

Pre-study of Stenpiren, Gothenburg

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CHAPTER 4.3

PRE-STUDY OF STENPIREN, GOTHENBURG

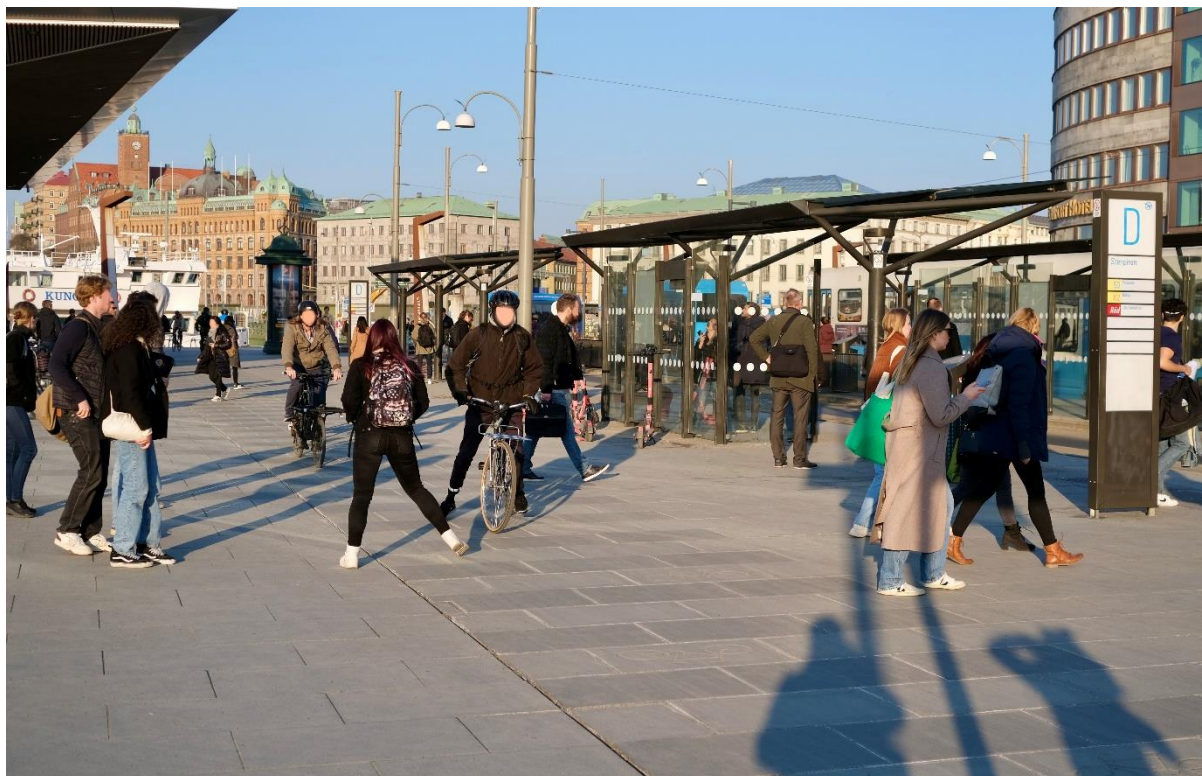


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CHAPTER 4.3

PRE-STUDY OF STENPIREN, GOTHENBURG¹

Written by Jonas Larsen – with inputs from Kathrine Norsk (RUC) and COWI Sweden



INTRODUCTION

This section discusses our pre-studies in Gothenburg. It roughly follows the same structure as the last two sections. First, we introduce Stenpiren and discuss the historical and current use of the square, in part by dividing it into zones. Second, we identify some of these locations' rhythms and flows. Third, we analyse the uniqueness of the walking environment of Stenpiren, focusing on what is unique about this location from a walking perspective, paying particular attention to conflicts between cyclists and pedestrians on a faintly demarcated cycle lane. Fourth, we outline some place-specific walking practices. The conclusion highlights the main findings and suggests design interventions for the next phase.

METHODS

Most of the fieldwork took place for a week at the end of October 2021. We physically mapped the square, performed on-street observations with photography, wrote field notes, and did 53 street interviews and filmed from the top of a balcony of a hospital overlooking Stenpiren. The interviews explored how people experience and walk on the square and how the location could become a better place for walking and stationary activities.

Walking, and especially ‘stationary activities’, such as sitting on a bench, are influenced by seasonality and the weather. Our research took place in wet and cold late autumn weather, which is not ideal for many staying activities, which largely explains why few people socialised on the square. In mid-March 2022, when we did additional research, the temperature was high for the season, and the sun was out. It felt like spring, and many socialised on the benches and quays. During this day, 15 respondents walked across the square with eye-tracking video glasses and were subsequently interviewed.

CASE AREA

Stenpiren is a newly renovated square in the port of central Gothenburg. Stenpiren is designed to be a major hub for public transport, active mobility and public life. From a sustainable transport perspective, Stenpiren is also interesting because cars – whether moving or parked – play only a small role in the new design; it is designed for public transport, cycling (a cycle lane runs through the square) and especially walking. This makes it an exciting place to study commuting and how the provision of public transport influences walking inclinations. Moreover, this place highlights that ‘last mile walking’ is tied up with arriving on time and the slower rhythms of waiting and queuing (Bissell, 2007; Kellermann, 2020). While walking on Stenpiren is dominated by commuting, it is traversed by people who walk along the harbour front with the fantastic views, the fresh air, and the unhindered flat terrain.

Stenpiren is also an excellent case to study interactions and conflicts between cyclists and pedestrians (City of Gothenburg, 2017, for previous studies elsewhere, see Kang & Fricker, 2016; Beitel et al., 2018; Alsaleh & Sayed, 2020) in place with some ‘shared space’ characteristics (on shared space, see Hamilton-Baillie, 2008). A faintly demarcated cycle lane runs through the heart of the square, where pedestrians queue and cross in great numbers with little regulation. Research has shown that such shared spaces between pedestrians and cyclists can be conflictual (Barr et al., 2021; Lloyd, 2019; Vozyanov, 2014). We analyse this potential conflict and discuss possible design solutions. Finally, the ambition with the newly renovated Stenpiren was also to create a public square with a lively urban life beyond moving and waiting. We discuss to what extent this is the case today.

We begin with discussing the historical and current use and function of the square. Then follows an analysis of this location’s problems and potentials from a walking perspective. We then outline some defining walking practices on this square. It ends by discussing some possible design interventions.

THE USE AND FUNCTION OF THE SQUARE



Stenpiren before and after the redesign. Produced by RUC. Photo credit: ©Lantmäteriet and Goggle 2022 image capture 2009.

This pier has a long history. It was named Stenpiren in 1883 and built between 1844 and 1845. Even before that, it was the departure site of the emigration boats to America. It has been vital in bridging Gothenburg internally across the river and for connecting to the archipelago. Throughout much of the twentieth century, it was part of a busy port with craft shops and industries, supported by roads and parking spaces running through the pier. The mobility landscape of Stenpiren was car-centric, and the city and the water were unconnected. A significant road dominated Stenpiren, and people walked in car-parking spaces when strolling along the pier.

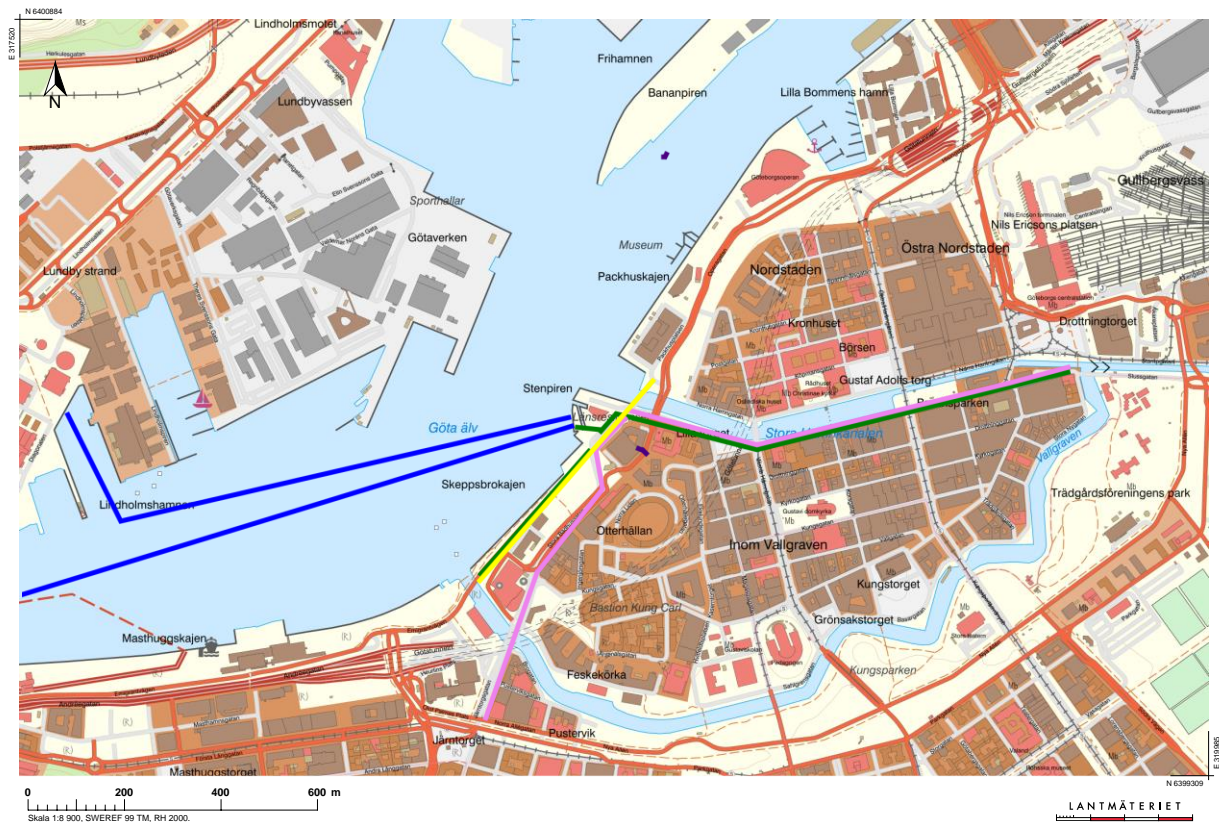
CONTEMPORARY USE

In 2016, Stenpiren was redesigned by Sweco Architects (in close dialogue with the City of Gothenburg) to become a hub for public transport as part of the larger development scheme Älvstaden. They wanted 'to recreate and develop contact between the city and water, a connection which has been separated for several years by large traffic routes'². This reflects that access to, and visibility of, the sea is now highly valued in property and urban development.

The road was abolished and turned into a pedestrianised square and tracks for buses and trams (where cars are not allowed). The unified pavement is like a carpet connecting the city with the river. Key 'watchwords' for the architects 'were flows and people in motion and at rest'. They wanted to create a 'meeting place by the river', a liveable public place. In conclusion, Stenpiren was designed for public transport, especially transit walking and leisurely walking along the water. One interviewee reflects on this positive transformation:

I think it is nice in terms of design. I think it is a good hub for the boats inside the city, and it is needed. And then - now that Lindholmen and Eriksberg are growing, having this free boat and the hotel and café down here has lifted the whole area, it

is fantastic. There was nothing here before.... (Personal communication, man, 40s³).



Traffic flows. Produced by RUC. Photo credit: ©Lantmäteriet.

Blue: ferries, Purple: trams and buses, Yellow: cycle lane, Green: walking path.

