The only thing the Leisure and Culture Services Department seemingly encourages people to do in this very central park, is to carefully throw away their litter in dustbins provided throughout the park area. Everything else is banned.

Kowloon Park, Hong Kong
“It is difficult to design a space that will not attract people - what is remarkable is how often this has been accomplished.”

William H. Whyte

Chapter 3
Sociable space - in a city of life

Looking up the word sociable in a thesaurus (see excerpt below), one finds many expressions which remarkably precise also could describe a people-friendly urban environment. If one also takes into account that the opposite of sociable is unfriendly it becomes even clearer. Who would want to live in an unfriendly community, and who in their right mind would plan such an environment?! - Sadly not too few, at least according to Mr. William H. Whyte (see quote above).23

To clarify how the physical structure, functions and activities relate to each other and how these together create sociability in the urban environment, we have compiled our thoughts into a conceptual model. Our Sociable Space concept is based on our observations of public life and is used as a central approach in this study to discuss how people-friendly urban environments can be created. The ABC’s of this concept is illustrated on page 54-55 and discussed more thoroughly thereafter.

Contrary to public and private space, which simply depicts different categories of space, the ‘sociable space’ comprises also the content and the activities taking place there. For these activities to emerge however, an apt design approach is needed. With design more in line with human needs and desires the urban environment will have a great potential to become sociable. By filling the city with such environments it no doubtedly will become a city of life.


The Oxford Paperback Thesaurus gives the following explanation for the word sociable:
Sociable, adjective: FRIENDLY, affable, companionable, gregarious, convivial, clubbable, amicable, cordial, warm, genial; communicative, responsive, forthcoming, open, outgoing, extrovert, hail-fellow-well-met, approachable; informal chummy, clubby; Brit. informal matey. **Opposite:** UNFRIENDLY
So... for whom do we plan?

Regardless of who we are or where we come from we all have essential needs that stretch beyond our bodies’ mere physical need of water, food and shelter. For an urban environment to become sociable it is of great importance that certain activities are promoted by the physical environment.

Jan Gehl addresses in his book ‘Life between buildings’ how communication is a key factor for promoting social activities in a city. He summarizes his ideas on communication in a figure (see figure 3.2), which describes how visual and auditory communication can be either prevented or promoted by the physical environment. These aspects are all fundamentals; without the possibility for communication between people, the urban environment will never become sociable.

For a space to be sociable however, it is not enough that people can communicate there (see figure 3.1 on previous spread). Regardless if there are walls or not, if there is nothing in the urban environment that attracts people to be there, communication will never occur. Based on this notion we have tried to find a reason for why people choose to spend time in an urban environment instead of staying in the comfort of their homes.

So... do human beings have certain needs that the urban environment can fulfil? Anthony Robbins offers a classification of human needs and suggests that we are motivated by six principal needs: certainty, uncertainty, significance, love, growth & contribution (see pages 50-51). These, he argues, are both conscious and unconscious needs which feed our identity and personality with influence. We found his ideas intriguing and we wanted to see if these could be relevant to consider when planning urban environments. We feel it is important to keep a holistical perspective where man’s needs are in focus. There might be other classifications on human principal needs, but we feel that the classification Robbins suggests, can be adequately adopted into the field of spatial planning.

Through our observations in Southeast Asia and Europe, we could classify the multitude of activities taking place in the urban environment. These activities seem all originating from people’s desire to fulfil the six human needs mentioned above, in one way or another. People seek certainty and comfort, but also a feeling of variety, uniqueness and connection to others. If the environment provides opportunities for challenge and learning we can grow as individuals and if the environment encourages people to contribute it will undoubtedly result in more creativity, activity and sociability.

We wanted to acquire an understanding of how the physical structure interplays with the social neighbourliness and how and why sociable spaces emerge. Our sociable space concept (see figure 3.10, pages 54-55) is an attempt to devise the possible aspects and functions that affect and initiate

24 Gehl, J. 2003, Life between buildings, Arkitektens Forlag, Copenhagen, Denmark
25 Robbins, A., 2001, Unleash the Power Within, Nightingale Conant Corp, USA
sociability in the urban environments. It further aims to illustrate the link between the physical structure and the people who will live and work in it.

