Libraries
and
Urban Development

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Libraries and urban development

We are not building a library for
the city. We are building the city.
REP

Libraries and urban development
Challenges

To do that the library has to:

- Think of itself not as an independent actor but as an active and vibrant part of the city and its development.

- Collaborate with cultural and urban planners to strengthen qualities of the city.

- Think less in ”library” and more in processes and synergi.

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Dorte Skot-Hansen
Biblioteket i byudviklingen
– oplevelse, kreativitet og innovation

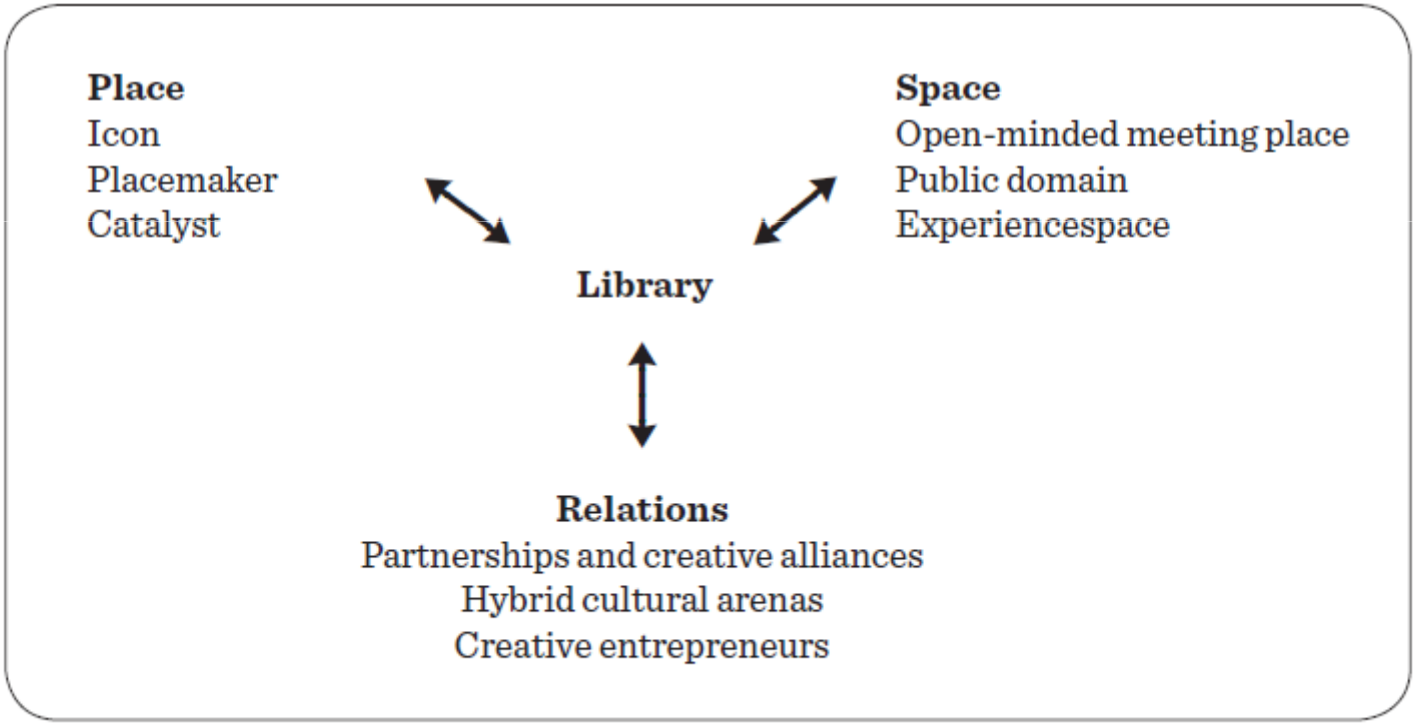
Libraries and urban development research-questions

- How can the library contribute to the city's and urban district's image, attractiveness and identity as part of a strategic urban development?

- How can the library as an urban space support citizens in need of public meeting-places and experiences?

