



stops (buses, subways). Along the length of a street there might be one center of action or several. One side of the street may be busy while the other side is quiet. Activity is also distributed in bands across the section of a path. There is often a band of stationary activity such as window shoppers standing at store windows or people sitting at sidewalk cafes. On wider paths we sometimes find two streams of movement, one faster and one slower. Or the two bands may be pedestrians moving in opposing directions. Bands can also accommodate bicycles, strollers, and other small-wheeled vehicles. Finally, a sidewalk could have areas where groups of people huddle for conversation or where scooters and bicycles are parked. These linear streams of activity come and go, ebb and flow over time cycles and in response to contextual factors such as weather and special events.

Ambience

Path ambience is strongly affected by type, volume, and speed of vehicular traffic that shares the space with pedestrians. Atmosphere is likewise driven by these same attributes of foot traffic. A street can be noisy and smoggy with multiple lanes of speeding traffic composed of every conceivable kind of vehicle. Or there may be only slow-moving bicycles in a narrow alley. An urban pathspace might accommodate large bustling crowds of tourists walking briskly, bumpingly, ten abreast. Or only an occasional, solitary, doddling old man with his grey-muzzled dog. Vehicular and pedestrian activity creates energy, vitality. Movement, stimulation, and aliveness are created

by a kind of rubbing friction that builds up an electrical charge. If handled improperly, heavy vehicular presence can degrade the pedestrian experience. In these unfortunate instance, speed feels dangerous and threatening, noise assaults the senses, and belching exhausts are anything but life-affirming.

The feel of a path involves its sense of purpose, its reason for being, and role in the tapestry of city places. A street might serve as the axial/ceremonial approach to an important building or monument, as a linear collection of the town's art galleries, or as the main vehicular arterial to the city center. A path could be where all the apartment garages face, where trucks make deliveries and collect trash, or where street vendors congregate. Ambience is the sum of our memories, expectations, emotions, sensations, preferences, choices, and actions. A synthesis of properties of place and human possibilities and processes. Our experience of atmosphere is as much about us as about qualities of the path. Experience in urban paths is shaped by both the physical place and our anticipation, readiness, alertness, mindfulness. The extent to which our perceptual apparatus is open or closed, sensitive or numb. We can be engaged with path qualities with all our senses and sense-making capability or preoccupied with place-eclipsing thoughts that situate us in our minds instead of the built environment. Path feel is affected by our environmental preferences, our positive and negative predispositions to scale, composition, material, crowds, traffic. Personal leanings regarding visual, audial, olfactory, tactile and taste environments map onto the particulars of this path, and the two interact to produce our sense of place, energy, and mood.

Historical significance

The feel of a path and our emotions when we're there are affected by the historical significance of the place. A street may be especially important to the town's story. It could mark an ancient route that early settlers used, that revolutionaries stormed down to take the palace, or that victorious armies paraded along on their way back into the city. The impact of historical significance on path ambience and on the community regard for the path is dependent on our awareness of its history. When a road has a significant past that is understood and appreciated, history becomes a tangible context, a medium in which the present place, present functions, and present attributes are situated. The spirits of important events and people are very alive there, and they combine with our immediate experience to create a deeper and