Within the structure, a large amount of activities require their space. We have categorized these activities into five main subdivisions and their sources into three. Each of these categories aims to comprise an important aspect of the human behaviour. The dividing into five categories of activities originates from our field study experiences. We could later also find support to our thoughts in the work of William H. Whyte. His work is however mainly focusing on human behaviour in streets and plazas whereas our study tries to include behaviours and activities related also to the private sphere.

For an urban environment to become sociable it is of great importance that neither necessary nor voluntary activities are restrained by the physical environment. If one strives to create an urban environment which appeals to a large amount of the inhabitants, it is important to be aware also of human’s representational system. We perceive our surroundings differently depending on if we focus visually, auditorically or kinaesthetically (see page 552-53). We use all our senses to take in our surroundings and through our senses we judge whether we like a place or not.

William H. Whyte learnt from his studies of public open spaces in New York that the downtown area was full of plazas and streets that were empty of people, despite the fact that the area was densely populated. Other spaces were full of people playing, sitting, lingering, walking and observing others. A conclusion he could draw regarding people and public spaces, was the simple fact that ‘people attract people’. We do not seek up the most isolated back streets during our lunch break - we are instead drawn to spaces which are already populated by others. If one could create a reason for people to linger or hang around, others would soon do the same.

27 Ibid.
Six human needs

Anthony Robbins ideas regarding the six human needs are not specifically meant to be used in the context of spatiality and urbanism, but since people daily use their environment it could be interesting to challenge his ideas in the context of urban design.

We suggest our surroundings play a vital role in creating an arena for the fulfilment of various human needs. The goal in planning urban environments must be to invite constructive and positive activities to take place and avoid creating environments that encourage the opposite.

1. Certainty
   similarity, comfort
   expectedness

2. Uncertainty
   variety, novelty
   serendipity

Certainty and uncertainty are two of the strongest human needs. Every person accepts different amount of certainty/uncertainty. What we all have in common is that too much of certainty leads to boredom and too much of uncertainty leads to anxiety. Boring environments in turn, easily produce destructive behaviour which in turn increases other people’s anxiety. If the response to this increased anxiety is walls and fences, the demand for certainty further drains the urban environment of variety, novelty and serendipity. The truly sociable environments fulfils both people’s need for certainty and comfort and also the need for uncertainty and variety. In fig. 3.4 we have tried to illustrate our view on how the relationship between certainty/uncertainty and sociability expresses itself in the urban environment.

29 According to Robbins, A., 2001, Unleash the Power Within, Nightingale Conant Corp, USA
3. Significance
the need to be needed
importance, uniqueness

Significance and love are paradoxical needs. People have a wish to feel needed, unique and important, but too much of uniqueness or importance pose a threat to others and you become an ‘outsider’ or a person who few will appreciate or love.

Significance can be achieved in numerous ways, where violence and racism are examples of destructively achieved significance and parenthood or the development of advanced skills are examples of constructively achieved significance. Street artists and places where one can ‘show-off’ ones skills are examples of how significance can add sociability to the urban environment.

By sharing the same experiences we can connect to others. We can also gain communion and love through religion or simply by just loving others. A destructive way to gain love is by creating problems so others will connect to you. Vandalism and crime can be perceived as a symbolic call for help; for being noticed and loved. We believe that an urban environment which is rich in sociable meeting grounds and offers a large variety of spaces where one can feel connection and oneness with others, can become almost as vaccinated against the destructively based calls for love and significance.

5. Growth

evolution, learning, improvement

Growth is an essential need that drives people to attempt to become all that they can be. For people at all ages and at all stages of their life, the urban environment should provide opportunities for challenge and learning. It should also encourage us to participate, in order for us to be able to confront our believed limitations and evolve beyond them.

