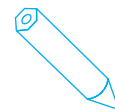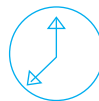# Toolkit

For measuring urban experiences of young children

Bernard van Leer FOUNDATION
A good start
for all children

Gehl

Urban95

Perspective from

95cm

Name:

Date/ time:

Weather:

Locations

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Intro

Building a partnership

In collaboration with Bernard van Leer's Urban95 program, Gehl has developed tools to better understand the experience of small children (ages 0-5) and their caregivers in the built environment. The Urban95 program aims to create healthy, prosperous, and vibrant cities where babies, toddlers and their families can thrive. This initiative is meant to make lasting change in the urban landscape and provide opportunities that can shape the first five years of a child's life. The tools presented in this guide are an adaptation of the Gehl tools, but tailored to small children and their caregivers. Following this mindset, we assume that by focusing on the urban realm's most vulnerable users we can better build cities that are good for everyone.

Public Life & Public Space

Gehl uses Public Space and Public Life surveys as a tool to understand how the form of the built environment impacts people's lives. Gehl uses a 'measure-test-refine' approach to design and planning, and through our Public Space Public Life survey (PSPL) we gather empirical evidence and arguments for improvements in the public realm. These surveys provide insight into public life by helping us understand the life of a place and what physical changes to the environment will create a more sustainable and liveable city for all. Surveys like these can be used at different levels of the planning process depending on the intended outcomes. They are both tools for evaluation as well as informing constructive dialogue and inform future strategies. When cities use public life data to guide decisions - whether design or policy based - the outcome is much better for people.

Urban95 objectives

The Urban95 program is working to pilot and scale innovations across green public space, mobility for families, data driven decision-making, and parent coaching. Bernard van Leer Foundation's specific areas of interest for developing these tools were interaction between caregivers and children, early childhood development, and the well-being of caregivers.

We adapted the Gehl PSPL tools and developed new tools with an explicit focus on early childhood, and then tested them in different public spaces and streets. The development of such tools is an important way to promote and enhance the Urban95 agenda within the field of urban planning and urban design.

People Moving Count

This tool records people moving through an area at a given time. It allows us to understand who is moving through and their form of mobility.

What

Counting people moving through a space and by what means they do so helps us understand how busy a space is, but how accessible it is with different modes of transportation. Here we can learn factors about a place that pin point what specific questions should be asked through the other tools. This tool is helpful to layer against the stationary activity mapping. For example, we can learn that a place has a high volume of people moving through, but very little people stopping to stay.

This can give us flows according to time of day, week, year and is comparable across cities and places.

When

This quantity data tool can be used in specific sites or at a city-wide scale and can be used to compare different cities or sites. When you know how many people are moving through, you can identify places for interventions or projects. If you know where the flows of people are you can identify where they should be supported. Once a intervention or project has been implemented, you can also use this as an evaluation tool – to define how the site has changed for people.

DIRECTIONS

- Stand at a location on your map, and count all of the people that pass you

- When doing a simple count – time yourself for 10 minutes. When doing a detailed count – count 200 people.

- For each person that passes, make a tally mark in the box. Write in the totals when you are finished.

- If there are too many people to count, simply make your best guess. Count people walking or biking in both directions on both sides of the street, including kids carried or rolled in strollers, people in a wheelchair, or women who are pregnant. If conducting the detailed count in a busy location, you will likely need to be two people counting different types of mobility

- Note on your sheets if anything out of the ordinary happens.

DATE	TIME	LOCATION	WEATHER

People Moving Count

Timing Count for 10 minutes. If in a busy location - count only one age category at a time. This count will allow you to collect the total numbers of people moving according to the time of day, week, or year.

	10 MIN	TOTALS
BABY		total
TODDLER		total
CHILD UP TO 5		total
CAREGIVER		total
OTHER		total

NOTES

DATE	TIME	LOCATION	WEATHER

Age and Mode Count

Timing: Count at least 200 people to get a validated sample size for finding the percentage of different age groups or modalities. It is helpful to pair with another person to count each category if in a busy location.

	MODE CATEGORIES	BABY	TODDLER	CHILD UP TO 5	CARE-GIVER	OTHER	TOTALS
PEDESTRIANS	**WALKING** (independently)						total
	LIMITED MOBILITY (Pregnant or other)						total
	SUPPORTED (supported. I.e.: stroller, hand in hand)						total
	ROLLING MANUAL						total
	CARRIED (any kind, I.e.: on someone's back or other)						total
	TOTAL AGE	Total	Total	Total	total	total	

DATE	TIME	LOCATION	WEATHER

Bikes Moving Count — Detailed

Timing: Count at least 200 people to get a validated sample size for finding the percentage of different age groups or modalities. It is helpful to pair with another person to count each category if in a busy location.

