

INTRODUCTION

Urban quality of public space is becoming increasingly a key issue in recent urban planning processes. In the past, strategic master plans focussed mainly on the development of houses. More recent planning projects are trying to single out the importance of public space. Projects like Hafen City in Hamburg or Seestadt Aspern in Vienna have integrated quality of urban space in a way that makes the importance of the public realm more obvious and is receiving more attendance.

But the way people use public space and how they perceive public places is very different. This raises the following questions concerning urban quality:

- What is the reason for feeling pleasant or unpleasant in a public space?
- Why do we feel comfortable or unsafe?
- Why are places attractive and others not?

If we look at the realisation of quality we can ask ourselves the following questions:

- How do we experience quality of urban spaces?
- How can we define urban quality?
- What is the most deciding factor of urban quality?

The question is how we can define quality of public and urban space. This question has a long tradition in planning history and has been discussed frequently in planning practice and theory in the past. Depending on the historic context the perception of urban space and urban quality was different through time. Urban quality and its perception changed under the influence of changes in society. Since 1900 the writings of urban planners and theorist like Camillo Sitte, Gordon Cullen, Kevin Lynch, Jane Jacobs and Jan Gehl were leading the development of a definition of urban quality.

In "City Planning According to Artistic Principles" published in 1889

Camillo Sitte (re)introduced the beauty of city planning. He describes this discipline by comparing the layout of medieval cities. With this approach he turned away from the pragmatically and technical efficient way cities were planned in the era of the rise of industrialization. In his studies he focused on the personal perception of public space.

In "Concise Townscape" published in 1961 Gordon Cullen developed a method which analyses the city in "Serial Vision". Based on a route through a city he shows different urban sequences by using sketches and combines them with theoretical components. In his method personal perspective and perception are leading the way in which the urban pattern is realised. His analysis is very much rooted in the physical way the city is used.

"The Image of the city" published in 1960 Kevin Lynch introduces a framework which focuses on the urban structure from the user's perspective. His framework focuses on the preparation of mental maps, which include five major aspects: paths or streets as the basic layer for moving around in the city; the edges as an indicator for physical barriers; the districts in the city which describe the personal surrounding of the inhabitant; the function and meaning of nodes and landmarks in the urban realm.

These three authors give a first impression of the differences according to which urban space can be analysed and interpreted. The ideas and methods of Jane Jacobs will be described more explicitly because they will form the frame for our practical cases in Lisbon.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK URBAN QUALITY

Jane Jacobs

In the 1960s planners and theorists started criticising the existing building development. "The Death and Life of Great American Cities" Jane Jacobs criticised pragmatic and functional urban planning, which

from her point of view was influenced by the wrong examples, like the garden city concept. Her opinion was that the main task of urban planning is to organise different functions to serve the needs and demands of the inhabitants. Especially the redevelopment of older suburbs destroyed the existing urban patterns and produced colourless new buildings and structures. Functional urban planning caused a separation of functions instead of mixing them, which is necessary to develop a vivid neighbourhood according to Jane Jacobs. In a vivid or qualitative neighbourhood the streets are a major element and act as the stage where living, working, recreation and retail are performing. This physical framework of urban space is the key to social cohesion.

Intending to counter practical functional urban planning and to improve the dominant planning doctrine Jacobs identified three “conditions for the working of the city” as a framework for the “four generators of diversity”. These conditions and generators indicate the qualities of urban life and urban space at the scale of a neighbourhood or a small suburb. She identified the following conditions and generators:

Conditions for the working of the city

- Safety: The realisation of clear demarcations between urban and public space in order to foster intensive use of space which promotes spontaneous protection. Also people need to feel safe when using the public space, a sense of safety is key to a successful public area.
- Contact: Promoting meeting the neighbours and other urban users enhances information sharing. Mixed use is a key element in facilitating contact between urban users.
- Assimilating children: Developing non-matriarchal playgrounds and successful parks and playgrounds that are diverse and intensely used.