- How can the library contribute to the development of the city's creativity and innovation through new relationships?

Libraries and urban development
Model of the public library in urban development



Libraries and urban development
Agenda

1. Short overall introduction to the connection between libraries and urban development

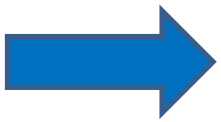
2. Some reflections on how libraries can be used as a strategic tool in urban development

3. Some reflection on how libraries can be inspired by urban planning.

Libraries and urban development
Context

Libraries are today facing major challenges

- Explosive developments in technology and media
- The library between the virtual and physical
- The library in competition
- New users
- Cuts and savings
- Uncertainty about the future role of the library

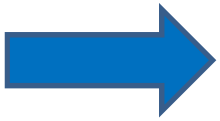


Process of transition

Libraries and urban development
Context

Cities are today facing major challenges

- The global competition
- Transition from industrial to postindustrial knowledge cities
- Cities have to stimulate creativity, innovation and cohesion
- And attract and retain businesses, tax-payers and tourists
- And think in terms of visibility, branding and staging



Process of transition

Libraries and urban development
Context

- Cultural institutions are today seen as major factors in urban development
  - ➡ Bilbao-effect
- New focus on the importance of the library
  - ➡ The renaissance of the physical library

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The library as an icon

Libraries and urban development
The library as an icon

The icon is

- Different and unique
- Famous (or at least intended to be)
- Of symbolic/aesthetic quality

- By appering as an icon the library can be an important part of urban branding and underpin the crediability of the city to investors and visitors

Iconic for whom?

The library as a placemaker

Libraries and urban development
The library as a placemaker

The placemaker is

- An active part of urban planning
- Contributing to urban diversity
- Creatin ”public domain” and new stages for experience

- By being a placemaker the library can establish new attractive city spaces or revitalize former industrial districts etc.

Are they contributing to everyday life and liviability for the local inhabitants or are they excluding the former residents?

The library as a catalyst

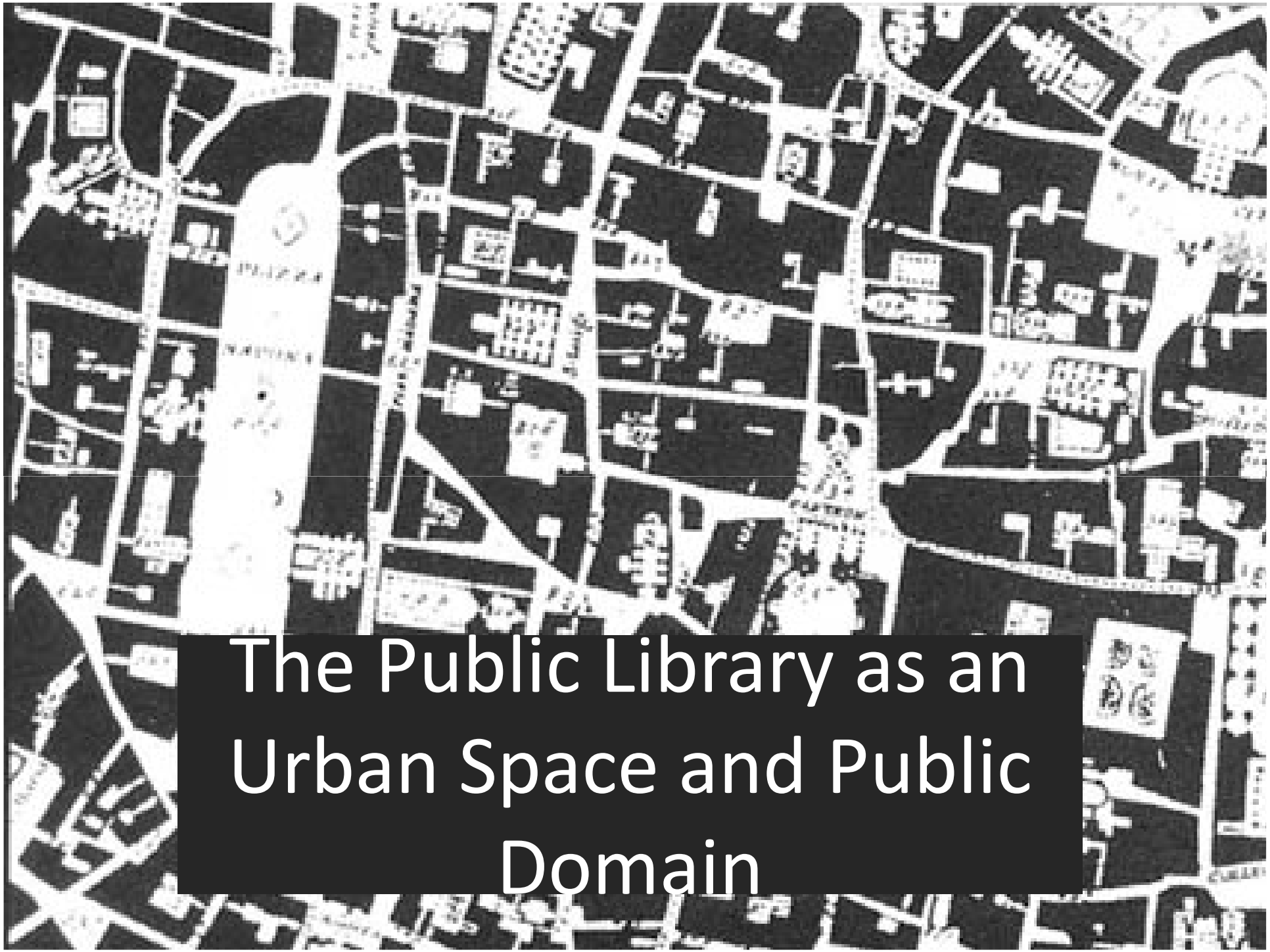
Libraries and urban development
The library as a catalyst

