Jane Jacobs & vibrant city life

How do you produce these conditions?

As opposed to these conditions?

How to create places like this: Bryant Park

Empire State Plaza, Albany

As opposed to this
Jane Jacobs starts from the experience of walking on city sidewalks

How to create a successful urban street even on cloudy days?

“Bedrock attribute of a successful city is that a person must feel personally safe & secure on the street among strangers”

“A well-used street is a safe street

“The public peace is not kept primarily by the police. It’s kept primarily by an intricate, almost unconscious, network of voluntary controls & standards among people themselves & enforced by people themselves.”

“Public interaction without private commitment”
“You can’t make people use streets they have no reason to use…

The basic requirement (for success) is a substantial quantity of stores & other public places sprinkled along the sidewalks of a district; enterprises & public spaces that are used by evening and night must be among them especially.”

But how do you create these conditions?

#1: Frequent doors, openings produce activity

Places of interest that pull you along

Rather than blank & boring walls

Buildings designed to activate …..
Uses that generate high volumes of pedestrians

Buildings that spill out onto the sidewalk

....and put “eyes on the street’

Celebrates formal role of NYC doorman

Informal: shop owners who watch over the street

Keep an eye on the sidewalk
Scale is much easier in pre-high rise, pre-auto city

16th century place thriving as tourist destination

Preserved, medieval city of Bruges, Belgium

Curving walkable, human-scale lanes
Medieval city of Bruges, Belgium

Thrives as a seasonal tourist destination
Not a 365 day working city

But if you are trying to create a competitive 21st century city

If you trying to accommodate explosive growth

In an historic setting

How to preserve human scale of historic city?
Frequent doors & openings
#2: What’s upstairs must be “mixed primary uses”

Uses that generate activity by day & not only at rush hour and lunchtime

Like the single use traditional downtown

Uses that generate activity at night: Arts & entertainment

Mixed primary uses: office, hotel & residential
Create foot traffic at different times of day

Add an outpatient medical building
& a hospital & get even more diverse foot traffic

On campuses: classrooms, offices & dorms

Evening classes

Add hotel & bookstore & there are more reasons for people to be on the street, more diverse hours

The more mixed, the better, but all upper floor uses....

Also need to get the ground floor right!
Primary mixed uses + frequent doors & openings on ground floor
High-rise buildings 1960s-1970s on podiums

Buildings separated from the street grid

Strong revival of West Chestnut Street

Nordstrom Rack

Bloomingdales
2015: first time in the 5 years CCD has done 24 hr pedestrian counts, West Chestnut exceeded W. Walnut Not just rush hour: all day

Surrounding density & mixed use creates the foot-traffic for Chestnut & Walnut Streets

Density has an economic value in-itself

The essence of cities is “the absence of physical space between people & companies. [Cities] are proximity, density, closeness. They enable us to work & play together, & their success depends on the demand for physical connection.”

Density creates economies of scale & robust labor markets

Density fosters innovation & creates opportunities
Midtown Manhattan: 920 jobs per acre

Chicago: 294 jobs per acre = thick labor market

Center City 203 jobs/acre; Philadelphia 4 jobs/acre
Region >1 job/acre

University City, 85 jobs/acre

It takes surrounding density to create value in open space
Piazza Navona, Rome

Surrounding density around Millennium Park
Surrounding density around Central Park

Rittenhouse Square: Density + diversity of landuse

Design of places matters too
Multiple entrances provide ease of access

Enable use of the park as a destination or short-cut

Ease of entry

Because of diverse, adjacent land-use: office workers
Bike messengers

Construction workers & day-care providers

Seniors & young children

College students & parents

Plenty of places from which to watch other people

Surrounding retail: eyes on the park
Clear views into the park

As opposed to these conditions at MSB plaza
The city as fortress

Gathering & focal points

Post Office square in Boston

Santa Monica’s Third Street Promenade

Millennium Park, Chicago
William Whyte focused attention on little details

“...It is difficult to design a space that will not attract people...what is remarkable is how often this has been accomplished.”

Great streets & places are created by paying attention to small details

“You can’t make people use streets they have no reason to use. The basic requirement (for success) is a substantial quantity of stores & other public places sprinkled along the sidewalks of a district; enterprises & public spaces that are used by evening and night must be among them especially.”

Jane Jacobs, The Death and Life of Great American Cities, 1961

Great streets & places are created by paying attention to small details

Celebration of intimately scaled streets

Getting obsessed with small-scale & incremental approaches to revival

Convention Centers, stadiums, aquariums, cultural centers, enclosed malls - these are about politics & development profitable for a few, not about developing local economies, enlivening downtowns, or stimulating revitalization.

Downtowns compete for these headline-grabbing, budget-straining projects, but overlook the actual complex cities in which they sit...and detract attention from complicated, fundamental difficulties”

Roberta Gratz, Cities: Back from the Edge

Big is not bad, It’s only bad, if it’s badly designed

Empire State Plaza, Albany

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Empire State Plaza, Albany
Direct ramps from the expressway to the garage

40,000 state office workers never have to walk in the plaza or on downtown streets

No surprise that the public spaces are devoid of people

Large buildings can transform image of a city

Iconic Sydney Opera house

Guggenheim in Bilbao
Transformed the surrounding environment

Any public facility can be successful as long as revenues exceed expenses. But for a public facility to be beneficial to the rest of the city, it must attract a critical mass of customers and yet be located & designed so that their market requirements cannot be fully accommodated within the facility.