Generators of urban diversity

- **Mixed-use:** The suburb or city centre has to be a mix of areas which have more than one function, preferably a mixture of various different activities. The functions have to fulfil the needs and demands of the people, who are moving around in the city during different times of the day. Such intensified use of urban space promotes contact which enhances safety.
- **Short building blocks.** The urban pattern has to consist of mostly short building blocks, which offer people many occasions to cross the streets and to move around. The advantage is to create several different opportunities to move around, without imposing a fixed route. The city is different every time a person rounds a corner and every time it does this there are new opportunities to make contact.
- **Buildings of various ages and states of repair in a dense mix.** Buildings of various ages, buildings in various states of repair and variation of economic gain promote economically mixed-use. A working and liveable city houses not only offices and shops that can afford high overhead but also the traditional well liked local shops and bars which give so much urban quality to a suburb or a city centre.
- **Variety of building structure.** Within a suburb it is necessary that buildings next to each other are from various ages and in different states of repair to give a fine grained picture.
- **Density.** There should be ample concentration of people in a suburb or neighbourhood who have different reasons to be there. This does not mean that an enormous building density is necessary but that the public space facilitates and promotes enough activities, for both visitors and the people living in the neighbourhood, to provide density.

The four generators of diversity all aim to increase human contact in a neighbourhood in order to maximise the feeling of safety and thereby

creating the framework for the development of non-matriarchal playgrounds and parks. In other words the generators of diversity facilitate the working of the city, all within the physical framework. This framework consists of the streets, roads and built environment of a neighbourhood, in other words the public space.

Jan Gehl

Jan Gehl has observed and undertaken studies and publications concerning the development of urban space over almost the last 50 years in his hometown Copenhagen. Over a long period of time he shows changes in how people are using the city and its space. Until 1950 the usage of the city was dominated by working and trading, but it was also the place for living. It was absolutely necessary to use it. Since then, caused by the rising car access and the separation of functions, the meaning of the city has changed and function has mainly focused on shopping and retail. However, in recent years we can see a movement towards more recreational, cultural and also sport activities. Due to these changes the need to develop and improve urban quality is growing to provide places where people can meet. Aspects like healthiness, sustainability, liveliness or safety have become more important.

Over several years Jan Gehl developed a list of "12 key quality criteria of city space" to describe and rate the quality of urban life. Three of these 12 criteria specify protection, three enjoyment and six comfort.

Protection

The matter of protection has to be seen in a very broad way. One important point is traffic safety, especially from the children's perspective, which means offering good facilities for walking and bicycling.

People's security is of importance when evaluating urban quality. This means not only providing physical elements like lighting during the evening hours, but also a mix of functions to increase vividness of a place during the whole day. Another group of aspects which receive attention are the negative influences which affect sensory aspects. People have to be protected against the influence of the weather, like rain or the sun, but also against pollution which is caused by emissions.

Comfort

The criteria ensuring comfort are aimed to offer people opportunities to use the public space in various ways. People will make use of the city if they are given multiple offers for walking, sitting and staying. This makes it possible to meet each other, play, talk or exercise. The public space should not have the ambition to provide all the possibilities for these activities at once, but to offer a basis which can be used in several ways.

Enjoyment

Urban places can be designed in a mainly functional way. This is the basis to create a successful and attractive place which can be enjoyed by a number of people. But it needs more than function for urban places to be attractive. The relation between the buildings and public space is important for the user to feel comfortable. The places have to provide a high design standard, which allows the user to feel pleased, a part of the place and not a stranger in a built environment. Also good urban design has to create the opportunities to experience the surrounding in many ways. The public space is an important component of urban quality in the two case study areas, Arroja Odivelas and Praia das Maças. This chapter shows the analysis of two squares to provide an idea of the recent quality

of the public space and its recent usage in the study areas. The squares are analysed by using the different methods and indicators of Jane Jacobs and Jan Gehl.