The catalyst is

- Boosting local identity and cohesion
- Adressing social an economic challenges
- Initiating local innovation and co-opration

- By being a catalyst the library play an important part in the development of socially and economically challenged neighbourhoods

To what extent can the library re-conceptualize its activities without moving away from being a library?



The Public Library as an Urban Space and Public Domain

Agenda:

- How can the design of libraries be inspired of urban planning:

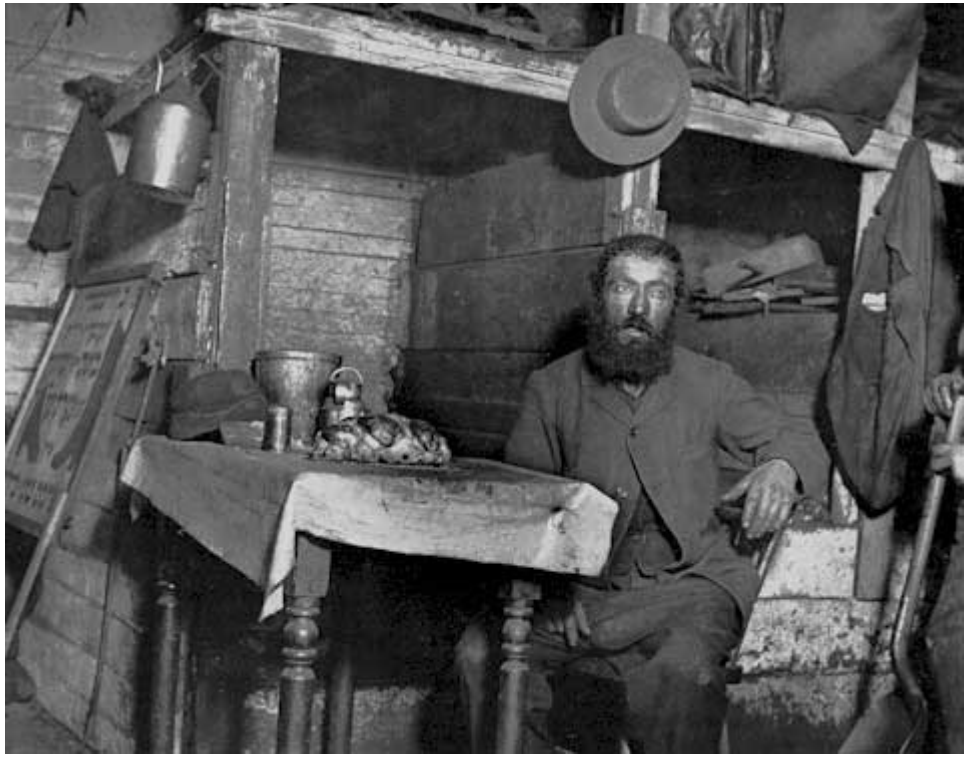
- How to attract people?
- How to support exchange between different social groups?