6. Contribution

sacrifice, serving, helping

Contribution is a primary need in the human being. In order to feel complete and fulfilled we need to find a way to contribute and serve others without demanding reward. Since this is an essential need it is important to encourage people’s wish to give of their resources and time. If the urban environment is open for citizen’s contribution and creative initiatives, we feel, much is to be gained.
Representational system in the urban environment

Our representational system provides us with information about our surrounding environments. Materials, shapes and sizes of elements in the urban environment creates a multitude of impressions for us to take in. (See fig. 3.6 - 3.8)

The visual aspect

Our visual sense is mainly affected by shapes, contrasts, distances, location, patterns, edges, levels, colours and other visual aspects. Motions are also easy to notice visually, but the sphere of attention is limited to a visual field of 180 degrees. The urban environment must be designed with effort put on visually perceivable values, to be able to appeal to our visual sense.

The auditorical aspect

Our auditory sense is sensitive to the way sound is colouring our surroundings. The environment can be interpreted through how sound flows and absorbs. By listening or by creating sounds we can ‘test’ our environment and get an immediate answer. Hard materials for instance, create a different sound impression from softer materials. Sound volume, frequency and pitch help describe the atmosphere and the auditory sense is soon to respond to these kinds of sensations. Sound can help people navigate by its ability to expose the position and distance of a sound source. Sound can further reveal the sizes of enclosures and rooms by resonance and echoes. Sound can also well describe motions and tempo in an environment.

The kinaesthetical aspect

Our kinaesthetical sense provides us with a lot of information about our surroundings. Through our kinaesthetical sense we ‘feel’ in our environment. Different materials have different feel to them. We easily notice the texture and the quality of materials simply by stroking our hands across a surface. Our bodies can instantly provide us information about temperature and if the level of moisture is pleasant or not. The kinaesthetical sense can give us response of motion and it reveals to us whether the ground we walk on is flat or not.
This urban place offers fine sensatory experiences. It has a visually interesting shape, purling water and openness, materials and textures and comfortable seats.

Burlington Square, Singapore
The urban environment has many different activities and requirements to integrate and promote. Within the city structure, a large amount of activities require their space. These different types of activities can be divided into five categories. All these aspects of the urban environment are necessary to keep in mind when one studies the sociability in existing neighbourhoods or plan for new sociable environments.

The sociable spaces are dependant on certain physical and experiential fundamentals. The physical structure is one of the key elements behind the possibility for sociable spaces to emerge. The structure creates the arena for various activities and functions. Together with the structure, the functions set the conditions for where people stay in motion and where people linger.

### A. Structure
As a basis, the structure of the urban environment sets the arena in which the sociable spaces emerge. The structure promotes the means of transportation people can and prefer to use (or perhaps more true – are forced to use). To attain qualitable sociable space, people will need to be able to safely access the urban environment on foot. Whether it is on foot, by public transports or by other means of transportation people move about in the urban environment, it is of great importance that the connectivity and street linkage is adequately designed. Short distances and an accessible and readable structure encourage people to on foot discover their city, bit by bit.

### B. Functions
It is the functions in the urban environment that act as catalysts for the sociable spaces. These functions are excellent at attracting people and they thereby animate their closest vicinity. Apart from this they can also activate large surroundings by encouraging activity and movement of people through the urban environment. Sociable spaces either emerge in conjunction to functions or alongside the pathways and streetscapes in-between them. These functions can work either separately or together to enhance the qualities of life and culture in the man-made environment and without them, a neighbourhood easily becomes monotonous and grey.

- Service and commerce
- Greenery and recreation
- History and aesthetics

### C. Activities
The street as a living room
Daily delivery of serendipity and expectedness
When the occasional intervenes
A space for challenge and learning
Harmony and contrast
3.10
The Sociable Space concept
When suitably designed, the structure of an urban environment can encourage people to populate the outdoor environment of a city. The structure sets the base for street linkage and distances. A readable structure designed for nearness and connectedness between attraction points, will simplify the traffic situation and perhaps what’s more important, promote on-foot transportation and activities. Unobstructed passage plays an important role. Walkability can be seen as a prerequisite and without it, walking will never become an attractive option. The structure can in addition encourage people to set up businesses or services if they feel there is a customer base available to them. These services then further encourage people to reside in the outdoor urban environment and a chain of influence to make the environment even more sociable can be started.