Central Square in Arroja Odivelas

The square is located close to the former commercial centre of the post war settlement of Arroja. The surrounding of the public space is dominated by housing of the post war times. The urban grid is dominated by housing blocks with several storeys. They accommodate different types of flats which have a rather small balcony. The public realm is overtaken by traffic. The available area is mainly used for car parking. What determines the character and atmosphere of the area is that it is mainly a place where commuters live, which means that during the day it is quiet and not very busy. Besides the housing there are a few social functions, for example a school and a kindergarten. Also there is the possibility for outdoor activity, for example playgrounds and sport fields. Commercial activities can only be found at a very small scale. Shopping and retail has been moved outside the area and located along the important access roads. An artefact from former times is an old commercial centre which is located between the housing blocks. This centre can be reached from a square, which is also delimited by several housing blocks. The function and appearance of these places is generally quite poor and cannot be easily defined. The entrances towards the square are not logical and is not clear who should use the square. Nevertheless, the square in combination with the (commercial) building offers a spatial potential which could be used to improve the situation.

The perspective by Jane Jacobs

The first impression when visiting the square is the fact that it is surrounded by a wall of cars that are being parked around the square. This creates a clear boundary between the general public space and the square itself. When applying the conditions of the workings of a city to the Central Square in Arroja Odivelas the first thing we noticed when visiting the square is the complete lack of people using the public space of the neighbourhood during the day. The parking spaces surrounding the square are intensively used, indicating that at least during part of the day the public space is used by the people. As a direct result of the lack of people using the public space there is hardly a sense of safety. When combining this with the general sense of loneliness in the park and the neighbourhood we can conclude that the place is not attractive for children to play without maternal control. Therefore we can conclude that the lack of people using the public space minimises the contact between people and therefore has a negative effect on the feeling of safety and safety in general. As a result the neighbourhood and its square are not very well suited to be used by children as a play ground. The conditions of a well functioning city can therefore only be sparsely found or not at all.

In the wider surrounding of the square several mixed facilities can be found. But the square itself does not have much diversity. When we look at a little larger scale we can identify various different functions, like housing, parking and a nearby commercial area. Because the commercial centre is turning its back to the square it does not generate a lot of activity. The square does have potential to attract people who use the public space but in reality this potential is hardly utilised.

The urban tissue does not correspond to Jacob's wish of small urban blocks. It is a mix of different building types and structures. Also the height and the orientation of the houses is not very clear, there are several

undefined front- and back facades. Due to the dominance of car traffic there are not many interesting and surprising locations in the area. In reality there is not enough room left for qualitative urban space because of this dominance of cars.

When we look at the state of repair and age of the buildings we do not see much variation. The buildings are almost all from the same post war period and they show no variation in quality and architecture. It is a very uniform and very purposeful build development. Therefore there is hardly any variation in age and state of repair, another of Jacob's key element for the quality of an urban space.

Due to the amount of buildings and apartments it is expected that there are enough inhabitants who could potentially use the public space in their neighbourhood. But the area lacks functions which could stimulate the use of the public space, not to mention attracting people from outside the neighbourhood. The lack of mixed use, or better put the lack of different functions, does not give people enough reasons to visit the area.

In the eyes of Jane Jacobs the place has a certain urban quality due to the density of people and to a lesser degree the variety of functions. But urban design and its translation into space is not very visible. As a result people use the square mostly for crossing instead of using the square as a place to stay and enjoy the public space. The square has potential but at the moment there are not that many conditions for urban diversity to be found.

To summarise we can rate the central square in Arroje Odivelas of average to low urban quality according to the generators of urban diversity and the conditions of the workings of the city identified by Jacobs. The square does have potential but the urban design does not utilise its potential fully. The urban space does not promote use by the inhabitants and therefore the place does not encourage people to have contact, the key ingredient to a successful urban space.

The perspective by Jan Gehl

The square itself is not entirely accessible by cars and gives people a very secure impression regarding traffic. However, due to the poor urban realm, there is not much observation and social control by other people living around the square or passing by regularly. It is very doubtful whether the space is lit enough during the night and whether there are any dark parts. The local sensory climate is very much influenced by continuous sunshine. There is a lack of urban elements which would provide enough shadow to protect people from the sun on the square.