Jan Gehl: Vibrant urban spaces

Arnold Reijndrop: Public domain

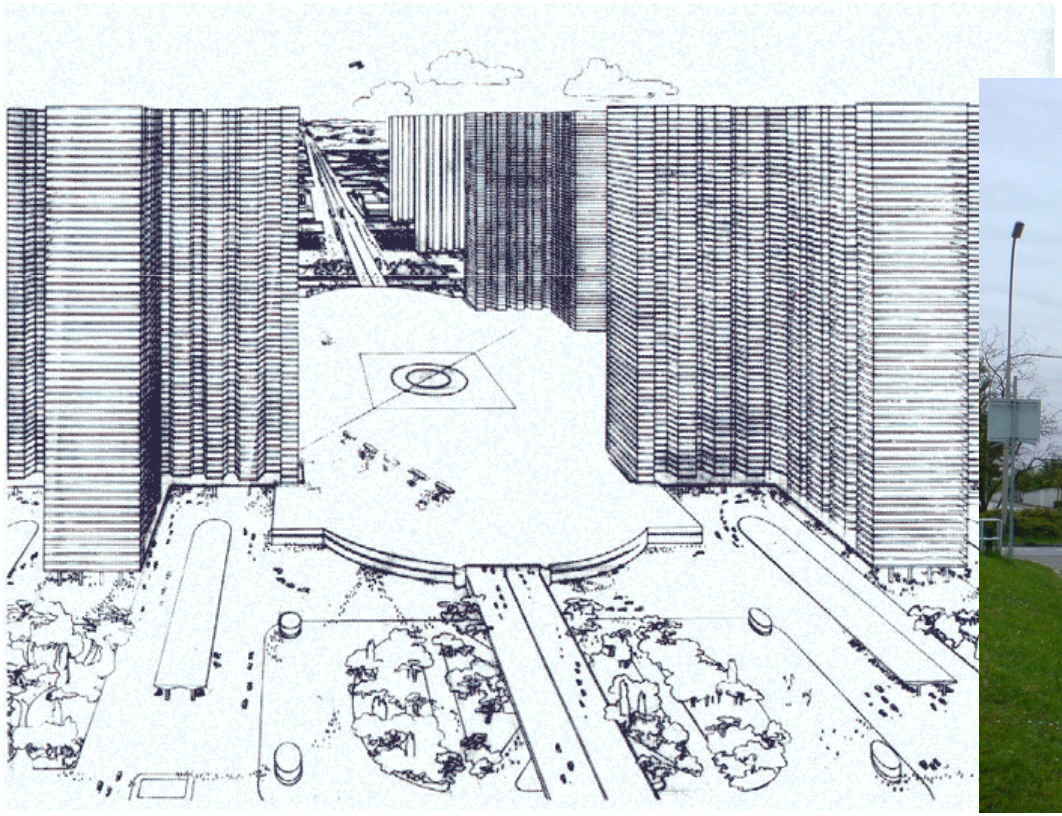
The metropol as slum: Jacob Riis

Bandits roost, 1988



Sabbath in the coal cellar, 1890

The modern functionally divided city



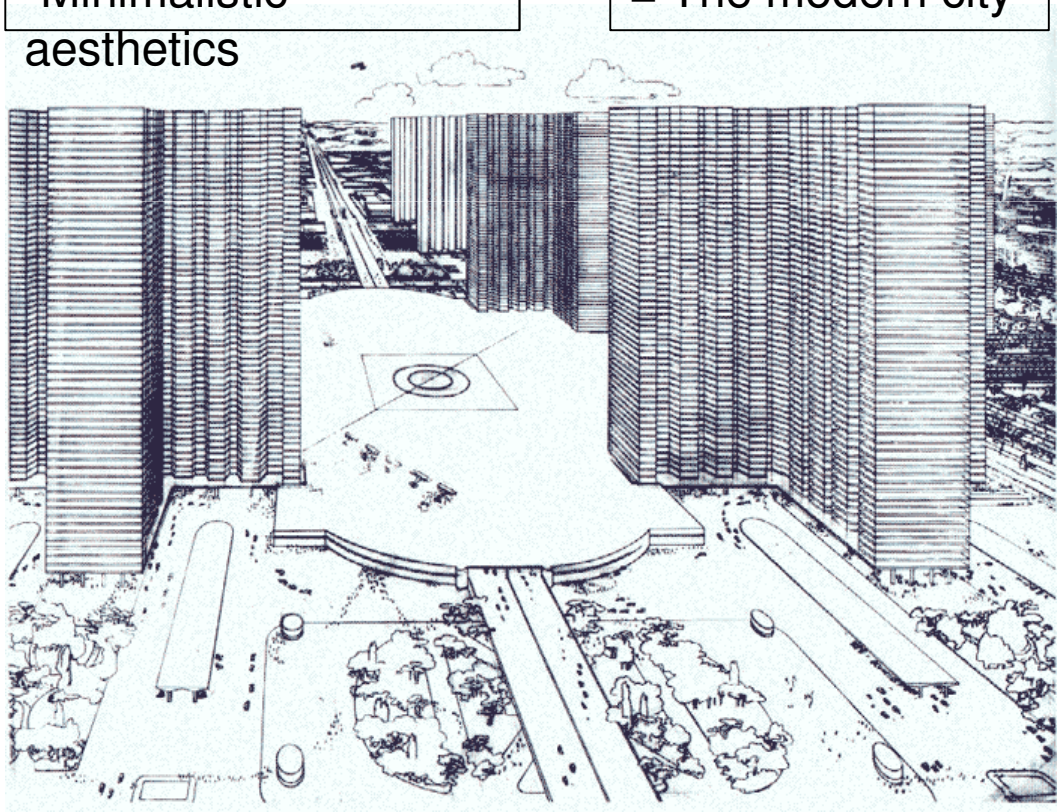
Le Courbusier, Radiant City, 1935

Høje Gladsaxe 1966

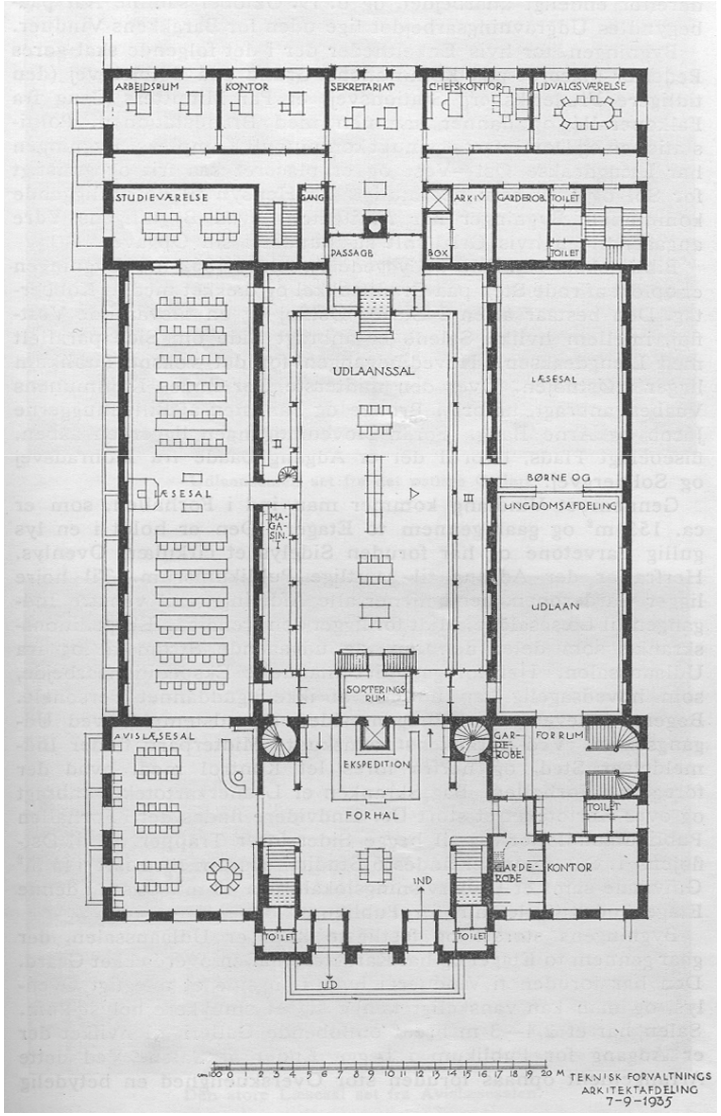
Modernity spaces: City and library

Focus on:
-Rationality
-Planning
-Minimalistic aesthetics

Grid-stucture + functionally division