Stenpiren is now a commuting hub with significant public transport infrastructures. Flows of buses and trams (purple lines) connect Stenpiren with the city centre and outer neighbourhoods while ‘commuting ferries’ bridge the river (blue lines). Walking is integral to this transit hub. One study counted around 107,000 pedestrians between 14 to 18 November 2018 (City of Gothenburg, 2019, p. 2). Commuting flows heavily dominate Stenpiren’s mobility flows. A study conducted in May 2017 showed that 64 per cent were on their way to or from a ferry, 27 per cent were passing through (most likely cyclists) (City of Gothenburg, 2017a, p. 3) and 7 per cent were socialising (City of Gothenburg, 2017, p. 2). A study conducted in the summer of 2019 concludes that ‘most use the square as a hub for ferry transport ... and most of those observed were waiting for public transport’ (2019b, p. 2, 43). However, it also shows that Stenpiren’s adjacent quay (“Kajstråk”) becomes relatively busy with sitting activities during the summer (City of Gothenburg, 2019b, p. 43). A later survey showed that almost 90 per cent of pedestrians agreed that Stenpiren was easy or very easy to walk on and a nice place to walk. The vast majority (84 per cent) also found it a safe place to walk. The cyclists were less satisfied with the design. For instance, less than half found it safe to cycle across the square (City of Gothenburg, 2017a, p. 3). Since cyclists do not interact with buses, trams or cars on this stretch, their main concern is pedestrians (discussed below) (City of Gothenburg, 2017, p. 4).

We asked our interviewees to rate (from 1 to 5) Stenpiren; the majority gave it a good score (the average was around 4). They appreciated it as a very effective ‘transit hub’ that connects

Gothenburg with the water. One man likes it for ‘the clarity, the cosiness, the accessibility. It feels like a part of the city in a different way’ (Personal communication⁴).

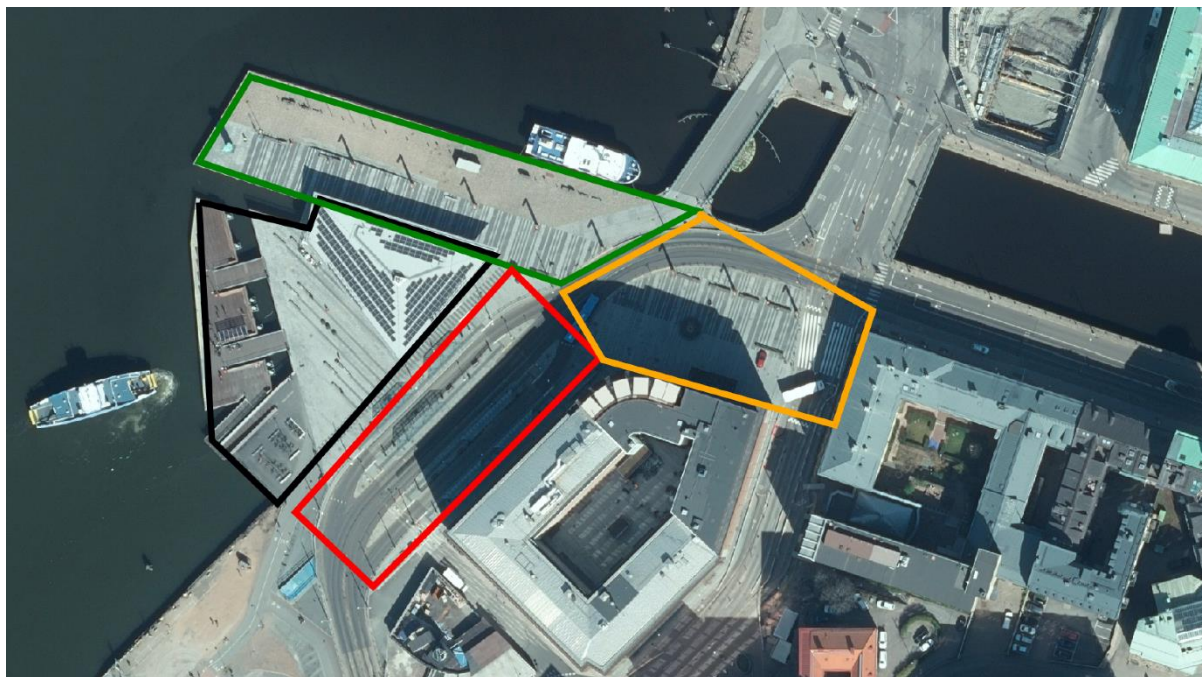
Several mention the fact that the view from Stenpiren over the water and the industrial harbour epitomises Gothenburg for them. This is a transit hub with a unique view and cultural identity. As one older woman says: ‘Yes, it is the water that is important and that it is a meeting place, that there are people, and it moves and there are boats and buses and trams. I think it is cosy; it is Gothenburg’ (Personal communication⁵). The interviewees disagree about Stenpiren as a meeting place. While some frequently hang out on Stenpiren, others do not find it inducing for social activities. As one says when explaining her grade: ‘I think it is good as a traffic point, so maybe a 4. However, it is probably also a meeting place, and perhaps a little more could be done here, so maybe a 3’ (Personal communication⁶). Another interviewee utters:

I think it is good what they have done with it ... purely in terms of transport. But it still feels like a lot more could have been done to make it a little more attractive (as a) green area or something that captures the place. But otherwise, it feels like it is primarily for transport purposes that it looks the way it does here (Personal communication⁷).

Being an open square facing the water, many mention that the seasons and the weather on the day dramatically affect how one experiences and socialises here.

DIFFERENT ZONES

The newly designed square can be said to have four distinct zones (represented below).



Zones. Produced by RUC. Photo credit: ©Lantmäteriet.

THE SQUARE OUTSIDE THE HOTEL (ORANGE AREA)

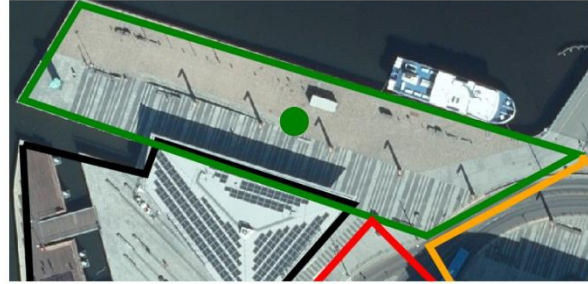


Orange zone. Produced by RUC. Photo credit: ©Lantmäteriet.

If one arrives on foot or by public transport from the city centre, this is the entrance area with a wide pedestrian crossing and stop lights. This area used to be a regular street with parking space in front of the hotel. It is now an open, wide and largely unprogrammed pedestrianised square with seven large and contemporary long benches with back support and striking light installations in iron – with Stenpiren engraved on them (they are a reference to the industrial harbour). The tree in the middle of one of the benches is the only green feature. Behind the benches are a string of bike racks (not used during the research) and an organised row of e-scooters. On the other side of the intersection is an extensive pavement on Södra Hamngatan with newly laid smooth surfaces.

This open space is mainly designed for walking and is the most direct connection to the inner city. There is much rapid movement on bikes but mainly on foot. There were no sun or sitting activities in this area during the research period. At this time of the year, this is a rushed-through transit space. While having some features of a square, it resembles a motorway where speed and flows (what Blomley, 2011 calls ‘pedestrianism’) overpower other concerns. People walk quickly through it with an indifferent stance, with many jumping red lights at the crossing when there is little traffic. Like many cyclists (Larsen, 2017; Spinney, 2010), pedestrians bypass the rules when it is considered safe (Diependaele, 2019; Zhu, Sze, & Bai, 2021). While designed for pedestrians, cyclists constantly ride here, being banned from the adjacent street which is restricted exclusively for public transport (a sign prohibits cycling).

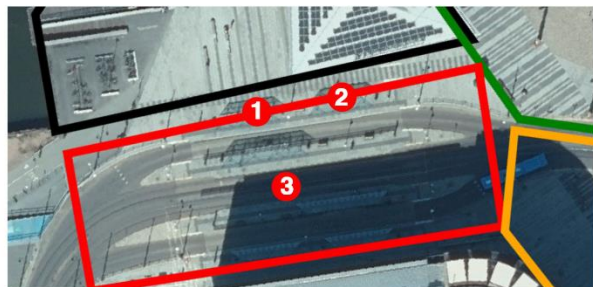
BEHIND THE TRAVEL CENTRE (GREEN AREA)



Produced by RUC. Photo credit: ©Lantmäteriet.

This area is directly ahead of the orange area, and the pavement is of the same visual design, creating a meeting between the city and the water. The area is largely unprogrammed, with a few benches and bike racks. For instance, the travel centre faces away from it with a blank brick wall. Boats were not leaving or departing from this area during the research period. At this time of the year, the area is cut off from the rest of the square and the flows between the different areas. The zone was deserted on the cold and windy November days, but people were hanging out by the water during our spring visit.

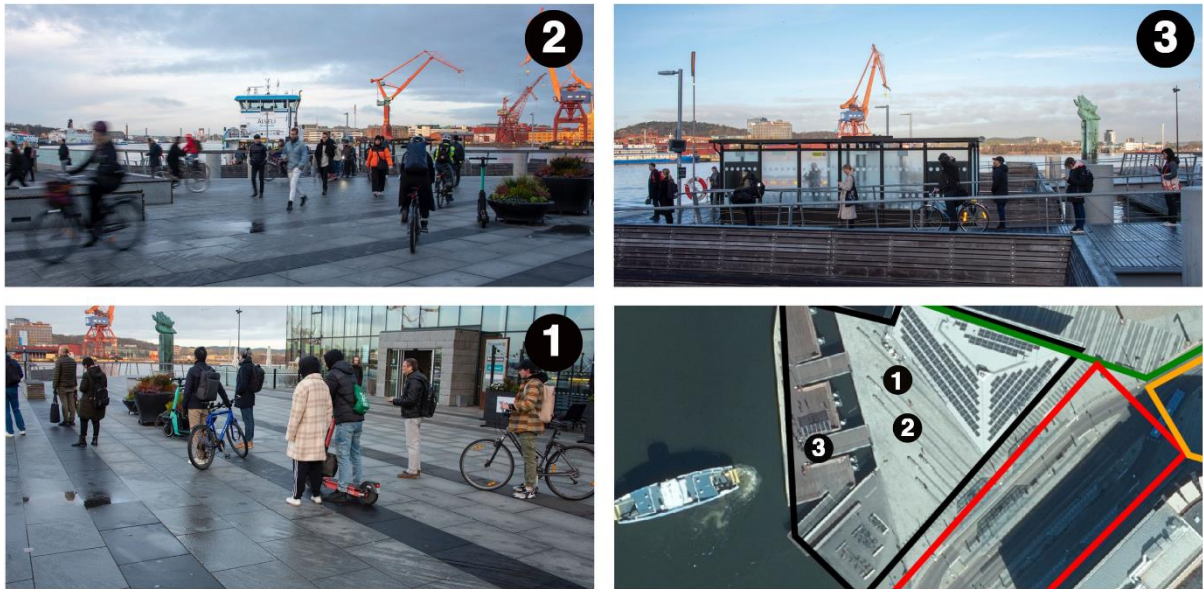
THE TRAM AND BUS STOP (RED AREA)



The red zone. Produced by RUC. Photo credit: ©Lantmäteriet.