Through our field study we found that readability of the structure is quite important. We could particularly notice this when we tried to navigate the streets of Kuala Lumpur in Malaysia, without making use of a map. We could see where we wanted to go (Petronas Twin Towers were easy to spot from a distance) but the organic structure of Kuala Lumpur made it very difficult to find which streets that would actually take us nearer to the goal instead of further away from it.

One other important aspect is accessibility within the structure. Through our field work, we found that in Hanoi for instance, the motorbike is today the most common means of transportation. The streets and the city neighbourhoods are however not always designed for the large amount of motorbikes now populating the streets, causing availability difficulties, particularly where they are being parked. This negatively affects accessibility and a place’s sociable possibilities. Already 1980, William H Whyte wrote: ‘We have given a disproportionate amount of our street space to vehicles, and the time has come to start giving some of it back to the pedestrians from whom it was taken.’

Undoubtedly, the traffic situation is a problem in Hanoi today and as the city’s population expands and the amount of motorbikes and cars increase with them, the situation will worsen if proper means are not taken to remedy this.

30 Whyte, W. H., 1980, The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces, Project for Public Spaces, NY, USA
People love to look at other people. Pedestrian streets encourage restaurants and cafés to establish. These in turn, attract even more pedestrians... and so forth.
Nyhavn, Copenhagen, Denmark

The walkability flow is repeatedly discontinued on this sidewalk. Apart from the nuisance, this also poses a danger to pedestrians yielding for the obstacles.
Ton Duc Thang Street, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

The environments where pedestrians and motorized vehicles interact, must be designed for *readability* and safety.
Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
Another important aspect of accessibility is accessibility to public transport. If people are ‘encouraged’ to use private means of transportation, the city will soon be flooded by vehicles, pollution and noise. Vehicles will not make the city more sociable - only people do. Public transports are therefore the most important structural aspect of the dense urban environments. They can move a lot of passengers around the city without causing the many negative effects cars and motorbikes do. Public transports bring in people into the city - not vehicles.

3.14 (below)
The KL Monorail cart soars undisturbed high above ground. The air-conditioned carts provide commuters with an attractive alternative to private car commuting. Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

3.15 (below)
Buses are constantly interrupted in peak hour traffic and have to struggle their way through. Hanoi, Vietnam
When the tram has passed, the lively city street is safe to cross again. No traffic, no danger, no hassle. Norrköping, Sweden.
Functions...the sources of sociable space

Service and commerce
As already stated, the design of the structure makes it possible for services and commerce to establish. These functions both provide and enhance sociable space qualities. W. H. Whyte has performed extensive studies of social life in cities. He could see that food stalls, restaurants and shops of whatever kind, attract people to plazas and street-scapes. From his field studies, he could further conclude another important fact; ‘people attract people’.31

A variety of private and communal services such as schools, sport facilities, pharmacies, health care centres and other public services can besides the actual service they provide also provide their surroundings with people.

It seems as there is an invisible chain effect in action, in environments that present vivid city-scapes full of interacting people. Service and commerce are very strong people attractors and people are conversely very strong attractors for service and commerce to establish. Shopping, eating and resting not only provide people with goods, food and a pause it is as well an excellent meeting opportunity providing sociable space.

Shopping, both for everyday commodities and for more exclusive goods, is an important cause behind people’s movements in the urban environment. The variety of restaurants and shops, the range of goods put up for sale and the opening hours are important factors that influence the attraction strength of the commerce – making possible an ‘enjoyable flow’ of pedestrians. A strong pedestrian flow then functions as an attraction in itself.

Service and commerce can thrive both in indoor and outdoor environments. There are however a few aspects one must bare in mind. The indoor commerce is located in a comfortable environment where weather and climate extremes are sheltered out. Comfort wise these environments have many advantages. They are easy to keep clean, they lack pollution and are generally noise free. They are on the other hand often privately owned and have less accessibility to the public during evenings and nights. These indoor environments are also more regulated and street vendors and other ‘unwanted’ characters are usually prohibited entrance. This way the environment is filtered and what we get to see is only what someone else wants us to see. These environments can therefore be seen only as supplements to the public outdoor environments, since certain activities and events will always be missing.
This café gains customers due to its location in conjunction with a passage-way and in turn its customers add sociability to the surrounding mall. This café has since the photo was taken added more comfort and thus further improved its possibility to attract customers. (See figure 3.40, page 77)

Karlskrona, Sweden
Greenery and recreation

Greenery in an urban environment is important for many reasons. Trees can provide shelter from sun and rain and they can function as a divider of space. A big tree can function as a landmark when orientating in an area and the seasonal changes of the vegetation add a dimension of time. With the seasons changing and blossoms transforming into fruit and berries greenery can provide a wide range of scent and taste experiences.

Recreational areas in an urban environment can function as an important source of sociable space. These areas can give room for both people seeking a contemplative atmosphere and for people seeking more eventful activities and recreation.
The possibilities for variations of greenery and recreational areas are endless. From the biggest of parks down to the smallest of gardens we can gain invigorating experiences. 

Butterfly garden, Siem Reap, Cambodia

Not only greenery has recreational qualities. A fountain with plumes of water shooting up a varying heights, has here caught the attention of three young boys.

Vientiane, Lao

With a tree behind her back, this elderly woman has claimed a part of the public pathway for hers. She is there able to perform her daily exercise programme uninterrupted. People passing-by adjust their directions and take the detour around the tree, without complaining. Hoan Kiem Lake, Hanoi
A popular recreational area located in the very central part of the city. The lively, noisy Hanoi lies side by side with the calmest of places. Big trees provide shade from the hot summer sun and the shallow lake provides undistracted sight, to rest the mind. Here people take walks around the lake, meet their friends, eat their lunch or do their morning exercise. This area is truly a multi-purpose environment with great possibilities to satisfy all our needs. Hoan Kiem Lake, Hanoi
History and aesthetics

When volumes, materials, colours and details work together, an aesthetical environment can be created. An aesthetical environment attracts people and where there are people there are interactions. However, these environments often need added functionality to improve the sociable space qualities. Places to sit on or activities to take part in are examples of such functions.

Buildings have different life span due to qualities of construction and preservation efforts put in through time. History and aesthetics are often interconnected and the historical elements in the urban environments provide a link to the past and make visible the flow of time.

3.26 (left)  
The French built St Joseph’s Cathedral in Hanoi, presents evidence of a different time. Not many citizens are catholics today, but the ‘big church’ is still a well known landmark. Hanoi, Vietnam

3.27 - 3.28 (left & below)  
The Notre Dame Cathedral, with the modern shopping centre Diamond Plaza towering up in the background, adds a historical dimension to the city.  
Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam
3.29
The ledge surrounding an aesthetic sculpture fountain, functions as a resting seat for tired citizens. 
Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

3.30
A rooftop garden is a good use of surplus space. This building does however not add any aesthetical or sociable qualities to its surroundings at ground level. Here function rules over contribution.
Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
Buildings are the walls of streets and they affect their surroundings and the character of streetscapes, both by their functions and their appearance.

Swiss Garden Hotel, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

The Tsim Sha Tsui Waterfront Promenade has purposely been designed for sociability and offers a good view of Hong Kong Island and Victoria Harbour. Hong Kong
1. The street as a living room

The street and the public open spaces have many uses to fulfil. The same environment that to some people only is a nice shopping street, to others function also as an extension of their homes.

In areas where apartment space is limited, residents are more or less forced to perform parts of their private life in public. As a result the street becomes an extension of the home, providing inhabitants with extra living space. This is however not the only reason why people leave their homes to spend their leisure time in the public spaces. A vivid street life can encourage people to take part in activities on the street, instead of staying at home. Small plazas, street corner restaurants, food stalls and outdoor cafés function as a perfect arena for socializing. They play an important role, providing the city with restaurants at places where various activities take place.