	MODE CATEGORIES	BABY	TODDLER	CHILD UP TO 5	CARE-GIVER	OTHER	TOTALS
BICYCLISTS	**PRIVATE BIKING** (independently)						total
	PASSENGER (Cargo bike, child seat, trailer)						total
	TOTAL AGE	Total	Total	Total	total	total	

Stationary Activity Mapping

This tool observes what kinds of stationary activities are happening in a place. It allows us to understand who is present and how a place invites for different uses.

What

In order to evaluate how a place is performing for people, we observe what kinds of stationary activities are happening in that place. When we understand what is happening, we can begin to identify what is working well and what enhancements can be made. The Urban95 plug-in for observing stationary activities includes observing the ways in which children and caregivers interact and type of play taking place. By tracking activities, who is doing them, and what type of interaction is happening, we can get an understanding of how inviting a place is for different people.

When

This quantity data tool can be used in specific sites or at a city-wide scale and can be used to compare different cities or sites. Observe stationary activities when you want to understand how many children or caregivers are present, what activity patterns are occurring, and what opportunities are available for play and interaction to occur. This helps provide a baseline understanding of the use of the space – generate ideas for improvement and investments (such as programming of the space) – and informs development strategies. You can also use this as an evaluation tool to compare before an after data.

DIRECTIONS

- Mapping people spending time is like taking a snapshot of all activities taking place in the survey area at a given moment (imagine looking down from above and taking a picture). It is not based on predesignated time.

- Walk through the space outlined on your map

- Map everyone staying inside the outlined area, not only along the line. Do not map people moving through unless they are moving within the area (IE: a skateboarder practicing tricks). If people are moving around the area, mark them as multiple.

- Use the menu card to apply Urban95 categories to your survey sheet

- Use individual maps even if mapping more than one location or mapping the same location more than once and summarize all activities on each map individually

- Take notes of any observations and note if large groups are doing the same activity

DATE	TIME	LOCATION	WEATHER

Stationary Activity Mapping

Insert site map here

Stationary Activity Mapping

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
GENDER OTHER/UNSURE																					
MALE																					
FEMALE																					
AGE BABY																					
TODDLER																					
CHILD UP TO 5																					
6-15 YOUTH																					
16-24 YOUNG ADULT																					
25-64 ADULT																					
65+																					
POSTURE STANDING																					
SITTING - PUBLIC																					
SITTING - COMMERCIAL																					
SITTING - INFORMAL																					
LYING DOWN																					
MULTIPLE (MOVING AROUND)																					

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
ACTIVITIES																					
WAITING FOR TRANSPORT																					
EATING/DRINKING																					
ENGAGED WITH COMMERCE																					
CULTURAL ACTIVITY																					
USING ELECTRONICS																					
GROUPING																					
ALONE																					
PAIR – Child – child / – Child – caregiver / – Caregiver – other adult																					
3–6																					
7+ – Children / – Adults / – Mixed																					

Activities Menu

ACTIVITIES	RECREATION - ACTIVE	EXERCISING	
		PLAYING	
	RECREATION - PASSIVE	OBSERVING	PEOPLE / ACTIVITIES
			LANDMARKS / BUILDINGS
			NATURE / LANDSCAPES
			OTHER
		PLAYING	
		AFFECTIONATE	KISSING
			HUGGING
			BREAST-FEEDING
			HAND HOLDING
		READING AND WRITING	NEWSPAPER
			BOOK
			NOTEBOOK
		CREATING	DRAWING
			PAINTING
			PLAYING MUSIC
			OTHER
		RESTING	SLEEPING
			RELAXING
			HANGING OUT
			OTHER

FORMAL	WITHOUT PROPS
	WITH NATURAL MATERIAL
	WITH BROUGHT OBJECTS
INFORMAL	WITHOUT PROPS
	WITH NATURAL MATERIAL
	WITH BROUGHT OBJECTS

FORMAL	WITHOUT PROPS
	WITH NATURAL MATERIAL
	WITH BROUGHT OBJECTS
INFORMAL	WITHOUT PROPS
	WITH NATURAL MATERIAL
	WITH BROUGHT OBJECTS

INSTRUCTIONS FOR ADDING CATEGORIES AND SUB-CATEGORIES FOR ACTIVITIES

- All stationary activities categories are optional. It is advised to look at different ways people are staying based on the unique context or specific research question. A study may choose to substitute or add categories.

- There are many ways to collect data on the type of play children are engaged in. Within the category passive and active recreation there is a subcategory play. Play can be broken down into formal play (play with or on the built environment that is intended for play - IE: on a playground or with toys) or informal play (play that is self determined or on the built environment that is not intended for play - IE: on building steps or hide and seek).

- Playing without props, with natural material, or with brought objects can be interesting depending on what you want to learn, but those categories can also be substituted.