This zone is a programmed space with three relatively narrow platforms where passengers wait – side by side and a faintly demarcated crossing (partly regulated by lightning) that pedestrians must cross when entering or leaving the black and yellow zones. There is a regular, fluid rhythm of boarding and departing, with buses and trains arriving almost every minute during busy hours while pedestrians constantly cross tracks on their way to and from the square. This zone is also characterised by the slower rhythms of waiting, so typical of public transport and transit walking.

THE BOAT TERMINAL AND WAITING HALL (BLACK AREA)



Black area. Produced by RUC. Photo credit: ©Lantmäteriet.

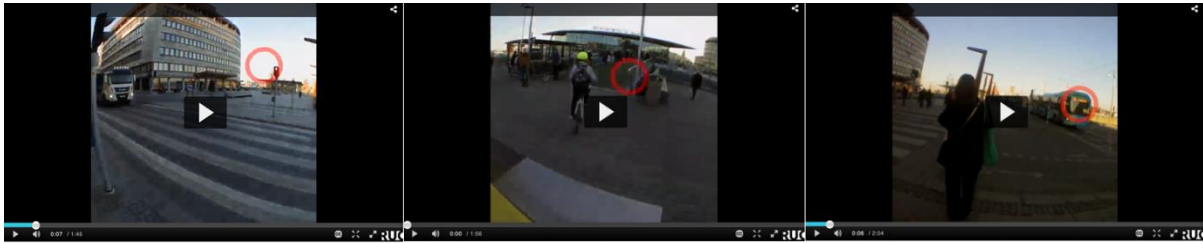
This area is Stenpiren's primary connection to the water; the square's "beating heart" and identity. The ferries generate specific temporal rhythms of walking and waiting (Vannini, 2012). There is a constant flow of free-of-charge commuter boats during the day, with departures every 10 minutes between Stenpiren and Lindholmspiren where many companies and the massive Lindholmen Science Park (with university campuses and companies) are located. There are also less frequent boats to Eriksberg, Älvsnabben and the archipelago. A large glass ceilinged waiting centre with seating, travel information, a café, a restaurant, and a kiosk are also located here. Finally, a cycle lane runs parallel to the bus/tram stops while there is parking for e-scooters and bicycles in one corner.

The large pedestrianised open square gives access to the busy ferry slips where people arrive on foot or on bicycle. There are a couple of waiting benches in the middle and more comfortable benches with a sea view next to the ferry slips. In theory, this is an ample, unprogrammed clean space with high visibility and easy navigation. As demonstrated later, this zone works as a shared space (Hamilton-Baillie, 2008) with much 'negotiation-in-motion' (Jensen, 2010; Lloyd, 2019) and occasional conflicts between walkers, cyclists, and those on the move and those queuing. There are few, or only faint separations, between cyclists and pedestrians or those waiting or moving. There is no signage or suggestion about how or where to queue and walk across the square.

Finally, as discussed later, a faintly demarcated cycle lane runs between the black and red zone. While designed for cyclists, pedestrians must cross the lane when heading toward the boats and trams, causing potential conflicts between cyclists and walkers.

Summing up, the design allows people to walk in all directions and continue their flow across the square without interrupting the movement by stop lights. Interactions and crossings are mainly regulated by negotiation and awareness between those moving and their judgement of the nearness and speed of approaching cyclists and vehicles, making it somewhat complex and

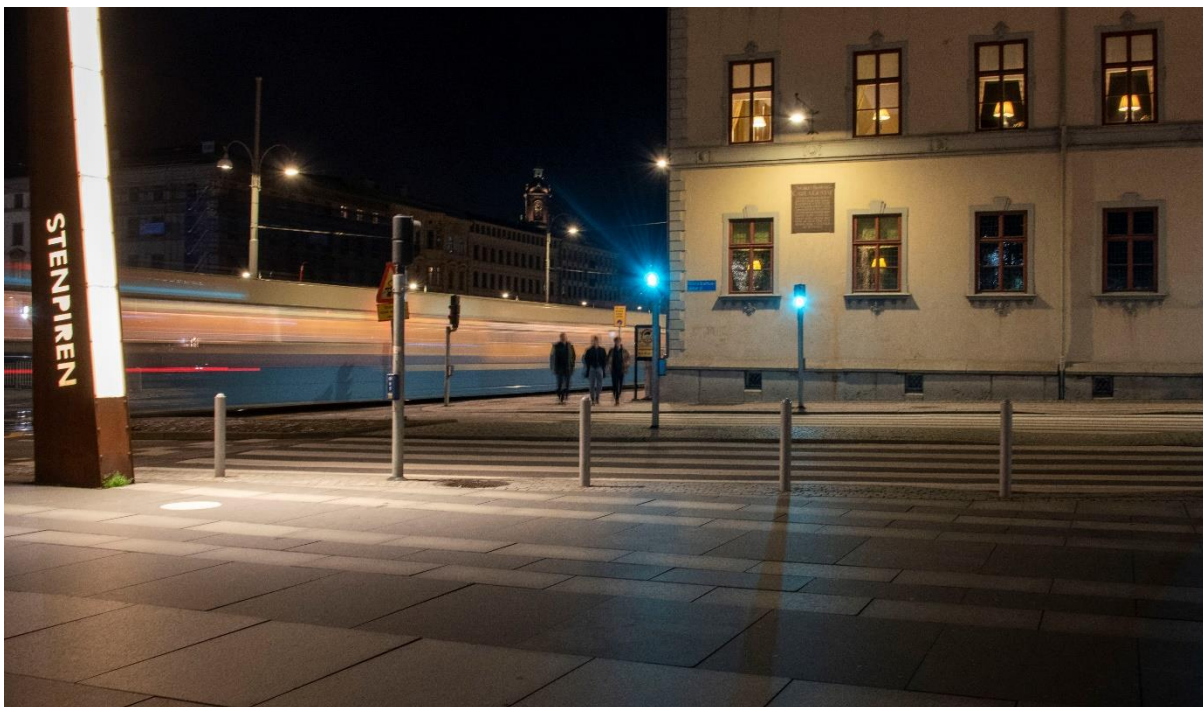
demanding to walk here, but also fast and efficient for those with the required skills. Many disabled people, or parents with young children, will not find such an environment inclusive (Imrie, 2012). The films below show how three interviewees – wearing eye-tracking glasses – walked through the different zones early one morning in mid-March.

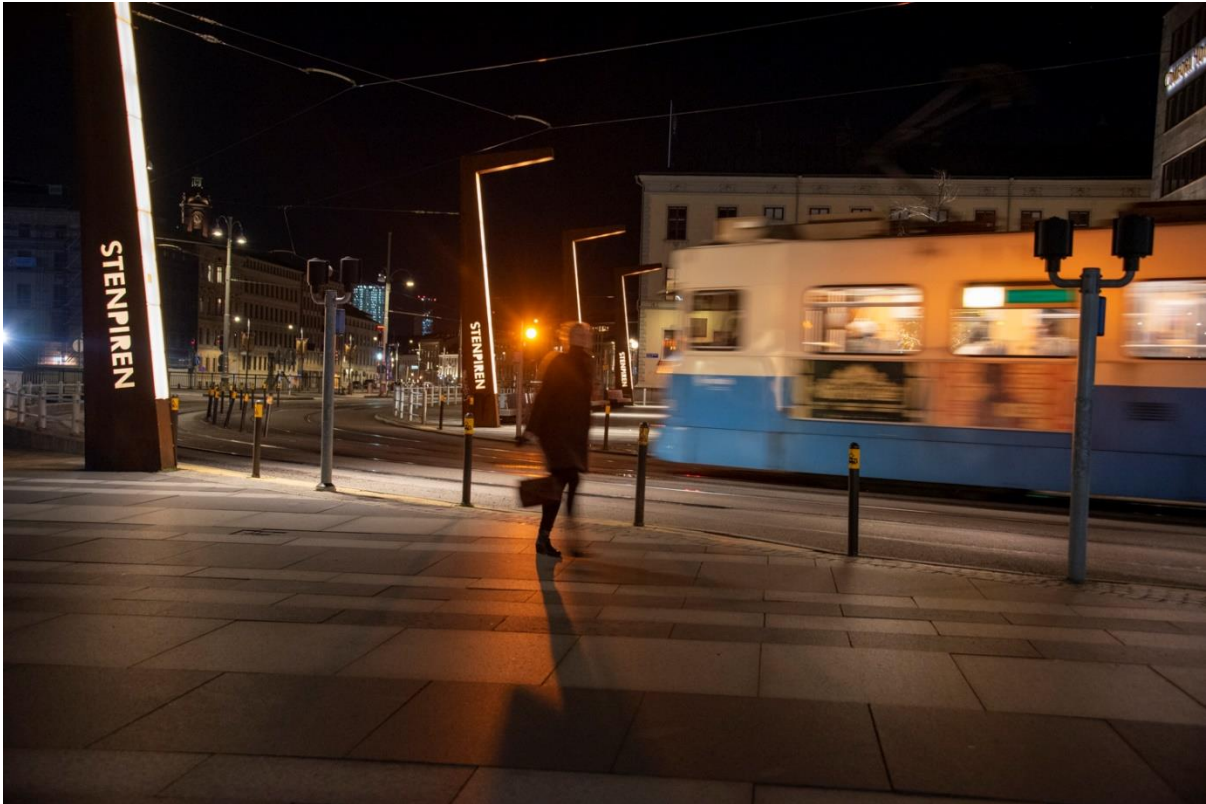


Eye-tracking recordings. [Film 1](#), [Film 2](#), [Film 3](#) Produced by RUC.

RHYTHMS AND FLOWS

VISUALISING RHYTHMS



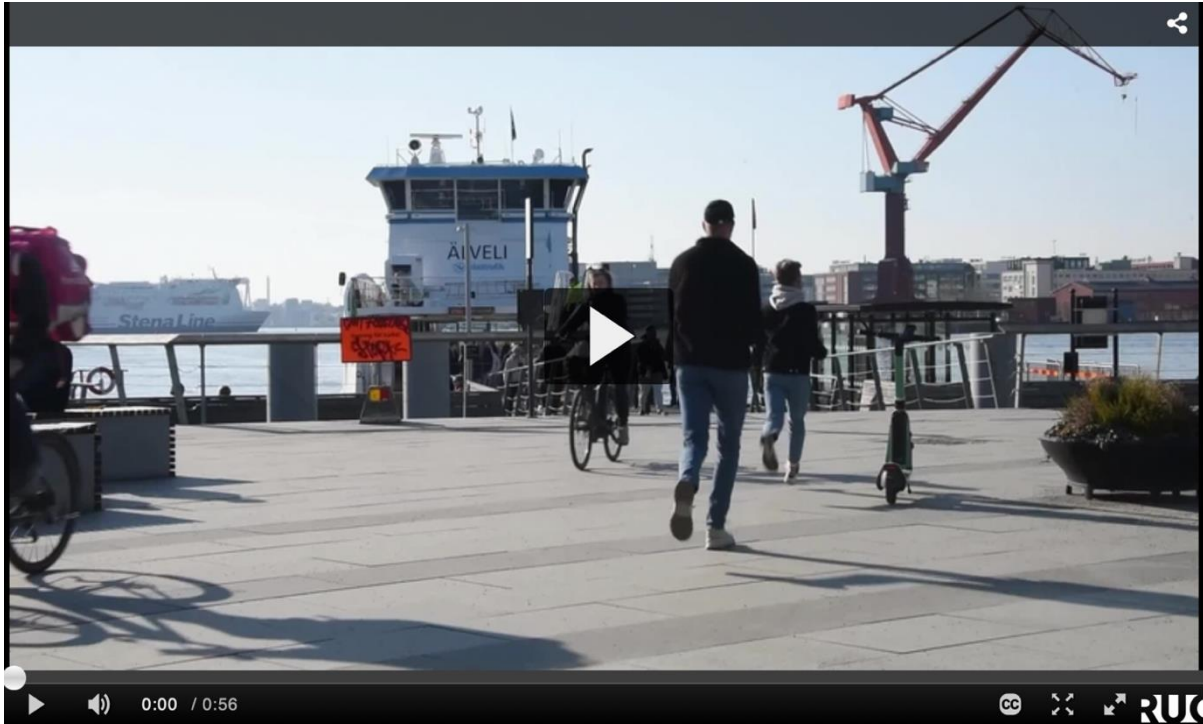


Stenpiren at night. Produced by RUC.