The square is not very inviting and does not offer a comfortable space for people to stay and enjoy. The only really positive aspect is that there is not much noise because of the segregation between traffic movement and the square. From this perspective the square has quite a good potential, but there is a lack of opportunities for possible activities. The public space is not providing a lot of possibilities to sit and to have social contacts or to stand and having interesting and changing views. Moreover, there are not many opportunities to be active, doing exercises or playing.

The spatial relation between the square and the buildings around it does not give people the impression to feel lost. Nevertheless, it was developed by taking the human scale into account. This is the only actual positive aspect which could give a user enjoyment. As the square is very much exposed to different negative influences of the climate, excessive sun and lack of shadow are important issues. The overall sensory experience is not very exciting. The urban furniture and the design of the urban greenery do not offer much spatial comfort for the users.

Overall, the rating by the Gehl system of this square is not very positive. The actual relation of the square and the surrounding buildings is positive, but there are not many positive aspects which would satisfy Gehl's criteria of comfort and enjoyment of protection.

Main Square at Praia das Maças

The village of Praia das Maças is located outside the metropolitan area of Lisbon along the seaside. The former fishing village has developed in the last years into a touristic place, which means that during the summer season it is a busy place which is filled with a lot of people and traffic. The Central Square is located in the centre of the village away from the coast line. Due to demand of access by tourism the main purpose of the square has become parking. Besides the parking function the only additional use is the location of waste containers. The square has a triangular shape, it is formed on one side by buildings and on the other by the main road. The third side is not clearly defined due to a gap between the building lines. On the ground floor the buildings have different functions for commercial use, such as shops and cafes. The upper storeys are occupied by housing. The usability of the square by the public is very limited due to its traffic function. It is quite obvious that the square is more a reaction to the increasing importance of the car. It is thus not a planned square with spatial and functional connections between the housing areas in the village and the beach.

The perspective by Jane Jacobs

When we apply the conditions for the 'working of a city' to the main square of Praia das Macas there is a big difference between the two studied squares. In this case the square itself is used as a parking area. Because of this use no people are using the square in the way a square should be used. The north eastern side of the square is a closed façade consisting of commercial functions with apartments on the upper levels. The commercial functions on the ground floor are strongly related to the tourism industry in the village. The small shops, cafes and hairdresser

give the square regular activity during the day, but in the evening there may be hardly any people near or on the square. Taking the conditions for the 'working of a city' we can draw our first conclusion. The square does not facilitate contact between people during all hours of the day. Far from it, apart from the working hours there will hardly be any people on the square. This will influence the feeling of safety in a negative way. This negative feeling will be enforced by the dark corners and spaces of the square and the surrounding buildings. Therefore children will not be able to play there without maternal control or even with it for that matter. To summarise the conditions for a working city some can be found at the square but not nearly enough for it to be rated positively.

Several different functions can be found in the direct surroundings of the square. There are shops, cafes and a hairdresser and in the wider surroundings we can also find some other commercial and business functions. Most of the functions are located at the fringes of the square, on the north-eastern side. The only interaction between the square and the functions nearby is the fact that people park their vehicle on the square. There is only a low amount of mixed-use to be found.

The original urban pattern of the village was located to the side of the main street. This structure has been developed without the development of small and short blocks. On both sides of the main street we can find small houses next to one another sparsely mixed with other functions. The only exception is the large housing block located next to the square. Looking more closely at the square we suspect that this block was never part of the original urban fabric but was added later in order to provide needed extra parking spaces along the main street.

The state of repair of the buildings varies widely within the village, ranging from refurbished buildings to completely dilapidated houses. In general most of the buildings need some maintenance. There is also a great variation in ages of the building with the apartment block being

Lastly we will look at the density of people directly around and in the surroundings of the square. The amount of buildings combined with their size tell us that there are not enough inhabitants to label the surroundings of the square as high density. The village has still the original low density and rural identity and the local economy is relying on the yearly invasion of tourists during the summer season. The square cannot be used in several different ways, apart from the parking and does not provide any other usage.

