

## **Gehl Architects: Creating cities for people**

Language English

This month Eltis talks to Gehl Architects' Henriette Vamberg about putting quality of life at the centre of urban design and transport.

### **What part does transport play when making cities more liveable?**

Transport is about providing people with the options to move. For cities with high liveability that means having a transport system that gives people a high degree of freedom to move when, where and how they want – regardless of age, income, and health.

It's about the experience of moving – whether you feel safe, whether it gives you any additional experiences (nice scenery, the chance to talk to/meet other people etc.), whether it gets you from A to B in a quick and direct manner. It is a means toward some more general aspects of quality of life: improving the environment, inviting citizens to engage in a healthier lifestyle, and so on.

### **Many cities are designed with cars in mind. Are cars and liveable cities compatible?**

Building liveable cities is not about banning cars, but about prioritising differently and giving people more convenient, efficient and pleasant mobility options. Sometimes that might be moving in your car, but it could possibly also be by public transport, by bicycle or by foot.

### **You were involved in a project in New York City that saw land in Times Square reclaimed from cars and given to people. What was the reaction?**

In Times Square we found that 90 per cent of the space available was for vehicular traffic, but when it came to users only 10 per cent were cars and 90 per cent pedestrians. There was an obvious discrepancy between how the land was allocated.

[The project](#) was a pilot where no permanent design was implemented. Paint and moveable furniture was used to be able to go back to the original layout if the new configuration didn't work. After six months there was a public evaluation; 74 per cent of respondents voted to maintain the improvements and to develop the permanent design.

### **What is the future of cities in terms of transport?**

Transport systems have to be more effective with space being a scarce resource. We have to look at combinations of travel, the greater mobility system and not just each transport system by its own. There will be an increasing need to combine different modes of mobility, also within the same journey. Urban spaces play an important role in that regard: attractive nodal and connecting points that serve different purposes.

### **Gehl Architects is famous for its mantra of planning cities for people. Can you give any examples of urban areas that embody this principle?**

Copenhagen is a great example of a liveable city. A city that captures people's entire life span - babies, kids, juniors, students, singles, families, seniors, elderly. It has something to offer for all; a sense of community and belonging. A place where you are born, study, have your kids and grow old without experiencing that you are making compromises in your quality of life.

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