We now discuss the spatial and temporal rhythms of movement that characterised Stenpiren during the research period. First, rhythms of commuting prevail, with a peak of users in the early hours and afternoon. In the evening, when the free ferries are no longer in service, the square becomes deserted, although buses and trams are still running. On weekends, strolling along the water and square becomes more common, and a food market on Lindholmen also generates much travel.

Second, the arrival and departure of the ferries animate the square and create distinctive rhythms and movements. The square bursts into life when people walk – or cycle – into and from the ferries or quickly head to the trams and buses or across the square towards the city centre. Many bicycles through the pedestrianised zone (the black area) to and from the ferry at relatively high speeds (although slightly slower than on the bicycle lane).

Long queues and sedentary travel turn into (brief bursts of) walking, and the bus/tram stops are soon packed with awaiting passengers. The ferries are loaded in a few minutes, leaving the ('black zone') square empty. Yet new queues soon emerge, and a new boat will arrive in 5 to 10 minutes, indicating how fixed schedules regulate such temporal rhythms. This also illustrates how walkers move between states of mobility and immobility, sensuous unpredictable 'weather worlds' of walking (Ingold, 2010) and the regulated indoor climates of public transport. See the films below to get a sense of how the ferries and the associated walking (and cycling) practices add to the rhythms of Stenpiren.

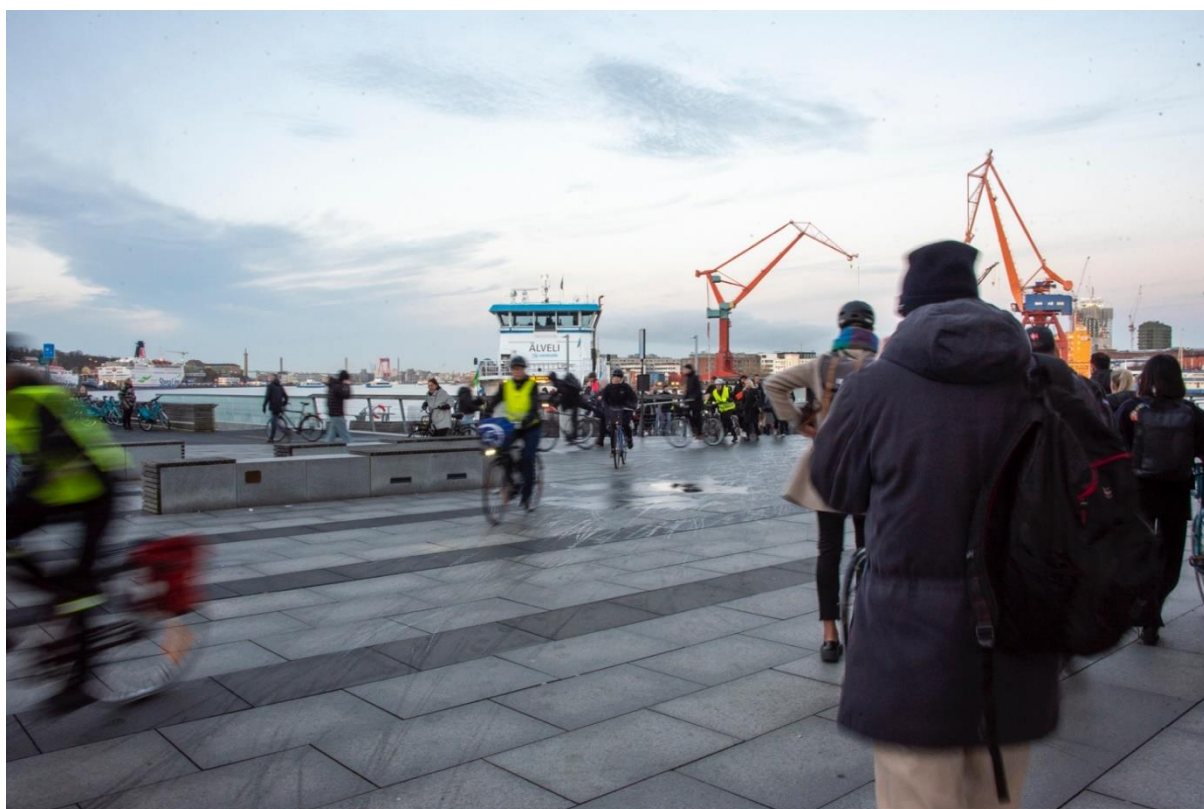
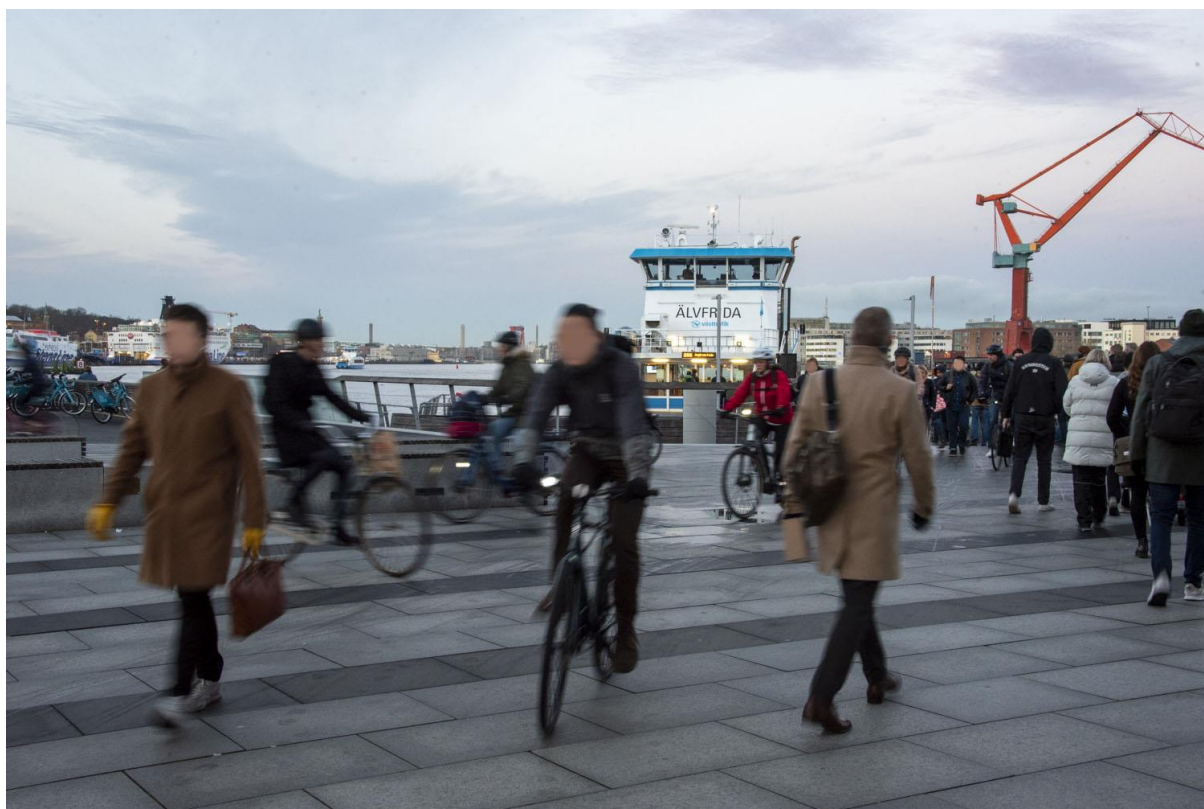


[Ferry rhythms 1](#). Produced by RUC.



[Ferry rhythms 2](#). Produced by RUC.

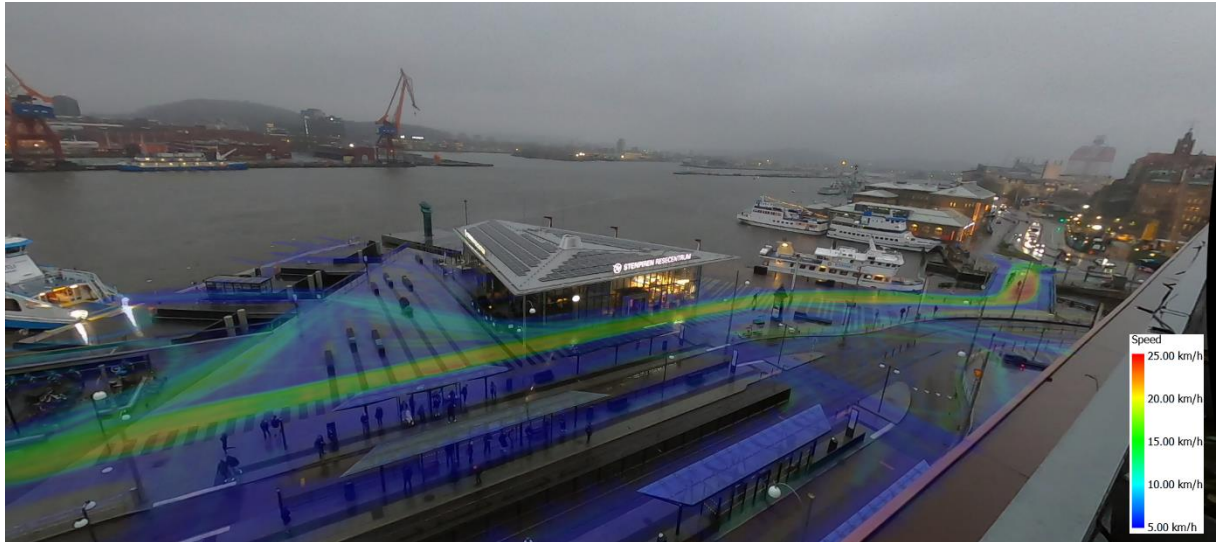




Rhythms of movement. Produced by RUC.