3.33
A courtyard is turned into an ‘actual’ living room. The sofa is placed in the comfortable shade of a tree. By a residential initiative, this place has suddenly become a sociable meeting ground for neighbours and bypassers. Hanoi, Vietnam

3.34
Street restaurants bring life onto the streets and joy and food to the people using their service.
Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam
When commerce open up their whole facades to the street it is easy to stop and chat for a minute. Son Tay Street, Hanoi, Vietnam
3.36 (left)
A lively street attracts children, teenagers and adults to linger and meet. This way they become important actors, in creating a city of life.
Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

(right) 3.39
The pavement has temporary become a sketching-board. The rough cement surface offers a much more convenient material to draw on, than what for example a polished marble tile would have done. A prearranged and ‘polished’ environment, decrease the possibility for this kind of creativity to flourish. Instead, by leaving room for the unplanned the street becomes a flexible and ever-changing scene.
Dalat, Vietnam

3.37 - 3.38 (left & below)
Children use the outdoor environment for games and play. They do not limit themselves to use only the planned playgrounds. To them the whole city is a possible arena for getting together and having fun.
Hanoi (left) & Dalat (below), Vietnam
2. Daily delivery of serendipity and expectedness

An urban environment has a great possibility to offer both expected and more coincidental experiences. When we are living in an area, we learn about our surroundings and we also learn about what we can expect from it. We also, however, expect it to give us something extra at times, something unexpected and surprising.

The unexpected activities can be very small and include just a few people meeting up at a street corner or along a pathway. W. H Whyte found in his research that people without hesitating willingly can stop in the middle of a dense pedestrian flow and have a long discussion with someone they coincidentally met there, without moving away from the busy street. Strangely enough, he found that people passing by did not seem to bother about this obstacle. He also found that people without any concern sat down on stairs or on ledges in front of building entrances or in important pathways, regardless of how busy these places were or if they posed an obstacle to others. One of his conclusions was that people seem to be more attracted to places that are already occupied by other people, than to places that are perceived being more quiet and secluded.\(^{32}\)

---

Shops and restaurants are examples of services for which you have certain expectations on. You expect them to be available when required and as promised. Apart from the services these functions are supposed to supply, they also function as an opportunity for serendipity to arise and this way they can set unexpected actions into motion.

3.41 (left) Two men who seem to know each other meet unexpectedly on the street. They stop right in the middle of the pedestrian pathway and engage in a conversation. Norrköping, Sweden

(below) 3.40 A ‘roofed-in’ street-scape has been transformed into a shopping centre. The cafe’s location in the middle of a pathway allows for the unexpected meetings to occur. Give it some time and someone you know will eventually pass by. Karlskrona, Sweden
Street vendors add serendipity to the urban environments - you never know where you will catch them the next time or what merchandise they will carry.
Ma May Street, Hanoi, Vietnam
We need for the peculiar and unplanned to happen. Today a group of angels landed in the city mall.

Karlskrona, Sweden
3. When the occasional intervenes

Sometimes temporary events interrupt the steady pace of life. Our lives generate a wide range of these occasional events. Some of them are confined to the privacy of people’s homes, but it is not unusual that these events also require the public sphere to adapt and make room for them. The urban environment needs to have a built in flexibility and be conformable to make possible for the wide range of occasional events to take place. It must be able to fit both the large civic events, but also the small, private events. Celebrations such as birthdays, mourning ceremonies, wedding celebrations and other feasts are examples of private events that sometimes intervene and claim space in the urban environment. Public holidays, religious rituals, festivals, concerts and market days are just a few of all the civic events that now and then require space in the public sphere. The occasional events often involve a large amount of people and this makes it vital that the structure allows these occasional events to take place without disrupting accessibility and important functions nearby.
Almost the whole passageway leading to the entrance of a shopping centre is blocked by a temporary stage and its audience. This narrow alley had problems housing this occasional event and the concert became an obstacle to passers-by. The audience in turn got jostled about by stressed parents with pushchairs and businessmen with leather briefcases. If this had been foreseen already when the entrance area was planned these problems could have been avoided.

Harbour City Mall, Kowloon, Hong Kong
3.46 - 3.48

The same street can present many different faces depending on when it is visited,

When shops are closed the street is mainly used by residents living there and when it is market day, visitors dominate.

Ronnebygatan, Karlskrona, Sweden
Once or twice a week, this vast and quiet city square is transformed into a colourful grocery and flower market. A city needs spaces which are able to house large, occasional events like concerts, circuses or festivals. The question is however, how to make these spaces interesting and sociable while they are waiting for the occasional to intervene. Karlskrona, Sweden
4. A space for challenge and learning

We learn from experiences and from interactions with people and the physical environment we live in. A responsive and creative environment can provide us with a daily dosage of stimulating challenge.

People have a variety of moods on their repertoire and some of them are outwardly directed and others are of a more introvert character. A city should be able to supply environments that fit people’s diverse frames of mind. This diversity can be originating from things like age, current mood or type of personality. Especially children and teenagers constantly have to redefine their self-image. Their surroundings and people they meet give them influences that help them form an identity. All meetings between people are unique. An environment that makes people come together and interact can therefore offer an infinite amount of instructive challenges. We learn from all our senses and become inspired by people we meet or observe. We also learn from experiences gained from interacting with our physical surroundings.
C.C. Marcus and C. Francis have published design guidelines for urban open space. In their book People Places, they discuss important requirements people have on their environments. They found that cities often have a shortage of environments that can provide excitement and challenge for young people. The urban environment is sometimes designed to protect us from the risky and adventurous. This way it unfortunately deprives us from necessary and sought after dares, they mean. To be able to grow as individuals we need the occasional challenge that makes us evolve beyond our thought limit.

33 Marcus C. C. & Francis C., 1997, People Places, Wiley, New York, USA

3.52
The small fence surrounding the park lawn poses an interesting challenge for this young boy. He gains confidence and we who see him jump, can smile in remembrance of our own vigorous childhood.
Karlskrona, Sweden

3.53
Water is an inspiring element to use in the urban environment. It sounds if you splash it and it makes you wet. Some things float in it, other sink. How is that?!
Karlskrona, Sweden
The open air stage gets temporarily ‘seized’ by a group of girls with a CD player. They show-off their skills to an admiring audience and manage to lure down an elderly man into participating. The urban environment is an ever changing show. If we let it, that is.

Tsim Sha Tsui Waterfront Promenade, Hong Kong
3.59 (below)
This rather calm temple area in the city centre has temporary become an adventurous play ground. These young boys are discovering the floatability of colourful ‘paper flower’ leaves. Vientiane, Lao

3.57 - 3.58 (both right)
A bunch of children, high up in a Star fruit tree, right in the midst of a garden belonging to a temple. A climbable tree can offer a perfect challenge for the young and brave and an inspiring sight for the less courageous. If the climbing experience then bares fruit also in a literal sense, the better. Vientiane, Lao
What to most people is a statue designed to merely be looked upon; to others is a dare for triumph.

- ‘Is it possible to reach the top? Let’s try!’

Gothenburg, Sweden

Children learn much by interacting with each other and their environment. Climbing, running, jumping and talking are equally important actions. Luang Prabang, Lao
5. Harmony and contrast

In a city there is a need for both calm and lively environments. Sometimes we look for a more secluded and quiet place and other days we prefer a busier and more exciting surrounding. When both are combined into one, where a quiet and a harmonious space lies directly adjacent to a busy path-way much can be gained. People can then easily move between the two ‘extremes’.

3.63
The church porch offers a quiet refuge and just a few steps away, the intense and lively spring market is in progress.
Karlskrona, Sweden

3.64
Two young teenagers have claimed a small space as theirs. These spaces are versatile and offers privacy and comfort right in the midst of a public environment.
Norrköping, Sweden
Despite its central location, the large Lenin Park offers both relaxing and invigorating leisure time. Fishing becomes an enjoyment also to bystanders.
Bay Mau Lake, Hanoi, Vietnam

In a sunny corner of this central square, a ledge provides plenty of seats and a joyous opportunity to watch others heading elsewhere. Gothenburg, Sweden

To chat away an hour in the shade is not to be overlooked as an important activity in the urban environment. If you provide a seat in a sociable surrounding people will for sure make use of it. Hoan Kiem Lake, Hanoi, Vietnam
The paved area next to the Lenin statue in Hanoi has several badminton fields painted on it. The space becomes a recreational meeting ground for the young and the old, for citizens and tourists. It is an aesthetically, historical and harmonious space for living and learning. It invites the unexpected and provides a useful space for the occasional events - It is sociable.

Dien Bien Phu, Hanoi