

MEDIA RELEASE

NEWS FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA

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ATTENTION: Chiefs of Staff, News Directors



UTAS brings ‘urban planning rock star’ to Tasmania

An eminent Danish architect and urban planner renowned as the ‘rock star of urban planning’ will arrive in Tasmania next week to meet urban planners and give public lectures in Hobart and Launceston

Professor Jan Gehl is an expert on the revitalisation of public spaces and the transformation of cities and towns into people-friendly places. He has been part of an effort to transform the roadways of Copenhagen into pedestrian and bicycle-friendly streets, while still providing for the car.

Having advised numerous other European cities, Prof. Gehl has worked extensively in one of Australia’s most pedestrian-friendly cities, Melbourne, and is now helping New York create new public spaces, ‘shared streets’ and bicycle strategies.

UTAS Vice Chancellor, Professor Daryl Le Grew, who has worked with Prof. Gehl in Australia, said that the University has an important role in bringing far-sighted strategic thinkers to Tasmania.

“Prof. Gehl’s ideas on the human side of architecture are renowned. He is at the forefront of the global move to retrieve city spaces for people,” he said.

“Prof. Gehl has a saying that expresses his philosophy in a nutshell: *First life, then spaces, then buildings – the other way around never works.* We at the University hope the members of local government and community and urban planners can draw some inspiration from his ideas.”

Prof. Gehl will give a public lecture entitled *Cities for People* at the Stanley Burbury Theatre in Hobart on Tuesday 24 February at 6pm, and in Launceston at the Tramshed and Atrium at the School of Architecture on Thursday 26 February at 4pm.

During his visit Prof. Gehl will meet Tasmanian planning groups, including:

- Senior State Government representatives;
- Hobart City Council;
- The Southern Regional Councils Authority;
- The Sullivan’s Cove Waterfront Authority;
- Hobart City Council;
- Launceston City Council and northern developers.

He will also meet key representatives from peak bodies such as the Local Government Association of Tasmania, the Australian Institute of Architects, the Planning Institute of Australia and the Australian Institute of Landscape Architects.

Professor Gehl will be available to speak the media on Tuesday 24 February at 10am at the Hobart Town hall.

For further information or photographs of Prof. Gehl contact Sharon Webb, University of Tasmania, ph. no's below.

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Professor Jan Gehl

Words from Jan Gehl:

“In a Society becoming steadily more privatized with private homes, cars, computers, offices and shopping centers, the public component of our lives is disappearing. It is more and more important to make the cities inviting, so we can meet our fellow citizens face to face and experience directly through our senses. Public life in good quality public spaces is an important part of a democratic life and a full life.”

“Only architecture that considers human scale and interaction is successful architecture.”

- **Jan Gehl** is Professor of Urban Design at the School of Architecture at Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts in Copenhagen.
- **His research** on public spaces and public life began in Copenhagen but was quickly applied to many other cities in Europe, North America, Asia and Australia. His ideas and approaches to design for public spaces incorporate the cutting edge of technology without losing sight of what best supports and enhances people’s experience of everyday life in the public realm.
- **His company**, *Gehl Architects – Urban Quality Consultants*, focus strongly on the facilitation of public life in public spaces, often pushing the boundaries beyond common uses of the public realm. To Gehl, design always begins with an analysis of the spaces between buildings. Only after a vision has been established of what type of public life one wants to see flourishing, is attention given to the surrounding buildings and how they can work together to support public spaces.
- **His first book**, *Life between Buildings*, grew from five years of research on the form and use of public space.
- **Gehl’s other publications** include *Public Spaces- Public Life* and *New Urban Spaces*, which have been published in various countries across Europe, North America, and Asia. They describe Gehl’s intensive research on the social uses of public space and people’s experiences and opinions about public spaces. They present a method for evaluating city quality, discuss how our sensory abilities affect our use of space, and make recommendations for how design techniques can encourage active use of outdoor space.
- **In their work with cities around the world** Gehl Architects educate city planning departments about the value of their public spaces and the quality of public life taking place between their buildings. These studies usually consist of three parts - *a quality evaluation of the public spaces, a recording of public life in the spaces and, based on these, recommendations for improvements* - which provide substantial knowledge of how the city is being used and how it can be improved. Because Gehl Architects recognize that making recommendations alone is often not enough to convince decision makers, many of the studies entail extensive demonstrations of the recommendations’ benefits. Major studies of this type have been conducted for Copenhagen, Stockholm, Oslo, Riga, Perth, Adelaide, Melbourne and London. Gehl emphasizes the importance of gradual transformation in urban redevelopments, in order to make changes sustainable and to give people time to adapt to physical changes, adjust their life styles, and experiment with the new ways of using the city.