MAPPING FLOWS

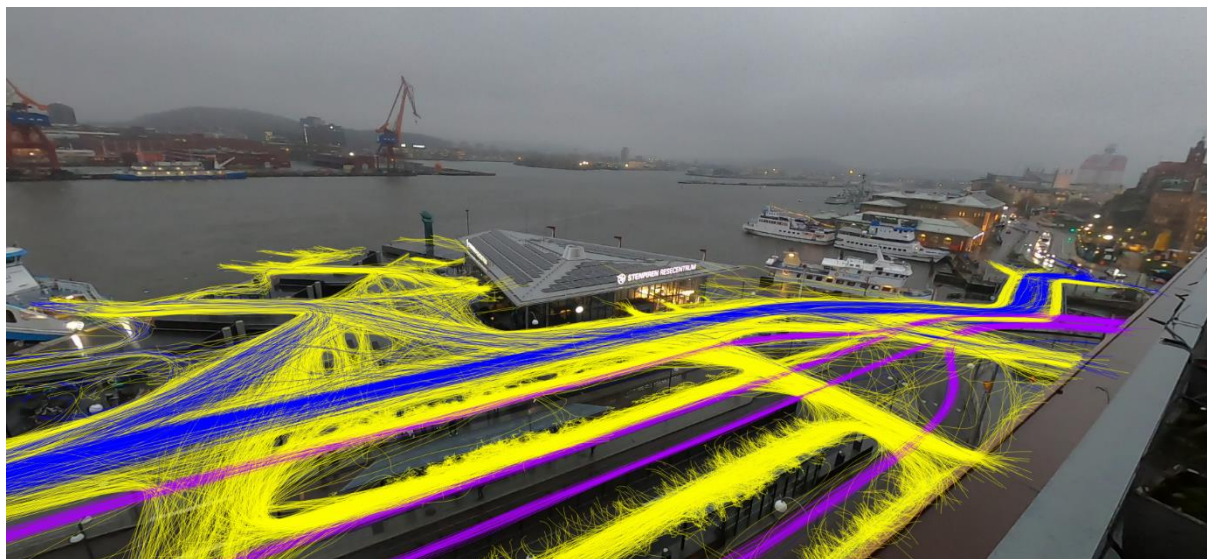
The below visualises the complex mobility flows on Stenpiren based on DataFromSky data produced on a rainy Tuesday afternoon.



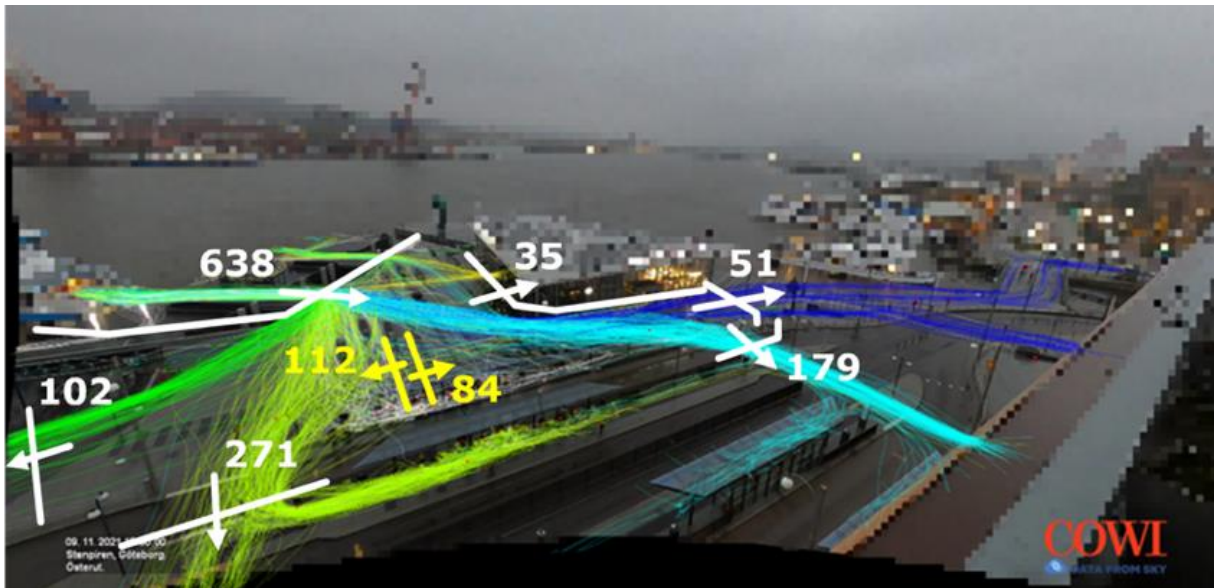
Speeds of cyclists and walkers between 15.00 to 15.45, 09.11.2021 (including runners and people riding e-scooters). DataFromSky. Produced by COWI.



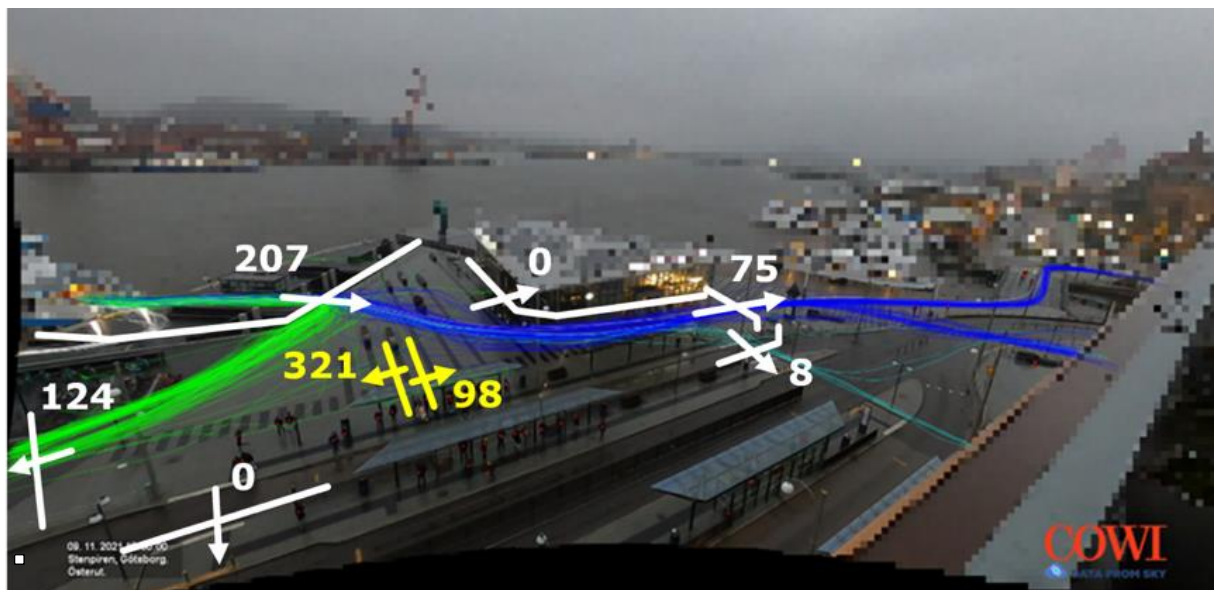
Pedestrian flows (yellow). Afternoon 3 pm to 4.30 pm, 09.11.2021. DataFromSky. Produced by COWI.



*Traffic flows. Afternoon 3 pm to 4.30 pm, 09.11.2021. DataFromSky. Produced by COWI.
Yellow: Pedestrians, Blue: Cyclists and Purple: buses and trams.*



Pedestrian flows to the ferry (white) and along the bicycle lane (yellow). Afternoon 3 pm to 4.30 pm, 09.11.2021. DataFromSky. Produced by COWI.



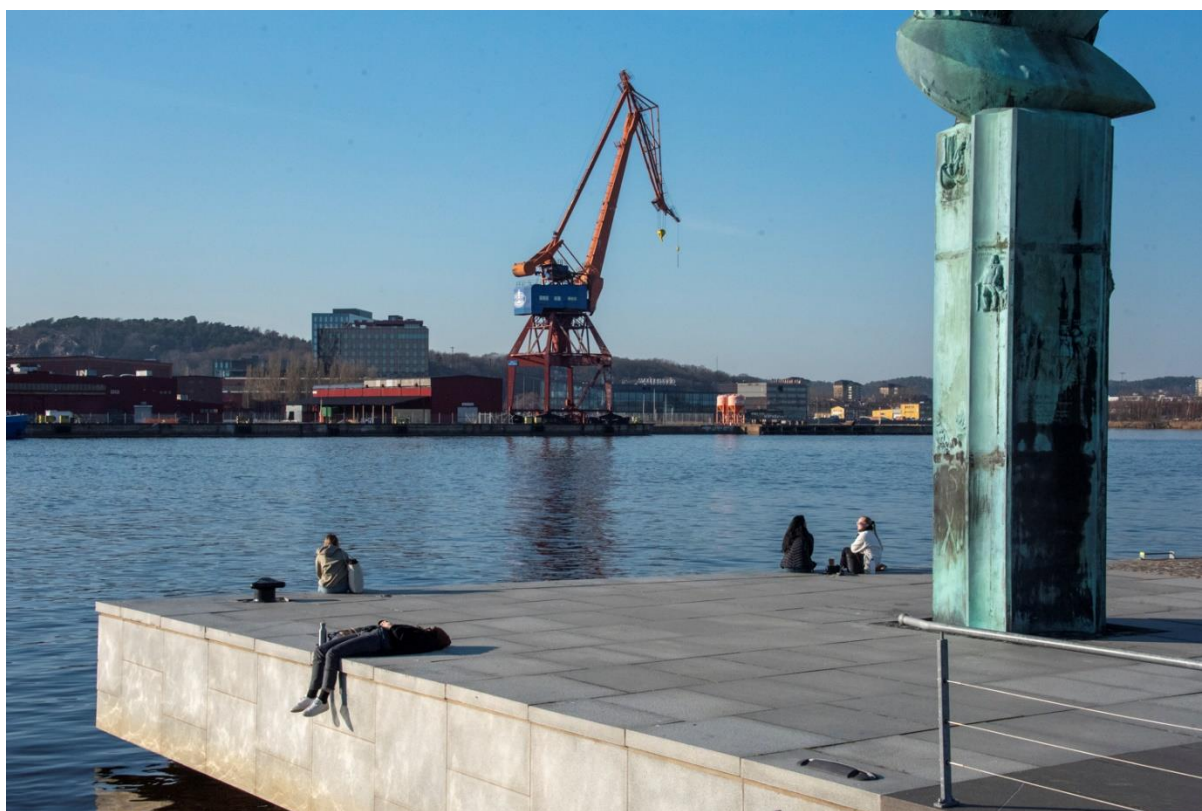
Bicycle flows to the ferry (white) and on the bicycle lane (yellow). Afternoon 3 pm to 4.30 pm, 09.11.2021. Data-FromSky. Produced by COWI.

These visualisations show the heavy use of the three areas by pedestrians and cyclists. The black area is the most complex and busy area, where pedestrians and cyclists share the same space and mingle in multiple ways, not sticking to their respective spaces. These encounters happen when pedestrians cross the relatively busy cycle lane to catch the tram and bus or walk towards the city centre. We can also see that some people walk in the cycle lane for longer stretches (see yellow lines above) while cyclists (blue lines above) – often with significant speed – bike into the pedestrianised areas to board or depart a ferry or make a shortcut to the city.

During the research period, Stenpiren almost exclusively works as a transit hub where movement and waiting are the master rhythms and prevalent practices. Few people are sitting or undertaking other social activities here. Most of the waiting takes place on the square, often with no protection from the weather, rather than in the waiting hall (dark blue areas indicate

stationary activities). At any time during the day, waiting is performed on foot, and there are few stationary activities – although the café in the travel centre does create some sitting activities. Indeed, many interviewees associated Stenpiren with public transport, not a public place of socialisation or pleasurable stationary activities. We ask a woman in her fifties if she happened to stop here for a while, and she replies, ‘No, not often. Only if I have to wait for the ferry’ (Personal communication⁸).

Of course, Stenpiren is very different when the sun shines, and the temperature is warmer. When we observed the area on a hot spring day, people were enjoying a quiet break in the sun. In the summer, it is brimming with ‘stationary activities’ and tourists, reflecting that the weather and seasonality heavily influence the social life of public squares.



Enjoying the springtime sun. Produced by RUC.

