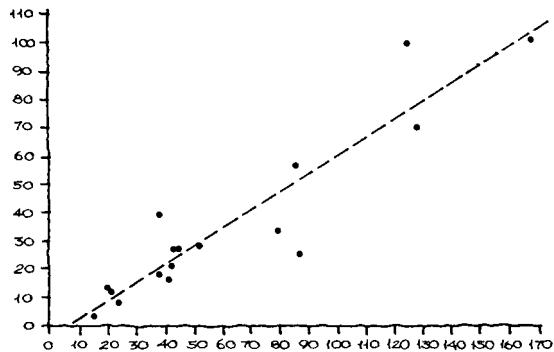


	Quality of the physical environment	
	Poor	Good
Necessary activities	●	●
Optional activities	●	●●●●●●●●●●
'Resultant' activities (Social activities)	●	●



The more time people spend outdoors, the more frequently they meet and the more they talk.

Chart plotting the relationship between the number of outdoor activities and frequency of interactions. (Street life studies in Melbourne [1].)

Graphic representation of the relationship between the quality of outdoor spaces and the rate of occurrence of outdoor activities.

When the quality of outdoor areas is good, optional activities occur with increasing frequency. Furthermore, as levels of optional activity rise, the number of social activities usually increases substantially.

Social activities are all activities that depend on the presence of others in public spaces. Social activities include children at play, greetings and conversations, communal activities of various kinds, and finally – as the most widespread social activity – passive contacts, that is, simply seeing and hearing other people.

Different kinds of social activities occur in many places: in dwellings; in private outdoor spaces, gardens, and balconies; in public buildings; at places of work; and so on; but in this context only those activities that occur in publicly accessible spaces are examined.

These activities could also be termed “resultant” activities, because in nearly all instances they evolve from activities linked to the other two activity categories. They develop in connection with the other activities because people are in the same space, meet, pass by one another, or are merely within view.

Social activities occur spontaneously, as a direct consequence of people moving about and being in the same spaces. This implies that social activities are indirectly supported whenever necessary and optional activities are given better conditions in public spaces.

The character of social activities varies, depending on the context in which they occur. In the residential streets, near schools, near places of work, where there are a limited number of people with common interests

or backgrounds, social activities in public spaces can be quite comprehensive: greetings, conversations, discussions, and play arising from common interests and because people “know” each other, if for no other reason than that they often see one another.

In city streets and city centers, social activities will generally be more superficial, with the majority being passive contacts – seeing and hearing a great number of unknown people. But even this limited activity can be very appealing.

Very freely interpreted, a social activity takes place every time two people are together in the same space. To see and hear each other, to meet, is in itself a form of contact, a social activity. The actual meeting, merely being present, is furthermore the seed for other, more comprehensive forms of social activity.

This connection is important in relation to physical planning. Although the physical framework does not have a direct influence on the quality, content, and intensity of social contacts, architects and planners can affect the possibilities for meeting, seeing, and hearing people – possibilities that both take on a quality of their own and become important as background and starting point for other forms of contact.

This is the background for the investigation in this book of meeting possibilities and opportunities to see and hear other people. Another reason for a comprehensive review of these activities is that precisely the presence of other people, activities, events, inspiration, and stimulation comprise one of the most important qualities of public spaces altogether.

If we look back at the street scene that was the starting point for defining the three categories of