= The modern city

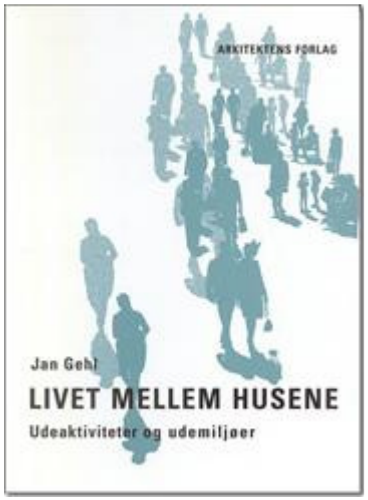


Le Courbusier, Radiant City, 1935



Frederiksberg Hovedbibliotek 1935

Jan Gehl:
Life between the buildings

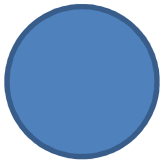


Quality of the urban space

	Bad quality	**Good quality**
Necessary activities		
Optional activities		
Social activities		

Gehl's model and the library

Quality of the urban space

	Bad quality	**Good quality**	**The physical library**
Necessary activities			The classic library focusing on storage and lending
Optional activities			The library as: - Inspiration - Participation - And a place to stay
Social activities			The library as a meetingplace - The 3rd place - Public Domain - Low intensive meeting

Challenge for the library:
To create spaces that supports all kinds of activities

Vibrant urban spaces: Basic rules

- Blur the functionally division
- Scale and ground design
- People – and not architecture – are the main attraction
- Many and different possibilities for seating