MAPPING AND VISUALISING THE WALKING ENVIRONMENT

We now discuss the material context constituting this square from a sensuous walking and urban life perspective. Here we also draw on the street interviews. We focus first on the pavements and cycle lanes and discuss conflicts between cyclists and pedestrians. Then we argue that the design favours mobility and offers relatively little visual stimulation or infrastructures for social life.

WIDE, SUPER SMOOTH, SOUNDLESS ASPHALT

The pavement area is extensive, for instance, 25 and 17 metres in the black and orange areas respectively. Such vast stretches make it possible to walk in straight lines, in pairs or even in

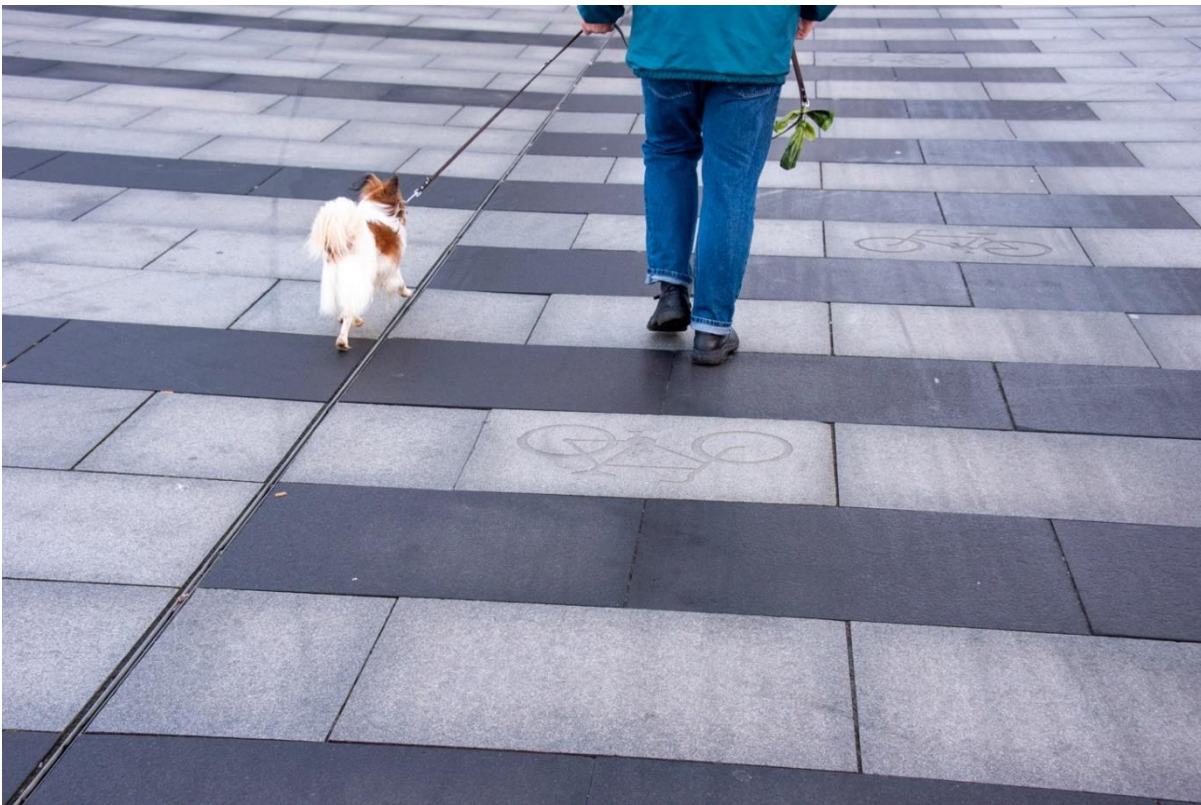
groups, and not pay much attention to others. It also explains why there is space for both cyclists and pedestrians.

The pavement is super smooth throughout the square, affording a safe, haptic walking experience. There are no bumps or uneven cracks, and e-scooters are neatly packed away and not blocking the pavement (as in Oslo). This is also the case on the first stretch at Södra Hamngatan towards the inner city. This ‘universal design’ minimises the prevalent risk of fall incidents among the older population and those with poor vision or mobility.



Packed away E-scooters. Produced by RUC.

LITTLE SEPARATION BETWEEN PAVEMENTS AND CYCLE LANES





Walking in the cycle lane. All produced by RUC.



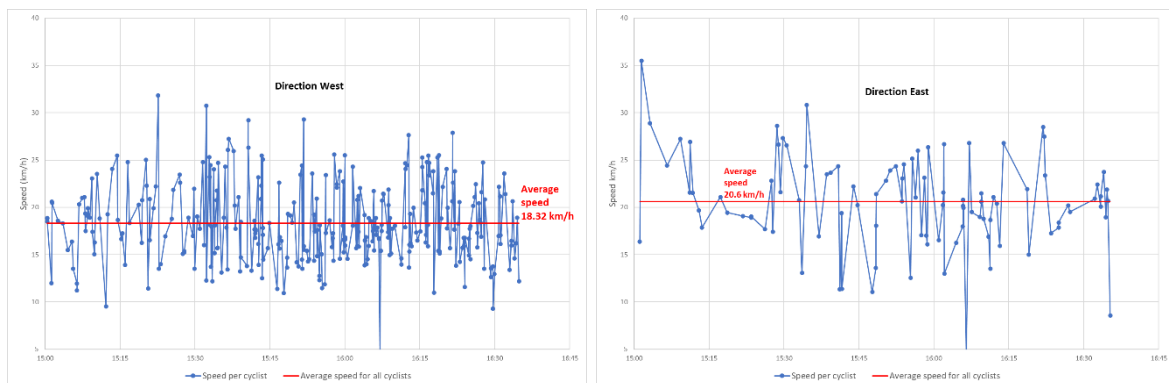
For one afternoon, more than 10 per cent of the pedestrians that crossed the cycle lane (red box) spend more 10 seconds there. Afternoon 3 pm to 4.30 pm, 09.11.2021. DataFromSky. Produced by COWI.

The cycle lane is not elevated from the pavement but only by differently coloured and patterned stones and small bicycle signs. There is no tactile sensation of walking into it, the visual distinction between the two spaces is weak, and there are no road signs to guide pedestrians or cyclists. This is striking, given that almost all ferry passengers must walk through the cycle lane to get to the buses or trams or the inner city. However, this lack of signage and separation between different types of mobile entities is typical of the shared space philosophy stating that places become walkable and liveable if pedestrians, cars, and cyclists learn to co-exist and adapt to each other. The shared space protagonist argues that pedestrians must become better skilled at reading the traffic and less afraid of cars and other vehicles (Hamilton-Baille, 2008).

Our video recordings and observations show that pedestrians sometimes walk along, and stand in, the cycle lane (see the below video). They are hardly to blame as the boundary of the cycle lane is weak. However, many do not orient themselves properly, so cyclists must ride into the walking areas to avoid collisions with hurried pedestrians. While the shared design logic presupposes that people signal to each other, sustain eye contact and allow others free passage, many pedestrians in the act of crossing do not communicate with incoming cyclists. It is not the norm to come to a complete stop when crossing. Instead, people navigate while walking, seldomly adjusting their pace: the boundaries between the cycle lane and pedestrian area are also fluid in practice. This navigation while walking can be almost impossible to the observer; instead of turning their head to check if the cycle lane is clear, they move their eyes (while the head is static) from side to side. Pedestrians are sometimes intentionally oblivious to cyclists to force the cyclists to stop for them, and not the other way around. Liberman (2013, p. 29; Llyod, 2019) refers to this skilled act of pretending to be oblivious as ‘doing oblivious’ (in contrast to ‘being oblivious’). By ‘doing oblivious’, people scan the cycle lane with a hidden wink of the eye and thereby communicate that they have not seen the other party, and that the other party is therefore obliged to make way for them.



Cycle lane encounters. [video](#). Produced by RUC.



Speed of cyclists passing Stenpiren. Afternoon 3 pm to 4.30 pm, 09.11.2021. DataFromSky. Produced by COWI.

While we spotted very few near accidents or road rage, cyclists and pedestrians must adjust their movement and speed in relation to each other. While the average cyclist rides at a typical average speed of around 20 km/h, many are significantly slower and/or faster (see graph above), suggesting – as we also observed – that many have to lower their speed when faced with approaching pedestrians. Cyclists constantly look from one side to the other, cycle into the pavement, slow down (or speed up) to avoid others, and use their bells. Most appear alert when crossing Stenpiren during rush hours. This full attention is needed as many people walk with earplugs, their eyes on their mobile phones, and only sporadically do they look at the incoming traffic. There is an atmosphere of controlled chaos.

This indicates that such shared spaces can be problematic. ‘Soft’ pedestrians can cause problems and unsafe environments, and cyclists and pedestrians do not necessarily coexist harmoniously (Barr et al., 2016; Beitel et al., 2018; Alsaleh & Sayed, 2020). An early study about Stenpiren concludes that cyclists:

... want the cycle lane to be better separated or more clearly marked to avoid collisions between pedestrians and cyclists. Both types of traffic see the cycle lane as a problem, but cyclists see it as a bigger problem than pedestrians do (City of Gothenburg, 2017, p. 4).

The study found that many find it somewhat unclear how they should move on the square, as only 31 per cent of cyclists and 63 per cent of pedestrians believe that it is clear how they should move and there are low levels of trust between them. Only 28 per cent of cyclists find the pedestrians considerate towards them, while 47 per cent of the pedestrians believe that cyclists are attentive towards them (City of Gothenburg, 2017, p. 6).

We asked our interviewees how they experienced this mix of cyclists and pedestrians (and public transport). They were divided. Some stressed that cyclists and pedestrians in the meantime had learnt to look out for each and hence there were no conflicts. Others were more negative and asked for a better design that would make it easier and safer for both cyclists and pedestrians:

It can be a bit difficult with cyclists. It is not entirely clear when you hop off the tram or bus and go to the boat, and you see that the boat is standing there, so ... when it is dark and bad weather, it is a little difficult to perceive the cyclists. They are a little inattentive too. It is not just us. I think this particular cycle lane, or whatever you want to call it, is a bit ... (Personal communication, woman⁹).

Above all, it is probably cyclists going in different directions here, and then we also have those who are in a hurry to get to and from the buses and then go to the boat, so there will be many conflicts that way. Then they have chosen to put these black markings; it is very confusing. Is it a cycle lane, or is it for accessibility, or what is it for? Very confusing (Personal communication, woman¹⁰).

It is hard not to start criticising ... It is so ill thought out. This is a place where many travellers come from all different directions. That they have then chosen, for example, to mark out the cycle lane with small discreet squares; yes, but you sit here waiting for the boat with your four-year-old child running back and forth, and there are also people coming and going who get off and go on trams and go towards the boats, right over where the cyclists ride. I wonder what they were thinking? It feels like they have built an accident scene (Personal communication, woman¹¹).

The cycle lane is criticised for not being visually distinct from the pedestrian area, making it unclear if this is indeed a cycle lane and how one should act. The latter quote also highlights the complex and hurried nature of the square with its many arrivals and departures and unpredictable encounters, meaning that it can be a relatively demanding square to navigate.