Jane Jacobs would have rated this square as a square that lacks any of the qualities or conditions associated with urban quality. The square was not planned as a public space but seems to be a parking area that has been labelled as a square. The sole goal of the space is to provide the needed parking spaces for the commercial functions and for the tourists during the summer season and it does not promote contact between people at all. In short there are hardly any conditions for urban diversity to be found.

The perspective by Jan Gehl

The access to the square is focused towards its usage by car. Pedestrians are just about tolerated to use the square and get only a small space for themselves along the apartment building. There is social control by the inhabitants of the housing and also the users of the small enterprises in the basement. Because main usage of the square is for parking there is no protection against the influence of different weather conditions. There is a total lack of urban elements for the usage by people which do not come by car.

The square does not have any positive aspect and is not offering a comfortable space for people to walk, stay and enjoy the place. The noise caused by traffic is really a negative influence and downsizes the quality of the small enterprises. The square does not really have a potential

to be integrated in the urban structure. The focus is very much on traffic and parking which are dominating this space and considered necessary by the surrounding businesses. Along the friction zone there could be more space created for walking and other activities, which would have to be clearly separated from the parking zone. Thus, the views to the seaside could be more important than at the moment.

The spatial relation between the square and especially the apartment building does not give the impression of a real space. It was developed without taking the human scale into account, because of the focus on parking. The biggest enjoyment of the square is by the car while the needs of other users are neglected. Further, the square is very much exposed to the different negative influences of the climate; the sun and lack of shadow there are an important issue. The total sensory experience is not very exciting. There is no urban furniture nor any design of urban greenery which could improve the spatial comfort for the users.

The rating by the Gehl system of this square would have found positives aspects, which make the square a real urban liveable space. The actual situation of the square and its surrounding could be improved by a total change of the actual purpose by giving the cars less space and thinking more about other users.

CONCLUSION

The two approaches of Jane Jacobs and Jan Gehl originated in different planning periods, but they are still (again) very contemporary because they help to identify problems and frictions in the public realm. The complexity of both theories lies in the relationship between the different aspects that need to be combined to define quality of space. The difference between the two approaches or methods originates in the way they each define and observe the urban cluster. In her theory Jane Jacobs, one of the first urban

planners, described the workings of the city and the conditions of urban quality from the perspective of the users and inhabitants: how they use the public space in the city and how they interpreted it. She focuses mainly on the shape and form of the build environment and its usage by the people, whereas Jan Gehl's method is specifically orientated towards the quality and use of the public space by the people.

Both methods are quite similar and cannot provide a definite judgment of whether a public space is of high quality or not. But these methods can provide indicators on the actual quality and use of public space and therefore help us to focus on the major design problems and tasks of an area. Additionally Jan Gehl's theory identifies the importance of protection against the climate and safety in general. This is important in the case of the second square, Praia das Maças, where safety is of major importance due to the fact that the square is mainly used as a parking place.

By dissecting both the squares according to the theories of Jane Jacobs and Jan Gehl we can see that the result of both analyses is quite similar. Both places have problems with the usability, the relation between the buildings and the open space, as well as with providing enough spatial and functional connections at a larger scale. In short both analyses conclude that both squares are not that well integrated into the public realm.

The need and importance of using methods like those of Jacobs or Gehl is to provide a detailed and founded analysis of urban space. Usually the first impression when visiting and using a public space is based on our first emotional and personal evaluation. By dividing a place into several sections and functional parts before analysing them helps us to figure out where the problems are concentrating and where possible solutions can be created. Combining such methods, even if they were developed during different cultural and historical times, can offer professionals an understanding of the problems and potential of a specific urban space from the perspective of the user. The methods shown and their results

are not to be seen as a rule, or a set of instructions indicating specific and precise criteria or lists on how to improve an urban space. The methods and their use for the two squares have to be seen as a guideline on how to analyse, understand and improve an urban space.

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