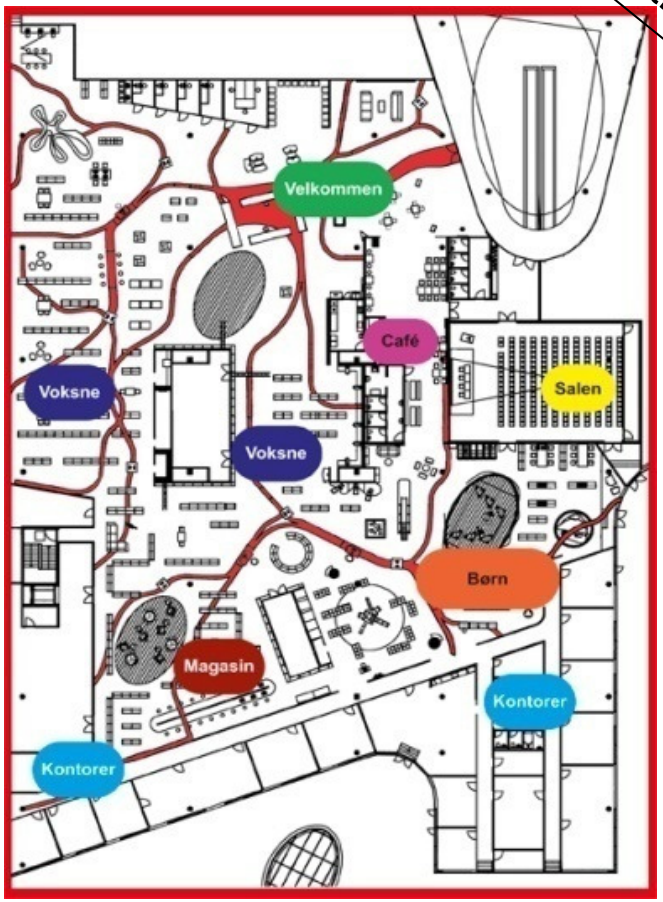
The ideal city: The medival city
Here the old city in Stockholm

Vibrant spaces: city and library

No grid structure
No large scale
No division of function

The mixed city

The floating library space, Hjørring Bibliotek



Openbare Bibliotheek Amsterdam OBA

- Different kinds of seating
- People as an attraction

Basic rules for seating:

- Cover my back
- Something to look at (especially other people)
- Different zones

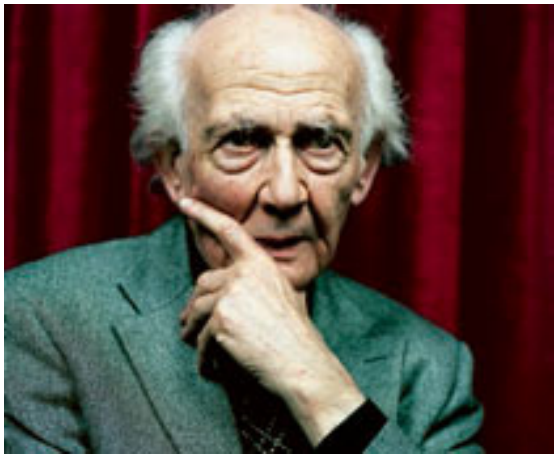
The Library as Public Domain

Background for Public Domain:
The development of urban social geography

The researchers became worried

Richard Sennet:
Fall of public man

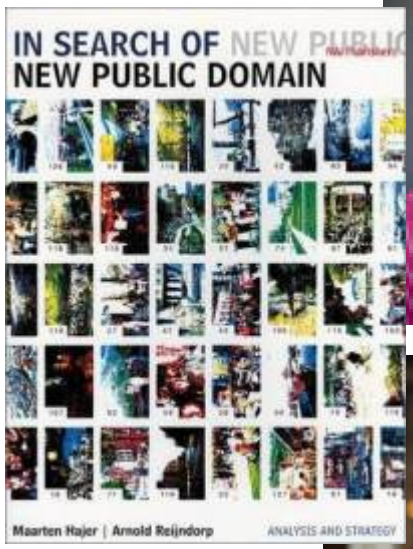
Zugmunt Bauman:
Liquid modernity



Ray Oldenburg:
The great good place

Robert Putnam:
Bowling alone

But we can do something!



- Blur boarders every time you can
- Create the unexpected
- Connect different social areas of the city
- Blur the functionally division
- Focus on exchange – and not meetings

The library as public domain - 3 strategies

- Locating the library on the social borderlines in the city
- Make a transzone (urban space) between the library and the city
- A mixed and multifunctional library space

Summing up: Public libraries and urban development

The library as a place

How can libraries be used in urban planning as a strategic tool?

- As an icon
- As a placemaker
- As a catalyst

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The library as a space

How can libraries be inspired by urban planning?

- How to attract people to the library
- How can libraries support exchange between different social groups

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