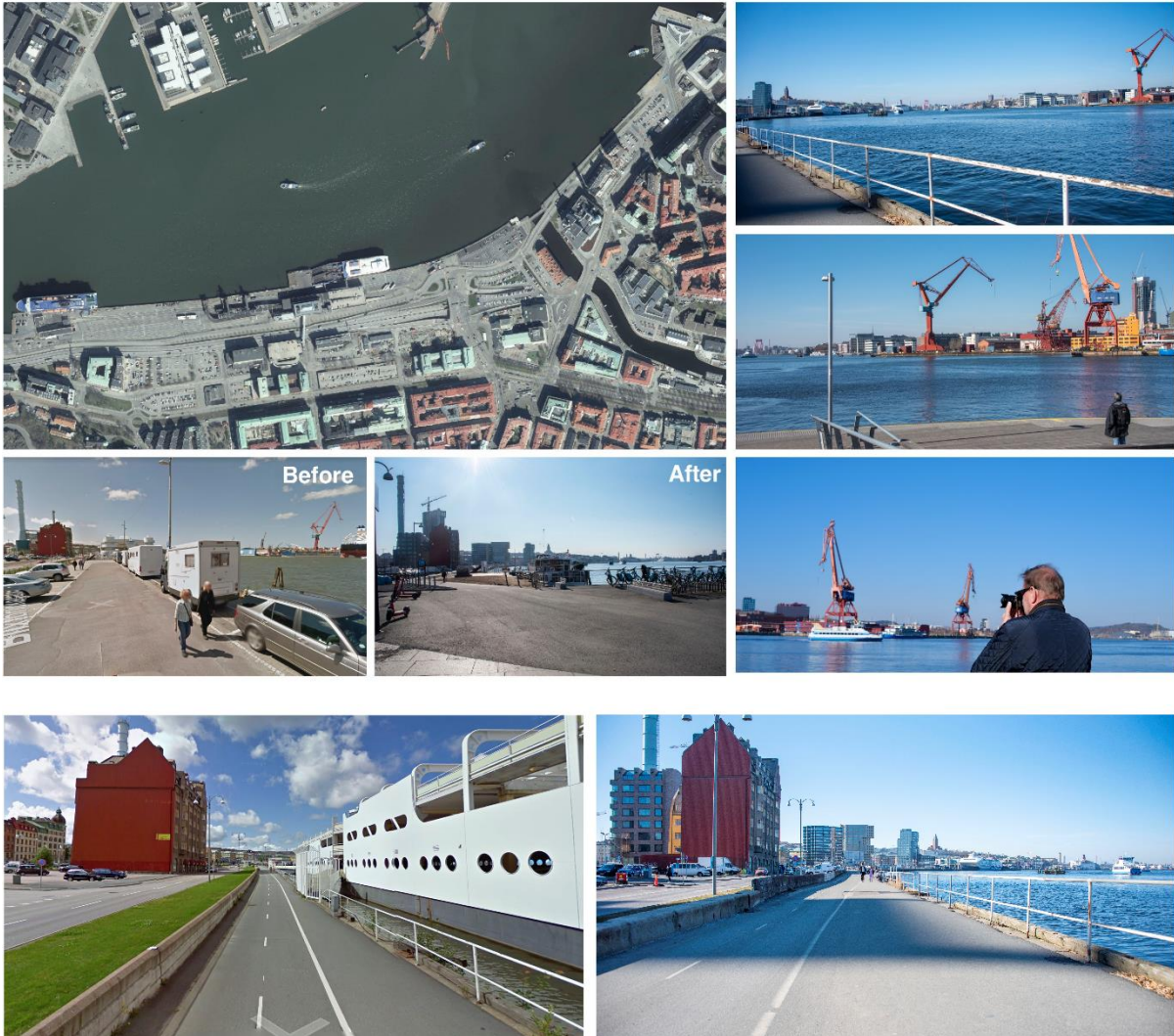
EDGE ZONES, VIEWS AND BLUE/GREEN ELEMENTS



Open facades. Produced by RUC.

Stenpiren has open and active ‘edge zones’. This is the case with the café and hotel in the orange zone, and the extensive travel centre with its glass facades (black zone) that create visibility and security (the exception is the blank facades in the quiet, red area). These businesses provide a crucial coffee and café infrastructure.

Stenpiren's proximity to the water and industrial harbour is spectacular, and this view defines the place and its aesthetic qualities, according to several interviewees. The redesign of Stenpiren opened up this view and integrated it into the walk along the promenade. Our interviewees appreciated this. As one woman explains: 'if the weather is nice, it is nice to sit here and just look at the water, sun, and sunset; there are such beautiful sunsets. I have been waiting for a few ferries and stood and watched for a while' (Personal communication¹²). An older woman says: 'It is lovely by the water, and I think it is a nice environment to walk in' (Personal communication¹³).



Stenpiren before and after the redesign. Produced by RUC. Google Map. Image capture 2009.

Some interviewees find the square somewhat grey and cold, lacking green elements: 'I think it is pretty cold. There are too few plants. It is just stone and glass ... The view does not get more Gothenburg than that, and you sit on a stone bumblebee, as it were, and blow away. It is sad' (Personal communication, women 50s¹⁴). Another woman says: 'Now you experience it as a very windy place. Empty and cold. With a little vegetation, I think you would come a long way' (Personal communication¹⁵). It appears as a grey modernist square with only a few green elements. Moreover, the square is clean and without graffiti. There is no furniture for children or play areas. Except for the Delaware monument, there is no (street) art or ornamentation. While Stenpiren has won a prestigious landscape award, this modern aesthetic does not appeal to

everyone (for a broader discussion of this ‘dislike of modernist architecture’, see Urry & Larsen, 2011, chap. 6).

URBAN FURNITURE

There are close connections between walking and staying activities (Chapters 1 and 4.1; Larsen, 2023). While Stenpiren is mainly designed for movement across the square, it is also, to some extent, designed for ‘stationary activities’. There are benches throughout the square. In the middle of the busy black area there are benches where people can rest their legs for a couple of minutes while waiting for the ferry (they are also part of the lighting). The benches at the quay slips are more comfortable and with commanding views over the harbour. Some interviewees explain how they often relax on Stenpiren on sunny days, listen to the water, and enjoy the views of the boats, cranes and people. Stenpiren’s unique location makes it a significant place for many people.






Benches. Produced by RUC.

LOCAL WALKING PRACTICES

We now discuss typical walking practices at Stenpiren. We begin with ‘the reluctant transit walker’, followed by the ‘walk commuter’ and ‘the stroller’.

RELUCTANT TRANSIT WALKING



Reluctant transit walking

Practices of 'reluctant transit walking' refers to such short bursts of walking between modes of public transport or cycling. Practices of walking are a necessity when moving around in the city and something that some people do not particularly enjoy; those practising this form of walking prefer to minimise walking, favouring other faster, and more convenient, modes of travel.

Walking is boring ... it takes a long time.

<p><u>Motivation:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Walking as little as possible - Using public transport 	<p><u>What could improve their walking experience?</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More effective public transport - Shorter walking distances - Less waiting
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Reluctant transit walking. Produced by RUC. Image credit: Persona Vectors by Vecteezy.

Traffic surveys show that more than half of all walks in Gothenburg are short and combined with other modes of transport (City of Gothenburg, 2019, p. 14). This form of walking dominates on Stenpiren, where many walk very short distances, for instance, less than 100 metres from the ferry to the platforms. What we call practices of 'reluctant transit walking' refers to such short bursts of walking between modes of public transport or cycling. With the word 'reluctant', we highlight that practices of walking are a necessity when moving around in the city and something that some people do not particularly enjoy; those practising this form of walking prefer to minimise walking, favouring other faster, and more convenient, modes of travel (on Stenpiren). This walking mode is prevalent among the many students who commute daily to Lindholmen. As one conversation with a young man goes:

Interviewer: Why did you choose not to walk (all the way)?

Interviewee: Because walking is boring.

Interviewer: Does it take a long time to walk?

Interviewee: Yes, it takes a long time. I am pretty lazy, so... yeah.

Interviewer: How long is the trip in total?

Interviewee: I just came from school ... Maybe ten minutes. With a change.

Interviewer: By tram, then?

Interviewee: By tram, yes.

Interviewer: How far have you walked then?

Interviewee: A minute maybe. It's only when I make a switch (Personal communication¹⁶).

However, many others are more positive about walking. As in Oslo, practices of walk commuting also flourish on Stenpiren.

WALK COMMUTING

Walk Commuting

While ‘walk commuters’ also use public transport, they walk longer distances and often wear ruck sacks and sensible shoes. They prefer a brisk walk to a short tram ride, and they will often arrive and depart from Stenpiren on foot. The practice is associated with physical and mental health and sensuous, embodied richness.



... I am pretty careful about my health and well-being. And as I get older, I think more about the environment. So, a distance that takes 20 minutes to walk, I do not take the car for that. I will rather walk.

Motivation:

- Physical and mental health
- Being outdoor and sensing the environment
- Fast and effective travel

What could improve their walking experience?

- Direct routes with few interruptions
- Scenic and calm routes

Walk commuter. Produced by RUC. Image credit: Persona Vectors by Vecteezy.

While ‘walk commuters’ also use public transport, they walk longer distances and often wear ruck sacks and sensible shoes. They prefer a brisk walk to a short tram ride, and they will often arrive and depart from Stenpiren on foot. As two interviewees explain:

... I am pretty careful about my health and well-being. And as I get older, I think more about the environment. So, a distance that takes 20 minutes to walk, I do not take the car for that. I will rather walk (Personal communication, man, 40s¹⁷).

I am on my way home from work. I work at Lindholmen... Sometimes I take the number 60 bus, and sometimes I take the number 9. Quite often, I walk ... Because it has become my daily exercise ... I love walking ... It is calming. It is good for health and... It is more about being active instead of standing passively on the bus (Personal communication, woman¹⁸).

As in Oslo, the ‘walk commuter’ appreciates the walking aspects of their daily commute. They associate it with physical and mental health and sensuous, embodied richness. This form of utilitarian walking also has an aesthetic component. In the case of Stenpiren, the view and sound of the water are crucial. Commuters explain how the quiet stretch along the water pleases the eyes and mind (unlike the parking lot on the other side, see photo below). They prefer to walk to Stenpiren – for example, from Central Station (1 km away) – rather than taking the tram or bus. They are thankful for the central location of Stenpiren and the smooth and broad walking environment on Stenpiren and into the city. They also appreciate how the ferry allows them to move on foot on land, be out on the open deck, and ‘weather world’ when using the ferry.



'Walk commuting' along the harbour. Produced by RUC.

STROLLING

Walking and stationary activities on Stenpiren are more than just commuting and waiting. Some interviewees stroll and enjoy the unhindered flow and view along the quay. Strollers often walk slower than commuters and are inclined to stop and enjoy the view. For instance, we interviewed an avid hobby photographer who deliberately shifted between walking gently, gazing at the water and stopping to take a photograph. He explains how leisurely strolling is perfect for street photography. However, strolling is usually a social activity with significant others. Many couples walk hand in hand, having a quiet, intimate conversation (see also practices of 'walking with significant others' in Chapter 4.1). A dog is another walking partner along this stretch. Dogs need to be walked, and being a dog owner requires much walking (Fletcher & Platt, 2018). Strollers walk on Stenpiren because it is part of the harbourfront and has a lovely walking path along the water. They also enjoy the flat surface in otherwise hilly Gothenburg, the lack of stop lights and the lovely view over the harbour.

We now exemplify how practices of walk 'commuting' in Stenpiren involve 'waiting' and 'sprinting', which illustrates how pedestrians accelerate and decelerate intermittently, even when there are no red lights.