Only then will customers have a reason to spend their money elsewhere.

Alexander Garvin, *The American City: What works, What Doesn't*

Large, but attentive to context

That what well-designed downtown ballparks do

Well designed downtown convention centers

Jane Jacobs was a reaction to Robert Moses: Regional, top-down planning

And successful concert halls
A focus that saw the prime purpose of planning as Enhancing the movement of goods through the city

Major projects: West Side Highway

Key to the vitality of the port

Jones Beach: auto oriented

Very thoughtful reconsideration

Robert Caro’s The Power Broker
Moses’ view dominated city planning for almost 40 years

Paradigm shift: The battle over Washington Square

Washington Square park

As Parks Commissioner in 1940, Robert Moses originally proposed to build a “double highway” through Washington Square Park.

In 1955, he proposed bisecting the park with a 48 ft wide highway.

“Mothers and children, New York University students would be able to cross from one half of the park to the other by a foot-bridge thirty-six feet wide.”—NY Times

Where Jane Jacobs got her inspiration

Challenged the image of the city as a system of regional roadways to move goods
City is about sidewalks; places not pathways
1968: the Park is permanently closed to traffic

Jane Jacobs became the bible for city revitalization

Modern city planning in US had begun
Chicago's 1893 Columbian Exposition

Daniel Burnham's injunction: "Make no little plans,
for they have no power to stir men's minds."

City Beautiful was a response to smog & filth
of the industrial city

City of industry & slaughter houses
Benjamin Franklin Parkway: City Beautiful project

The Parkway is a 19th century idea: 1884

Alternative to smoke-filled messy density of the industrial city

A line of desire through 1 mile of the city

Connect the new City Hall to Fairmount Park

Influenced by Hausmann’s Paris
Involved demolition of 1,300 properties

Large scenic boulevard; often devoid of sidewalk vitality

Jane Jacobs a reaction to 1950s demolition

Thinking Big was seen as the problem

Discredited by destructive renewal projects

But a lot of what we have inherited in cities
Is the result of bad design principals from the past

Often you need big money & big projects to overcome big money mistakes from the past

To create intimate-scaled places

Places programmed with activities

That draw people at different times of the day

That’s the challenge of JFK Boulevard at 30th Street
Require large scale, high-density intervention that gets the ground floor right

How do we combine attention to pedestrian scale with the willingness to think big again about our cities?

How do we solve this equation?

In global economy, digital technology provides mobility & choice; post-industrial work can be performed anywhere.
When people can work anyplace, the quality of a specific place defines its competitiveness.

Jan Gehl: In the manufacturing city, People were in the street out of necessary That's where a lot of work was performed

Post-industrial city, they are outside by choice

Only if we provide quality public spaces

Main street Copenhagen in 100 years from necessary to optional activities
1900 to 2000: From necessary to optional activities in Public Spaces

Will occur only if good quality is provided

The traditional city

The invaded city

The abandoned city

The reconquered city

In 1962 all 18 squares were parking lots - now they are all people squares
Public plaza in Copenhagen

Nyhavn, Copenhagen: 1960s

Nyhavn, Copenhagen

Bruges

Market Square, Bruges
Restored market function

Evaluating Public Spaces

Plan for growth
Four geographic areas + transit

Buildings that contribute to quality street fronts
MGA Partners

Non-contributing

Jan Gehl: “Inactive”
Jan Gehl, How to Study Public Life

Chapter 7: Toolbox

Jan Gehl Cities for people

Non-contributing

Non-contributing

Based on design

How the building meets the street

NON-CONTRIBUTING

DOMINATED BY HIGHWAY

NON-CONTRIBUTING

OPEN LOT

NON-CONTRIBUTING

VACANT

NON-CONTRIBUTING

Dominated by highway

Absence of development
Tall buildings can meet the street in different ways

Get the ground floor right!

Filling in gaps in fabric of the city

Streetscape
Survey instrument
Public space evaluation

- Compare Penn Center office plaza, between 15th and 16th Streets, Market to JFK Boulevard with Commerce Square, north side of the 2000 block of Market Street.
- Compare the beer garden at the Dow Building on the SW corner of 6th and Market Street with the public spaces surrounding the federal courthouse on the NW corner of 6th and Market.
- Compare Sister Cities & Aviator Park, east & west sides, Logan Square, Benjamin Franklin Parkway.

Elements of Great Places

- Sociability
- Uses & Activities
- Place
- Access & Linkages
- Comfort & Image

Record Location
Identify Opportunities

Evaluate the Place

Comfort & Image
- Attractive: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
- Fresh, safe: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
- Clean/pest management: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
- Comfortable places to sit: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

Access & Linkages
- Identifiable from a distance: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
- "Human": 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
- Connects to adjacent areas: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
- Connects to major routes/avenues: 1, 2, 3, 5

Uses & Activities
- Mix of street-level businesses: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
- Active street-level businesses: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
- Active adjacent uses: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
- Economic vitality of area: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

Sociability
- People in groups: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
- Evidence of interaction: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
- Sense of pride and ownership: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
- Cultural and services are present: 1, 2, 3, 5

Overall Rating: [ ]