- Abandoned green areas
- Dirtiness
- Brownfield
- Promiscuity residential-industrial
- Lack of sidewalks
- Lack of urban quality
- Little phenomena of social deviance

"Green Spine" Local Action Plan

  o **Participatory planning** (identify the user's needs through participatory methodologies)
  o **Detailed design** (translate the identified needs in technical documents)
  o **Experimental realization** (carry out the realization of a low cost public space)