WAITING

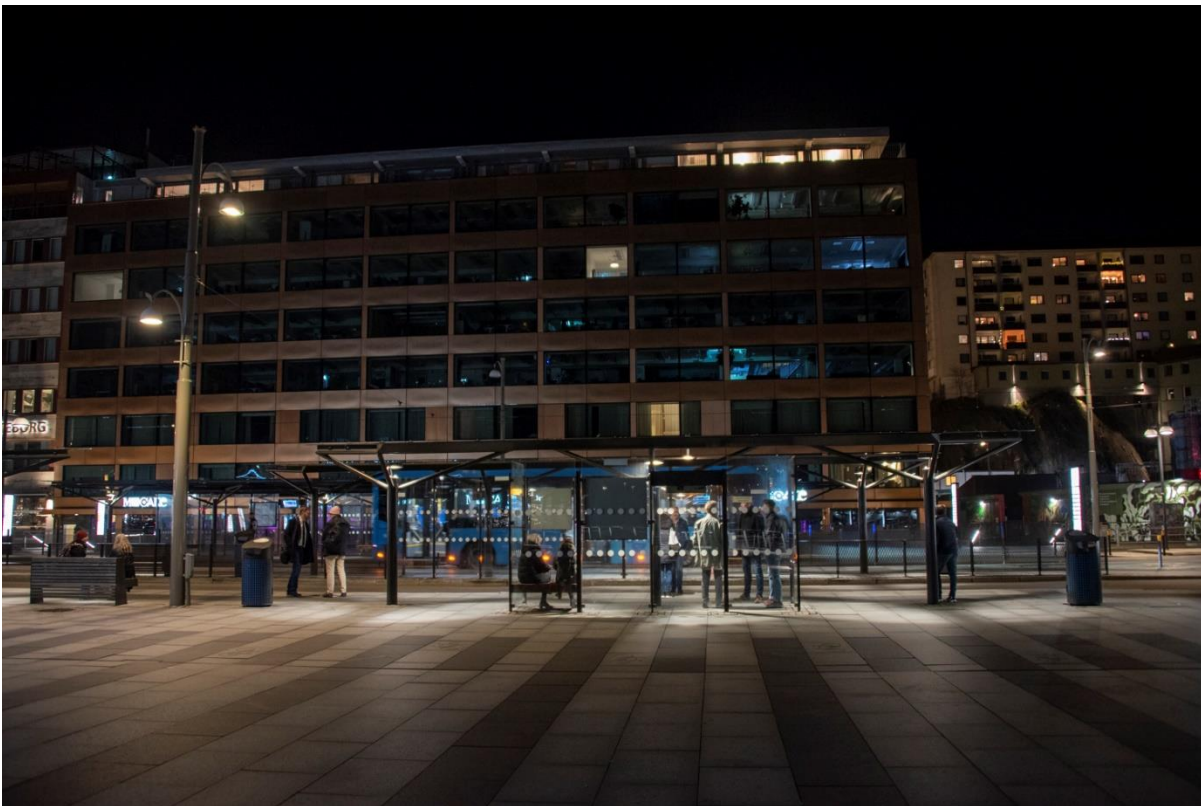


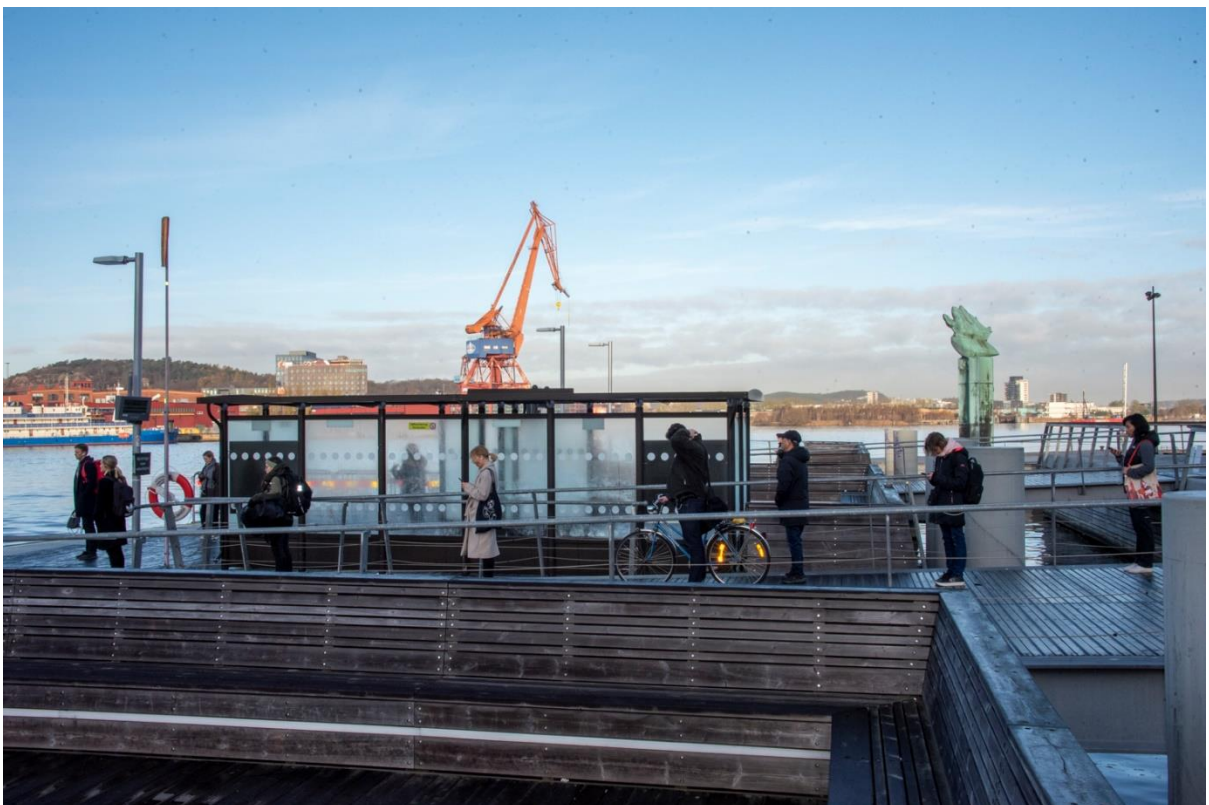
Waiting

Waiting is central to the lived pedestrian life of Stenpiren. People wait for buses, trams and ferries to arrive and be ready for departure.

Waiting is not dead time. People inspect their phones, avoid meeting the gaze of others or form groups while waiting.

Waiting. Produced by RUC. Image credit: Persona Vectors by Vecteezy.






Waiting. Produced by RUC.

Waiting is central to the lived pedestrian life of Stenpiren (see the dark blue areas above in the maps). People wait for buses, trams and ferries to arrive and be ready for departure (on waiting and transport, see Kellermann, 2020). The square itself is partly designed for waiting practices. The outdoor bus and tram stop have shelters that protect against the wind and rain, while the

bus terminal has indoor seating and is heated. Yet few wait indoors in the travel terminal. They stand unprotected on the boat lodging. As one woman says, ‘Lovely, compared to before. I think it is lovely to wait for the ferry here actually ... (Personal communication¹⁹). Few use the travel centre – they head straight to the ferry, bus, or tram unless the weather is abysmal (see DFS above). Transport research shows that waiting is not dead time (Bissell, 2007; Vannini, 2011; Vozyanov, 2014). First, most people inspect their phones and avoid meeting the gaze of others. There is much that the sociologist Goffman (2008) called ‘civil inattention’: people acknowledge and adjust their movement to each other, but they do not become social. They keep their distance and do not strike up conversations with strangers. However, students often form groups while waiting, sometimes moving backwards into the cycle lane. It is striking how well-organised cultures of waiting and queuing are here. People get into line, and there is no cheating. They know how to stand in lines – sticking to the right side to allow people to depart the boats first. This social ordering is produced through people’s practices – through ‘planning from below’ (Jensen, 2014). There are no signs or inspectors telling people how to proceed, except for COVID-19-related social distancing signs.

“SPRINTING”

An illustration of a person in a blue t-shirt and red pants, captured in a dynamic sprinting pose with one leg forward and arms pumping. The person is pointing their right index finger upwards.

Sprinting

‘Running is integral to catching a train or boat and not missing the connection.

When the boat display announces a departure in two minutes, one minute or 30 seconds, walkers turn into runners and everyday cyclists into sprinters.

Motivation:	What could improve their walking experience?
- catching a tram or ferry	- less obstacles
	- fewer cyclists

Sprinting. Produced by RUC. Image credit: Persona Vectors by Vecteezy.



Sprinting. Produced by RUC.

The usual walking speed is 5 to 6 km/h, but pedestrians sometimes slow down or come to a complete stop when at a red light or waiting for public transport. Alternatively, they sprint when their 'connection' is about to leave. Running is integral to catching a train or boat and not missing the connection. When the boat display announces a departure in two minutes, one minute or 30 seconds, walkers turn into runners and everyday cyclists into sprinters. People sprint through the cycle lane, and cyclists whizz through the square at high speed and seemingly being less attentive, increasing the likelihood of clashes.

SUMMARY - FINDINGS, CONCEPTS AND DESIGN IDEAS

Stenpiren is a busy commuter pier, recently redesigned for public transport, cycling and walking. We have argued that Stenpiren resembles a 'shared space' where pedestrians have ample space to move and with little choreography from the design. Stenpiren is generally perceived as a pleasant walking environment without cars and with a beautiful view over the harbour. We have argued that the distinctive walking practices are related to public transport, and have coined the notions 'the reluctant transit walker' and 'walk commuter'. These notions highlight how walking and public transport are connected, and the sensuous qualities of walking are valued differently. We further argue that practices of 'waiting' and 'sprinting' are basic to transit walking in particular; walking has different paces. Commuters may speed up and down depending on when their 'connection' is about to leave. These variegated rhythms of vehicles and people affect how it feels to walk. While Stenpiren is often a quiet easy place to walk, it can become jam-packed during peak hours when pedestrians and cyclists wait for or rush to the ferries. At such moments, the faintly defined cycle lane can become a problem.

We have shown that problems arise when cyclists ride fast through it, or pay inadequate attention to the many walkers who must cross it on their way to and from the ferries. No signs indicate to cyclists that pedestrians may suddenly walk through it. Problems also occur because pedestrians often look at their mobile phones, or rush and run through it. Some forget to look up and communicate visually with cyclists. Less frequently, problems also arise when people walk along or stop in the cycle lane, seemingly unaware or not caring that the space is not for them.

Based on the above, we now discuss design interventions that could improve Stenpiren from a walking perspective. First, some interviewees find it grey, in the need of plants, flowers and colours. Therefore, adding plants or colours in the wake of the City of Gothenburg's "ta plats" campaign could be an option. The most apparent intervention is redesigning the cycle lane to increase the clarity and safety of crossing it (and cycling on it). The cycle lane could become more visible and separated through paint, lighting, nudging or signposting.

¹ This chapter draws on material and arguments in a submitted journal article titled *Practices of urban walking: ethnography, Movement and Spaces* (Larsen, forthcoming).

² www.swecoarchitects.com/projects/stenpiren.

³ Interview M3

⁴ Interview P15

⁵ Ny inspelning 29

⁶ Ny inspelning 23.m4a

⁷ Interview N10.m4a

⁸ interview M1

⁹ interview N17

¹⁰ ny inspelning 25

¹¹ Interview P2

¹² interview N18

¹³ Interview, M2

¹⁴ Interview M10

¹⁵ interview, Ny inspelning 25

¹⁶ Interview M7

¹⁷ interview M11

¹⁸ Interview N17

¹⁹ interview N7