- When filling in the survey sheet, write the activity in this manner:

  Recreation_active/Playing/Formal/With natural material

Urban95 Quality Criteria

This tool assesses specific urban qualities from the perspective of caregivers and young children.
It is an informative discussion tool that allows us to highlight central characteristics of a public space for human well-being.

What

The Urban95 Quality Criteria looks specifically at caregivers and young children. For small children and their caregivers, the quality of a space is important as is how connected and accessible it is, what kind of amenities are available and what kind of interaction between caregivers and young children is supported by the built environment. This tool offers deep insights into the quality of a place. This tool is meant to research the quality of a public space and how it is experienced by its users.

When

This qualitative data tool can be used in many different types of public spaces in many different cities but is not to be used to compare sites from different cities or countries. Use this quality criteria to conduct an assessment to understand what is impacting the use, or lack of use, of a public space. The tool can be used in the initial analysis phase and during a project development. It can be used as a starting point for an in-depth analysis, as a way to create a common language for practitioners and designers, to identify potentials for improvement, and as a way to evaluate a place.

You can both use the tool alone as a surveyor, but also with people in the public to fill out themselves. By having others fill in the sheet, you can learn more about how specific users perceive a space.

DIRECTIONS

- Select your site: plaza, park, square or street. Spaces with low activity can still be interesting to assess with this tool.

- Take a few minutes to simply observe. Gain an understanding of the space before you do the survey itself. Depending on where you stand, you may find a different Quality Criteria outcome.

- If in groups, perform the survey on your own and convene at the end for a conversation and comparison of evaluations.

- Assess and take note of the individual public space and whether it lives up to the criteria. Remember this is conducted for children and their caregivers, so keep that user group in mind. For every criterion, give it a score: a happy, neutral or sad face (meaning yes, in between, or no).

NOTES

DATE

TIME

LOCATION

WEATHER

Urban95 Quality Criteria

Protection

Protection against traffic and accidents
- Eliminating fear of traffic
- Safe crossings with children
- Safe cycling routes
- Available with of sidewalks adapted to strollers
- Clear waiting places
- Slow moving traffic

Protection from crime and violence
- Lively public realm
- Passive surveillance options
- Well lit
- Human scale
- Mix of uses

Protection against unpleasant sensory experiences
- Protection against:
  Wind/draft
  Rain/snow
  Cold/heat
  Dust, noise, glare
- Free from trash

Basic Needs

The feeling of comfort
- Safe noise level at 55dB
- Protection against pollution at 95cm eye-level
- Surroundings that feel safe for children and caregiver

Opportunities for good hygiene and health
- Access to fresh water
- Safety to breastfeed in private
- Diaper changing area separate from feeding areas
- Accessible bathrooms
- Well maintained bathrooms

Convenient opportunities for consumption
- Close proximity to cafes or restaurants with eating and drinking possibilities
- Diversity in food options for shopping
- Nutritious food options for eating or buying

Comfort

Opportunities to walk and cycle
- Walkability with children
- Surfaces for slow moving stroller
- Accessibility for strollers children
- Clear way-finding
- Sidewalk for stroller/good curb

Opportunities to stop & stay
- Attractive & functional edges
- Invitations for intended use
- Zones for sitting with children
- Seats near play area
- Mix of seating typologies
- Resting opportunities
- Ability to park strollers
- Ability to observe child - passive & active

Opportunities to see
- Opportunities to observe surroundings
- Lighting (when dark)
- Access to nature
- Visibility at 95cm eye level
- Rich sensory experiences
- Stimulating built environment

Interaction

Invitations to interact with environment
- Presence of interesting and inviting environmental elements
- Variation in the natural elements and built environment that is present
- Possibility to interact with nature at the height of 95cm

Opportunities to talk & listen
- Low noise levels
- Seating conducive to communicating
- Place for child & caregiver to talk about environment

Opportunities for play & exercise
- Inviting playscapes for a mix of ages
- Children's physical activities
- Street playscapes
- Temporary activities
- Ability to interact spontaneously
- Challenging play
- In summer/winter/day/night

Connection

Opportunities for flexibility
- Flexible and impermanent programming that encourages use at different times of day
- Convenient to spend time based on different purposes

Opportunities to access
- Ability to access the place with multiple modes of transportation
- Without physical barriers (e.g fences or traffic)

Highly integrated
- A close proximity to amenities and services - highly mixed
- Opportunity to integrate this place into daily patterns and activities
- Clear routes to/from/through

Intercept Survey

Intercept surveys capture information about why caretakers and their children are spending time in a place. This allows us to gain deeper insight into what the other survey tools uncover.

What

Intercept surveys capture information about why caretakers and their children are spending time in a place. Through the intercept surveys we can learn qualitative information, such as why are people visiting a specific place and how long they plan to stay. It allows us to learn how people perceive a place and track sentiment. We can learn if a caretaker feels the place is of high quality for a child to play, if a place is somewhere they could stop casually on their way to another destination, or if it is a place they frequent. This tool gives complete data, but is limited to a small sample size due to the intensive time required to survey people.

When

Intercept surveys are used at a specific site or for comparisons across a city. They are valuable as an evaluation tool, and measure before and after a concrete intervention in a public space. Intercept surveys involve asking people who are present in a public space to answer a few questions about their experience.

DIRECTIONS

- Approach people with small children 0-5. The questionnaire is tailored to that demographic, but if others are curious they can take the questionnaire too. Aim to obtain as many questionnaires as possible from people who can answer from the perspective of a caregiver and young child.

- You may deliver the questionnaire questions verbally or hand the respondent a form.

- If your site is a busy area, you may consider asking every 3rd person to avoid surveyor bias (i.e. only surveying people the surveyor feels comfortable talking to).

- Be sure to record the date of when the questionnaires were collected on the questionnaires themselves.

Intercept Survey

Thank you for completing this questionnaire. **Your response will be confidential.**

DATE 📅	TIME 🕐	LOCATION 📍	WEATHER ☀️
✏️			

General

1. Why are you here today?
(check all that apply)
☐ Personal need
☐ Child needs
☐ Passing through
☐ Other. Please describe:
_____
_____

2. How safe do you feel in this place?
☐ Safe
☐ Neutral
☐ Unsafe

3. Generally, how often do you visit this place?
☐ Less than once a week
☐ Once a week
☐ More than once a week

4. Who is in your party today?
(Write the number of people in each category. Include yourself.)
___ Babies
___ Toddlers
___ Young children
___ (7-10) Older children
___ (11-14) Teen
___ (15-19) Teen
___ Parent/s
___ Friend/s
___ Caregiver/s
___ Other family members: _____

5. How long do you plan to stay at this place today?
☐ Less than 5 minutes
☐ 5 - 10 minutes
☐ 10 - 30 minutes
☐ More than 30 minutes

6. Have you or the children you are here with met or interacted with anyone new here?
☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Not sure/ we just got here

7. What is the likelihood you will interact with others you did not come here with?

○———○———○———○———○———○
Not at all   Neutral   Absolutely

8. How did you get here today?
(check with all that fits)
☐ Walk
☐ Bike
☐ Bus/shuttle
☐ Private car
☐ Taxi/Rideshare
☐ Other. Please write:
_____

9. Is it easy to move around in this place with a child?

○———○———○———○———○———○
Not at all   Neutral   Absolutely

Specifically, for play areas

10. Is it clear that this is a play area or that it was okay to play here?
(if applicable)

○———○———○———○———○———○
Not at all   Neutral   Absolutely

11. **Do you feel that this place is a high quality place for a child to play?**
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Not sure

12. **What do you like about this place?**

> Please write:

13. **Is this place comfortable for you as a caregiver?**
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Not sure

14. **Is this a place for short or long stops?**

> Please write:

Demographic Questions

(Your information will be kept strictly confidential.)

1. Do you identify as
- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female
- ☐ Other

2. What is your age?
- ☐ 15-20
- ☐ 20-60
- ☐ 60+

3. Where do you live?
- ☐ Please note your post code:_____

NOTES

Sensory Mapping

This tool maps how children's senses can be used in the built environment. It allows us to gain knowledge on what environmental prompts can be stimulating for small children 0–5.

What

Mapping how children use their senses provides insight into how the built environment can influence children's sensory development. Architects and designers use design to trigger visual senses, but equally important is stimulating all senses such as feeling and balance. For young children, walking on changing texture of the pavement or steps on which to balance when climbing can stimulate more than touch, but the development of balance and motor skills. The built environment offers opportunities to challenge and build strength, even when not designed intentionally to do so.

When

Sensory Mapping is used at a specific site but not for comparisons across a city. It is a valuable qualitative discussion tool, allowing the surveyor to 'place themselves in a child's shoes'.

DIRECTIONS

- Use the symbols provided to note where different senses can be engaged in a given area.

- Each sense can be triggered positively or negatively, so note each symbol with a + or -

- This exercise is subjective, but should be carried out from a child's perspective, so if you have the opportunity - follow the actions of a child in the space, but if you cannot follow a child, you must imagine what a child's behaviour could be in the space. (IE: are there engaging things to touch? Is there something stimulating to look at such as a mural or plants? Or, is there loud noise from traffic or construction?)

DATE	TIME	LOCATION	WEATHER

Sensory Mapping

Insert site map here

		TOUCH
□	+ −	**TOUCH** i.e. play equipment
○	+ −	**SEE** i.e. Access to nature
△	+ −	**HEAR** i.e. noise from Traffic
◁▷	+ −	**SMELL** i.e. food odours
⊠	+ −	**BALANCE** i.e. uneven pavement

NOTES:

NOTES: