Today's Main City Squares

in North-western Europe

Amiens | Nottingham | Brugge | Haarlem | Dordrecht | Darmstadt | Wolfsburg | Zoetermeer | Milton Keynes | Cergy-Pontoise | Almere

Saskia Commandeur - Urbanism TU Delft - P5 - 28.01.2010

Introduction

Main City Squares

Brugge

Haarlem

*"…above all, a Place where People **Meet** and **Socialize**"*

(Moughtin, 2003)

However...

Problem Statement

Main City Squares

Almere

Zoetermeer

*"Modern Squares are Simply Spaces **Marked** as **Such** on Maps"*

(Zucker, 1959)

Problem Statement

Main City Squares

Dordrecht

Dordrecht

*"Modern Squares are too **Open** and **Amorphous**"*

(Kostof, 1992)

Therefore...

Aim of the Project

- To Derive **Criteria** to Define **Quality** of Main City Squares

- To Identify **Strengths** and **Weaknesses** in Actual Cases

- To Provide **Recommendations** for Improvement through the Criteria

Research Question

"How can we **Define** and **Improve** the

Social-Spatial and Spatial-Functional **Qualities** of

Today's **Main City Squares** in North-western Europe?"

Steps in the Project

- **Literature study:**

  - **History** of city squares in North-western Europe

  - **Criteria** for **Quality** of main city squares

- **Case studies:**

  - Identifying **Strengths** and **Weaknesses** in actual cases

  - Derive **Successful** examples of **Transferable** elements

- **Spatial design:**

  - **Test** case for **Improvement** through **Criteria** for Quality
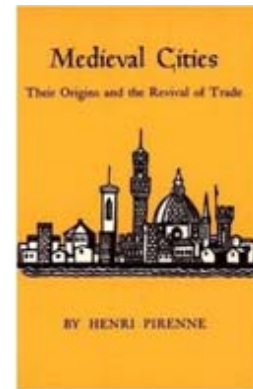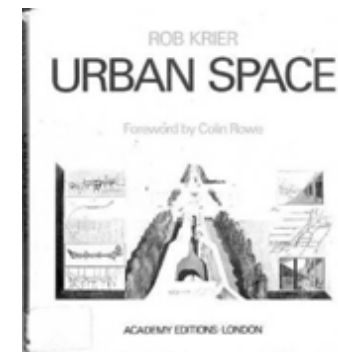
Steps in the Project

- **Literature study:**
    - **History** of city squares in North-western Europe
    - **Criteria** for **Quality** of main city squares
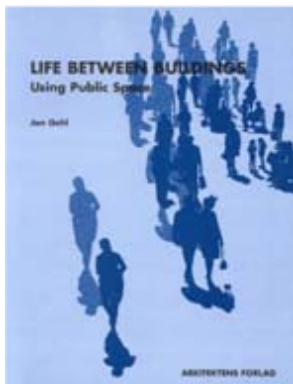
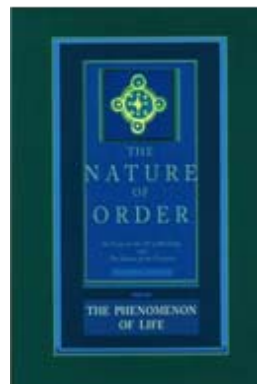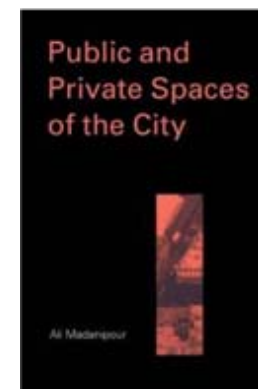*Sitte (1889)* *Brinckmann (1921)* *Pirènne (1970)* *Krier (1979)* *Lynch (1981)*

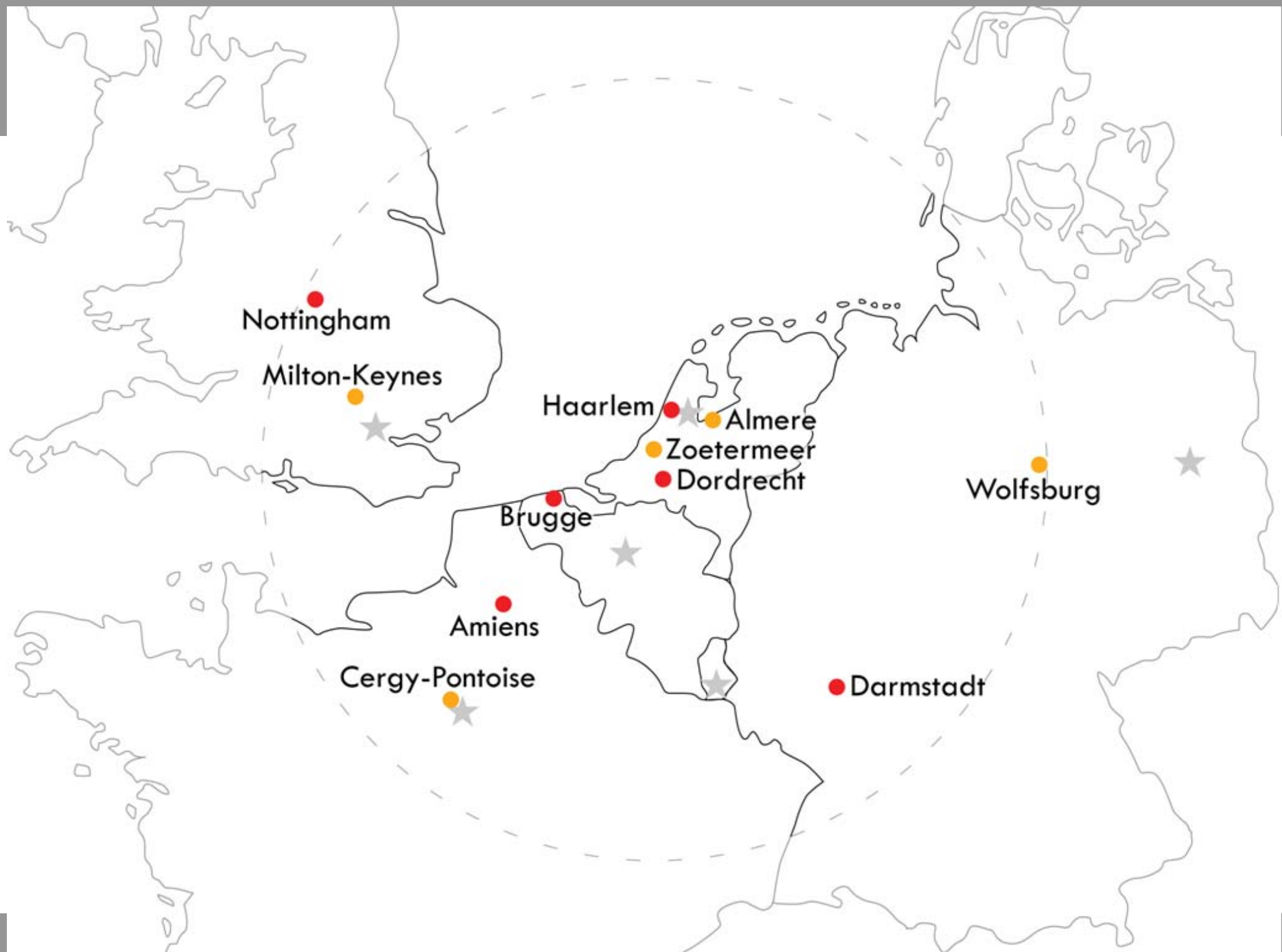*Gehl (1996)* *Banerjee (2001)* *Alexander (2002)* *Madanipour (2003)* *Lenzholzer (2008)*

Steps in the Project

- **Literature study:**

  – **History** of city squares in North-western Europe

  – **Criteria** for **Quality** of main city squares

- **Case studies:**

  – Identifying **Strengths** and **Weaknesses** in actual cases

  – Derive **Successful** examples of **Transferable** elements

Nottingham

Milton-Keynes

Haarlem

Almere

Zoetermeer

Dordrecht

Wolfsburg

Brugge

Amiens

Cergy-Pontoise

Darmstadt

Amiens

Brugge

Darmstadt

Dordrecht

Haarlem

Nottingham

Almere

Cergy-Pontoise

Wolfsburg

Milton Keynes

Zoetermeer

voon het meest ga

Maps
Main Squares Only

n elements / Public furniture / Relation indoor-outdoor / Climatic conditions / Greenery

5. Counting People
5.1 Matrix

Location, Date, Time, Weather conditions, Activities of people, Number of people

Brugge, Markt: veel wind

Day	Date	Time	Weather	Sit	Sit 2	Stand	Walk	Bike	Work	Total
Fri	02/10	12.45	Sunny	78	218	62	72	7	15	452
	02/10	15.30	Sunny	74	206	210	116	8	24	658
	/10	17.15	Clouds	37	173	58	86	27	10	379
	/10	18.55	Clouds	10	184	42	58	3	14	311
	/10	20.55	Dark							

Z <3. Maps
3.1 Main Squares Only

Urban elements / Public furniture / Relation indoor-outdoor / Climatic conditions / Greenery
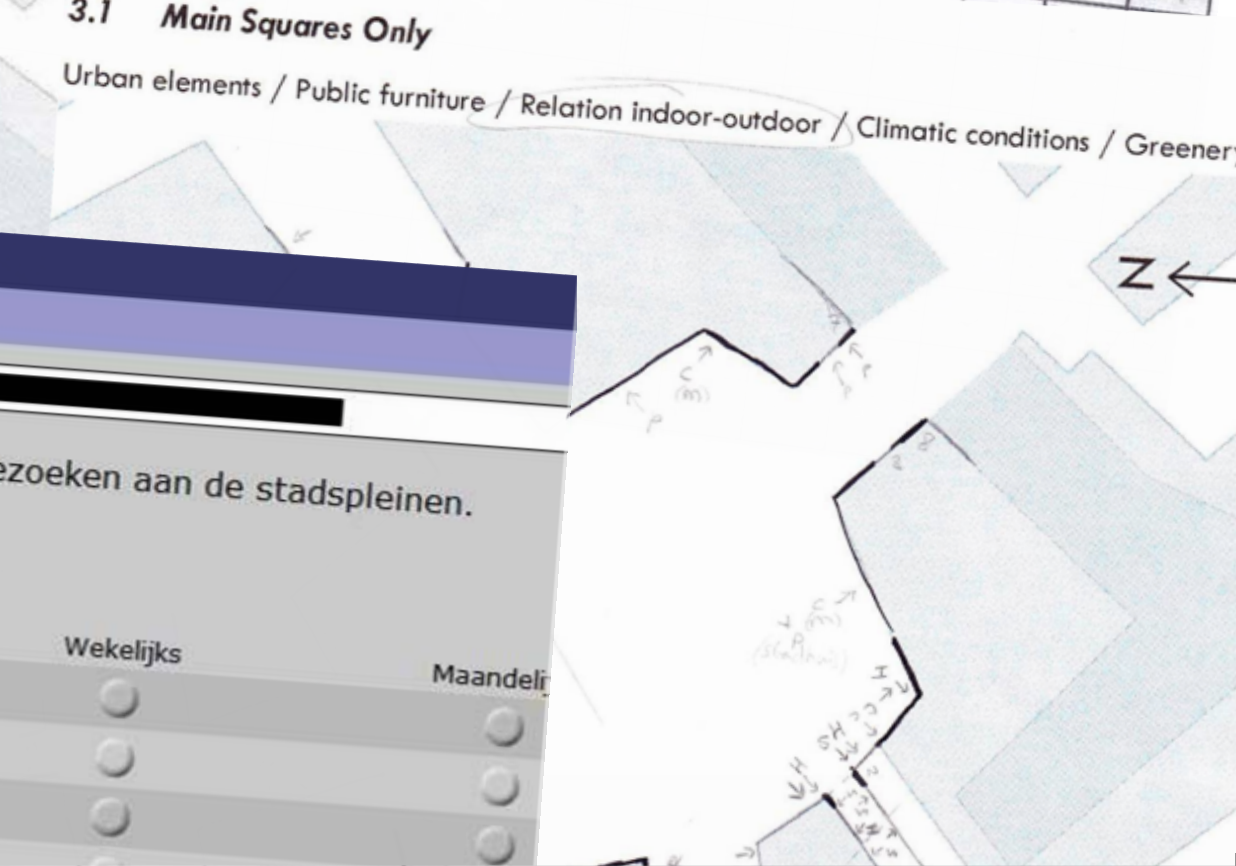
Stadspleinen van Vandaag
3. Uw ervaring

Deze vragen hebben betrekking op de frequentie van uw bezoeken aan de stadspleinen.
Er is ruimte voor eigen opmerkingen!

4. Hoe vaak bezoekt u de volgende stadspleinen?

	Dagelijks	Wekelijks	Maandeli
Almere: Grote Markt	○	○	○
Almere: Stadhuisplein	○	○	○
Haarlem: Grote Markt	○	○	○
Haarlem: Oude Groenmarkt	○	○	○
Stadsplein			

Z ←

Steps in the Project

Almere: Current

Almere: Proposal

- **Spatial design:**
  - **Test** case for **Improvement** through **Criteria** for Quality

Results...

Project Results

Criteria for Quality of Main City Squares:

- Spatial Organization

- Accessibility & Connectivity

- Civic Program

- Identity

- Liveliness

- Safety & Comfort

Project Results

Spatial Organization

*"The **Size** and **Shape** of a Square and its Surrounding Buildings Creates the **Physical Space**"*

(Sitte, 1889)

*"When a Town Lacks **Character** and **Structure**, the Failure […] Impediment in the Relationship of **Form** and **Function**"*

(Cullen, 1971)

Project Results

Spatial Organization

*"The **Size** and **Shape** of a Square and its Surrounding Buildings Creates the **Physical Space**"*

(Sitte, 1889)

"Corresponding squares"
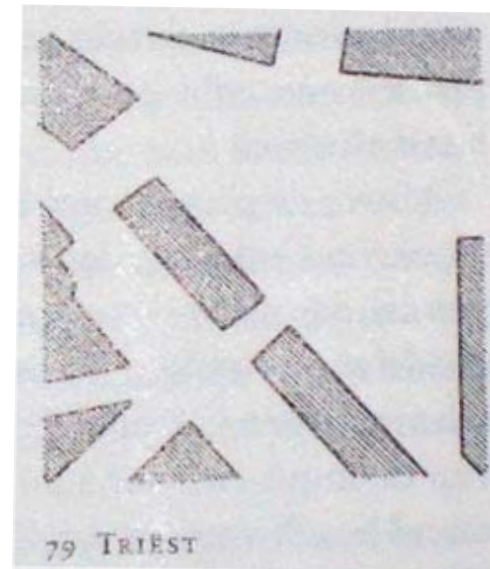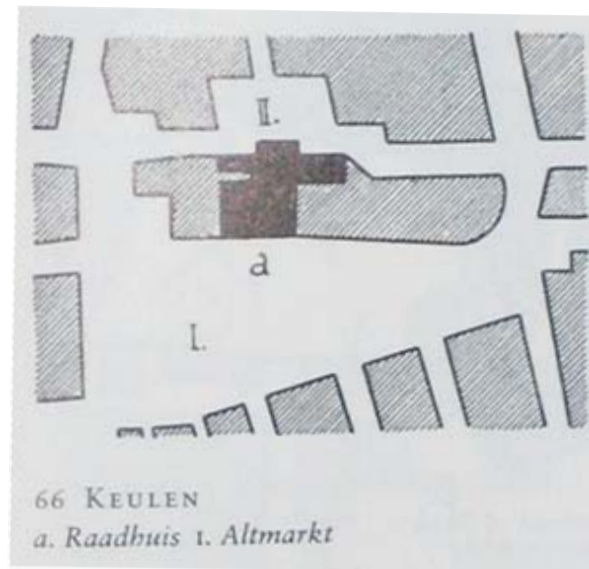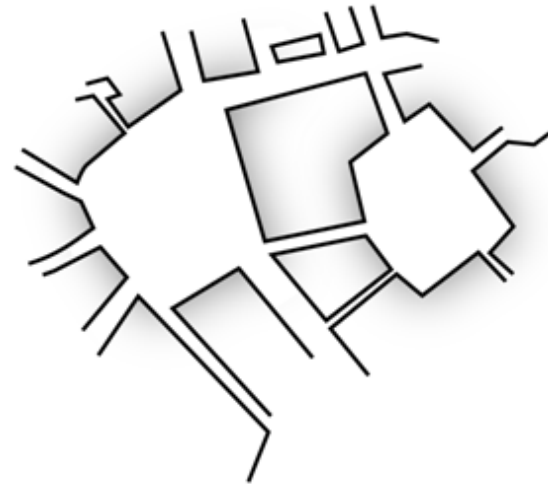
"Wedge-shaped leftover spaces"

Project Results

Spatial Organization

- **Surface**   – – →
- Scale
- Configuration
- Experience on eye-level
- Design style

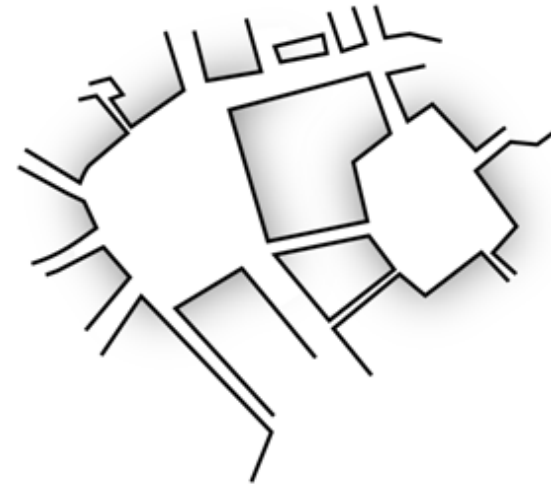Successful example

Brugge

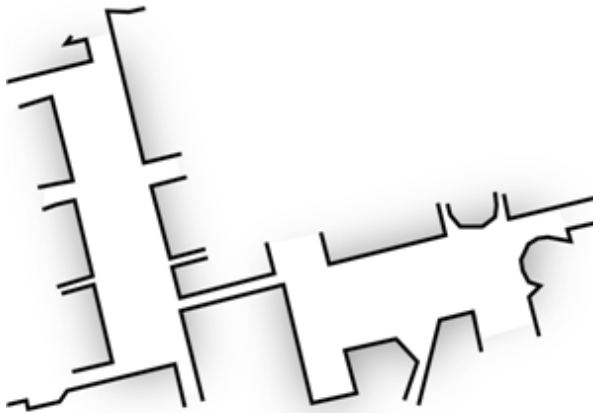# Project Results

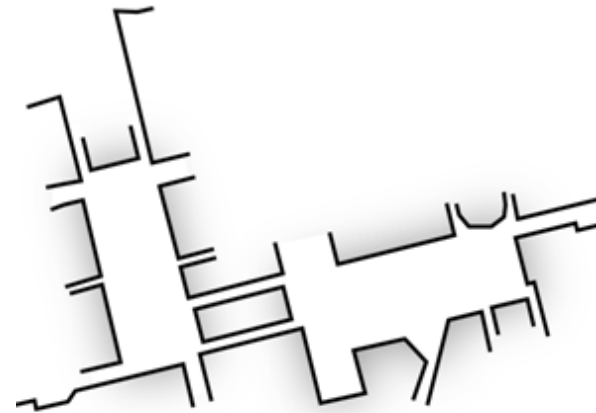## Spatial Organization

- **Surface**

Successful example

Brugge

Case for improvement
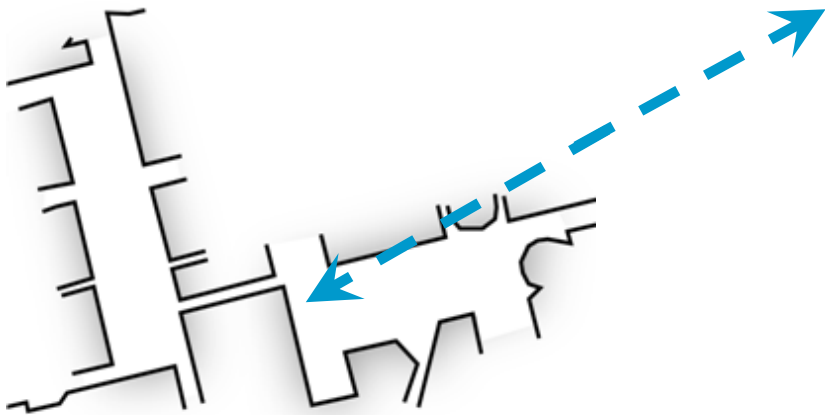

Almere

Proposal

Project Results

Spatial Organization

- Surface
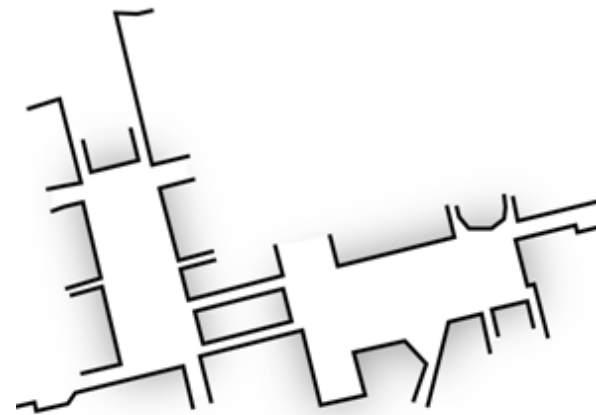
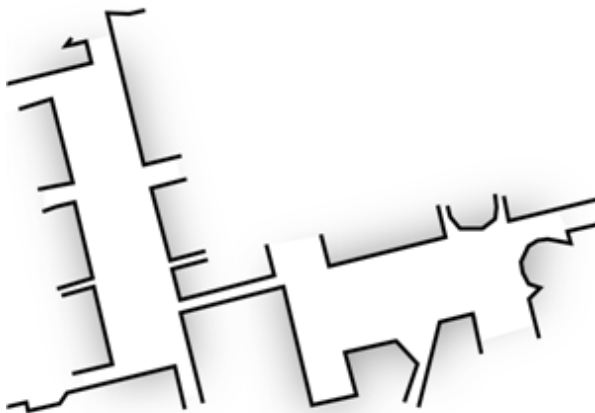- **Experience on eye-level**

Case for improvement

Almere

Almere

Proposal

Project Results

Spatial Organization

- Surface

- **Experience on eye-level**

Case for improvement

Proposal

Almere
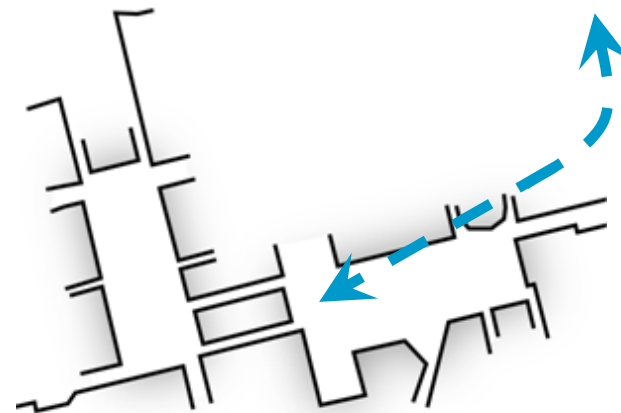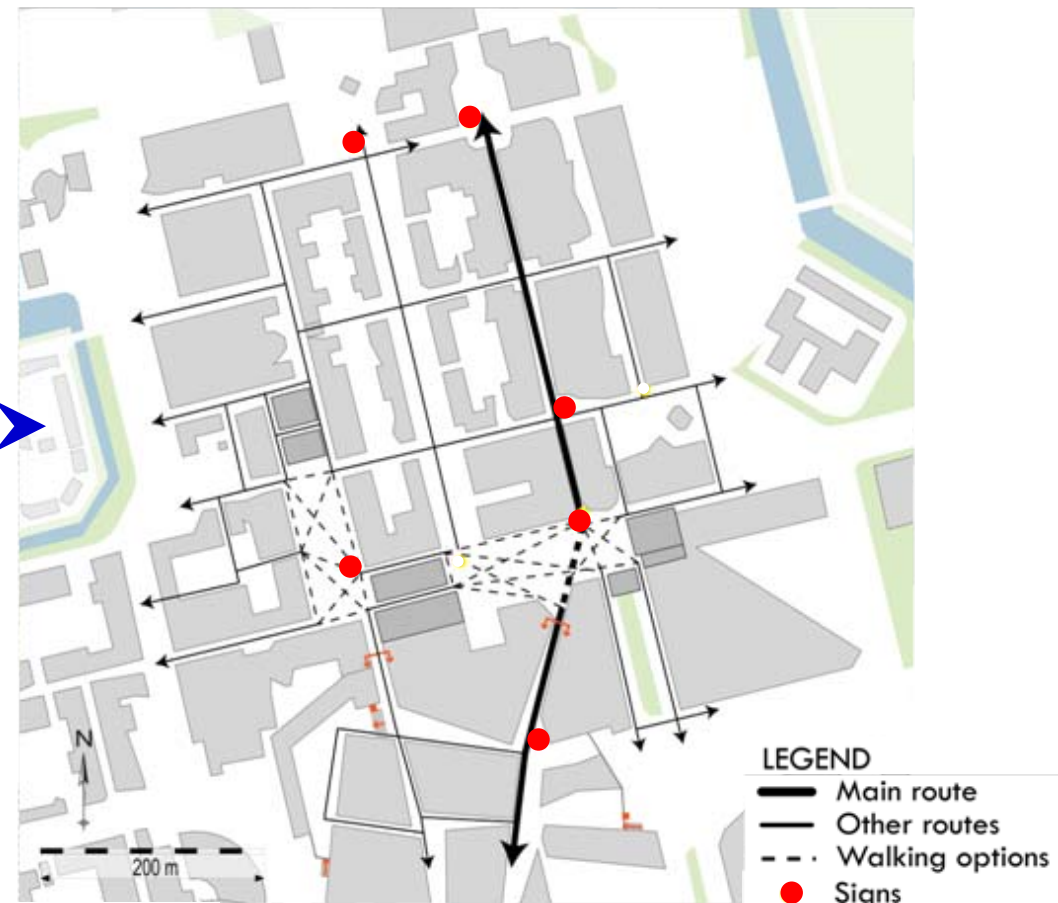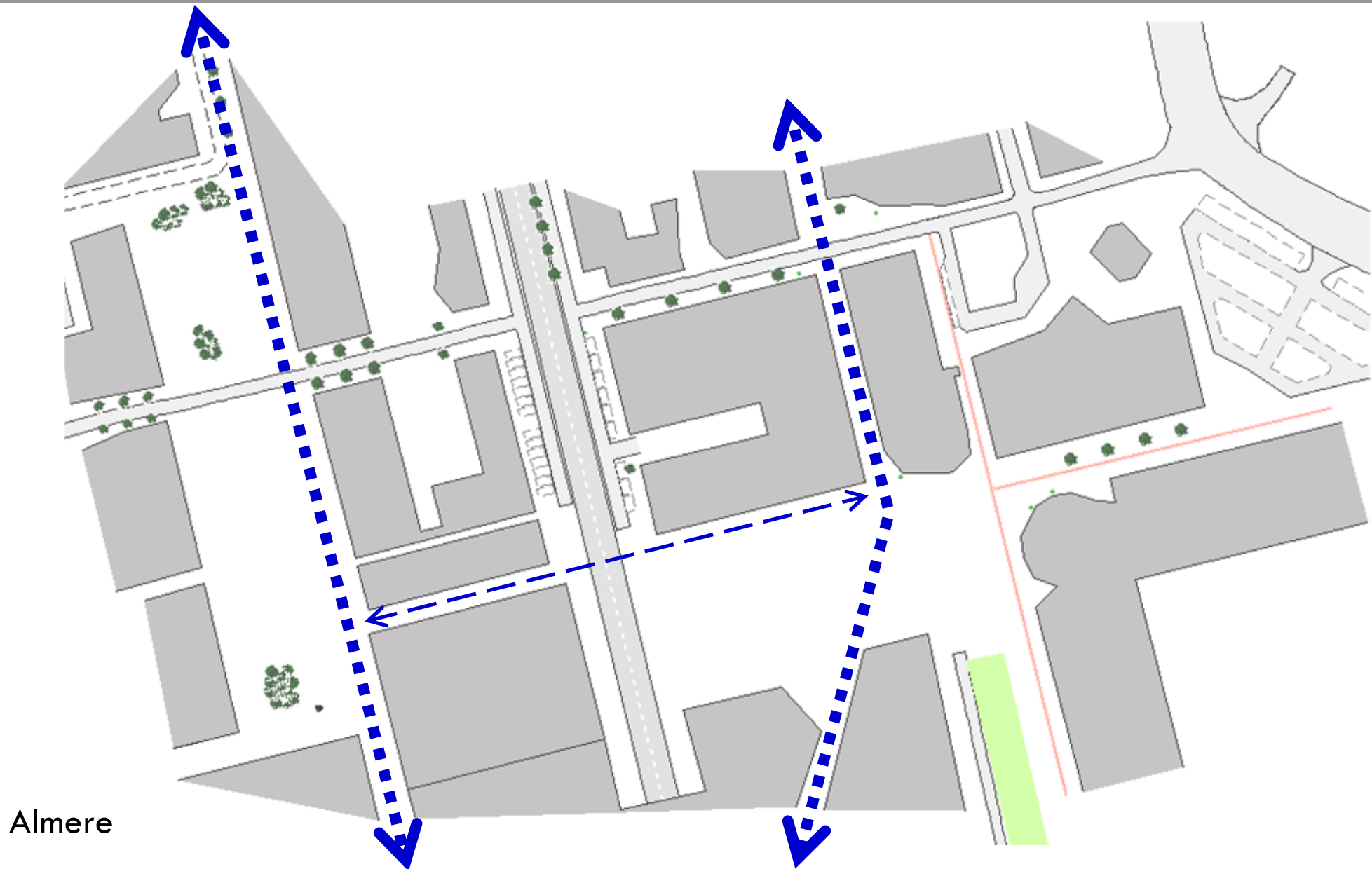
Proposal

Project Results

Proposal

Project Results

Spatial Organization

Accessibility & Connectivity

*"Urban Space Participates in a **Network** that
is Larger than the Space Itself"*

(White, 1999)

*"Streets in Historic Towns lead **Naturally** to the Centre,
the Main Square, where one Feels that he has **Arrived**"*

(Moughtin, 2003)

Project Results

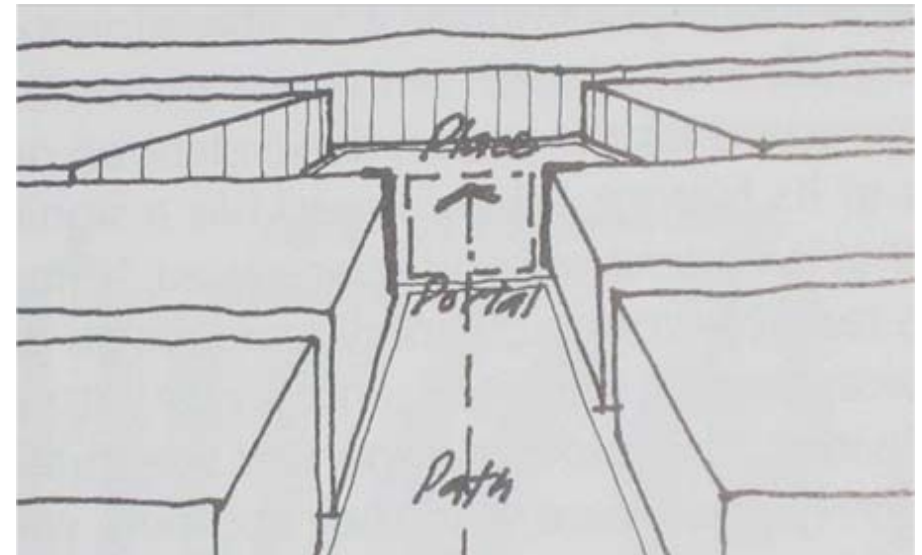## Accessibility & Connectivity

*"Urban Space Participates in a **Network** that is Larger than the Space Itself"*

(White, 1999)

Project Results

Accessibility & Connectivity

- Car parking

- Public transport

- **Walk-ability** – – – →

- Approach

- Integration larger urban fabric

Successful example

LEGEND
- Main route
- Other routes
- – Walking options
- ● Signs

Brugge

Project Results

Case for improvement

Successful example

Almere

Proposal

LEGEND
— Main route
— Other routes
--- Walking options
● Signs

Almere

Proposal

Project Results

Spatial Organization

Accessibility & Connectivity

Civic Program

*"Public Space is the **Common Ground** where People carry out the Functional and Ritual **Activities** that Bind the **Community**"*

(Carr et al, 1992)

*"A City Square can be called Successful when it **Sustains Activity**"*

(Moughtin, 2003)

Project Results

Civic Program

Alnwick, 19th C.

(Madanipour, 2003)

Project Results

Civic Program

- **Markets** ‒ ‒ ‒ →

- Festivals & events

- Social & cultural activities

- Subsidy of activities

- Target groups

Haarlem

Successful example

Grotemarkt, the main market. (Not a market day :P)

Almere

Case for improvement

Project Results

Almere

Case for improvement

Project Results

Spatial Organization

Accessibility & Connectivity

Civic Program

Identity

"Good Place has Distinguishing Qualities that Establish a Unique Identity"

"Successful Places have Strength of Character"

(White, 1999)

*"The Property Creates Life by Helping Centres
to Intensify Each Other"*

(Alexander, 2002)

Project Results

Identity

 "Strong Center"

 "Levels of Scale"

"The Property Creates Life by Helping Centres to Intensify Each Other"
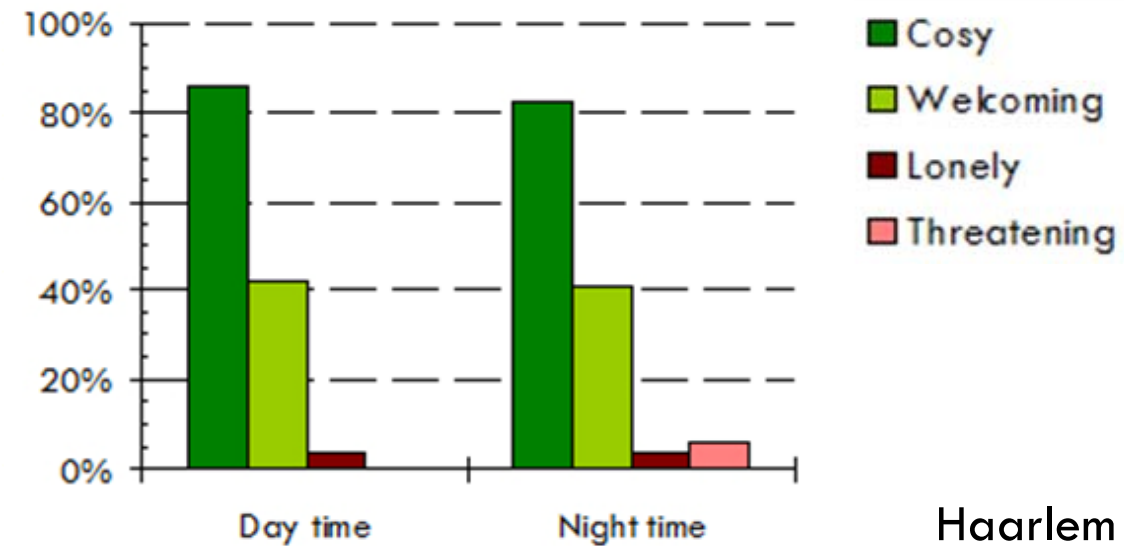
(Alexander, 2002)

Project Results

Successful example

Cosy
Wekoming
Lonely
Threatening

Haarlem

Identity

- Symbolic value

- **Atmosphere**

- Image

- Details in design

- Urban elements

Case for improvement
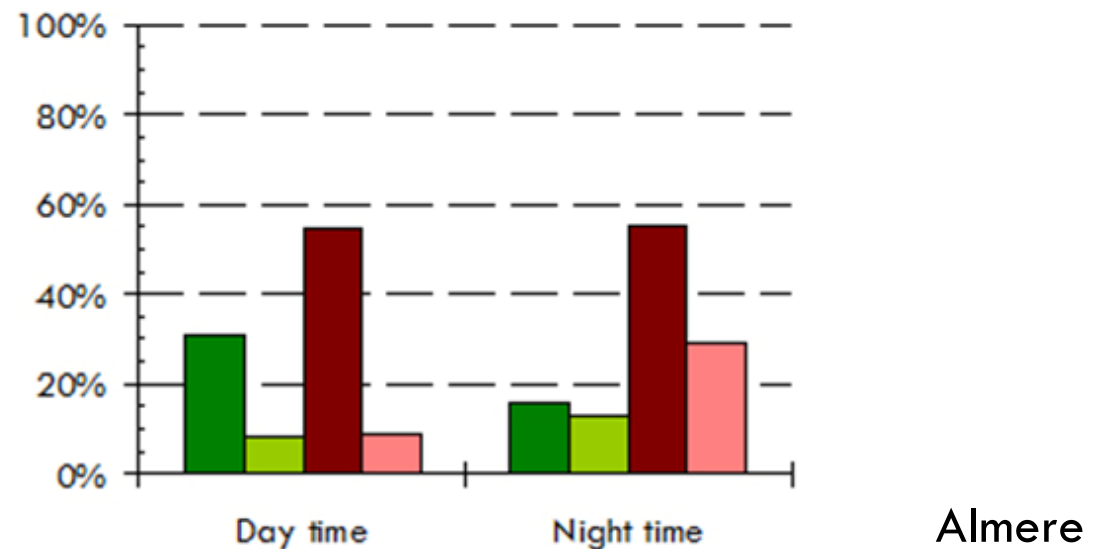
Almere

Project Results

Spatial Organization

Accessibility & Connectivity

Civic Program

Identity

Liveliness

"Urban Vitality is mostly about Providing Possibilities for Transaction"

(Montgomery, 1998)

"The Space should Encourage People to Come and Participate"

(White, 1999)

"Successful Places are Characterized by the Presence of People"

(Carmona, 2003)
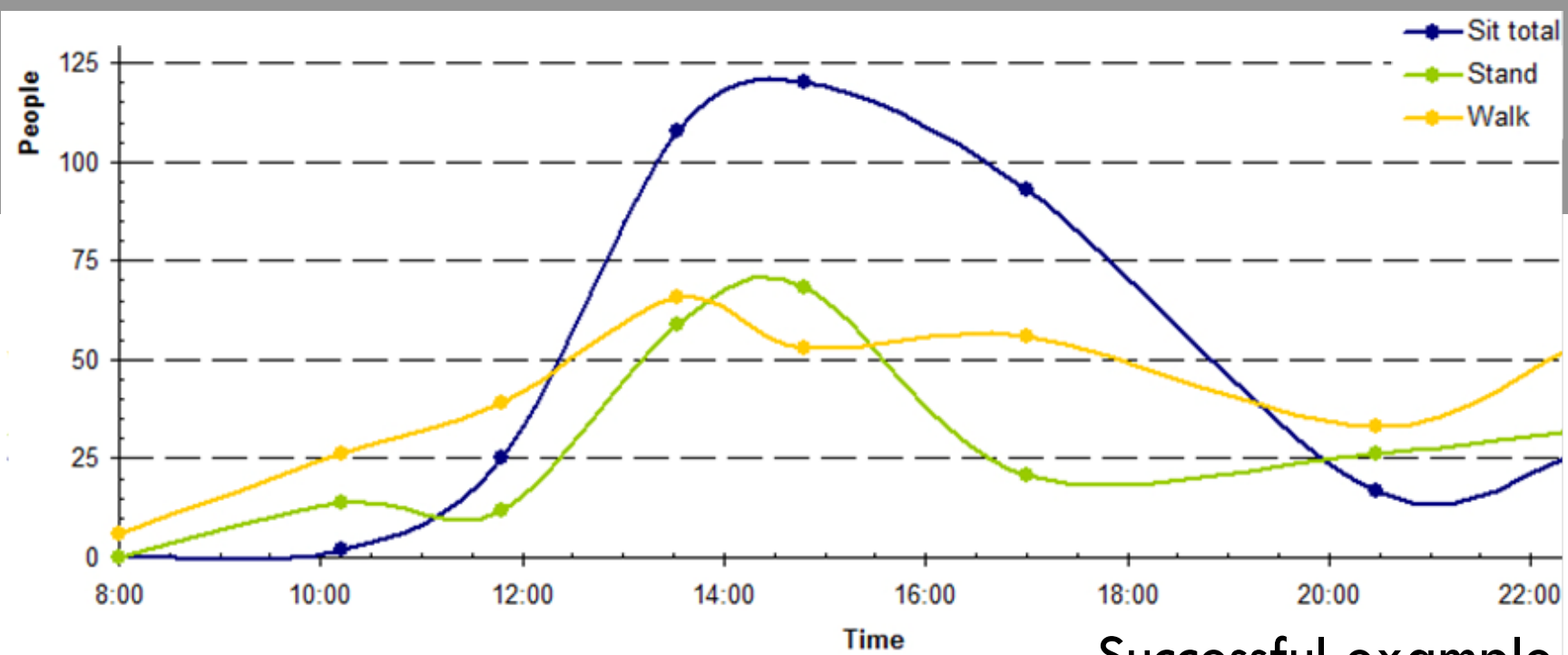
Successful example

Liveliness

- **People**

- Public furniture

- Dominant functions

- Changes of activities

- Relation in-/outdoor

- Public network

Haarlem

Liveliness

- **People**

Successful example

Case for improvement
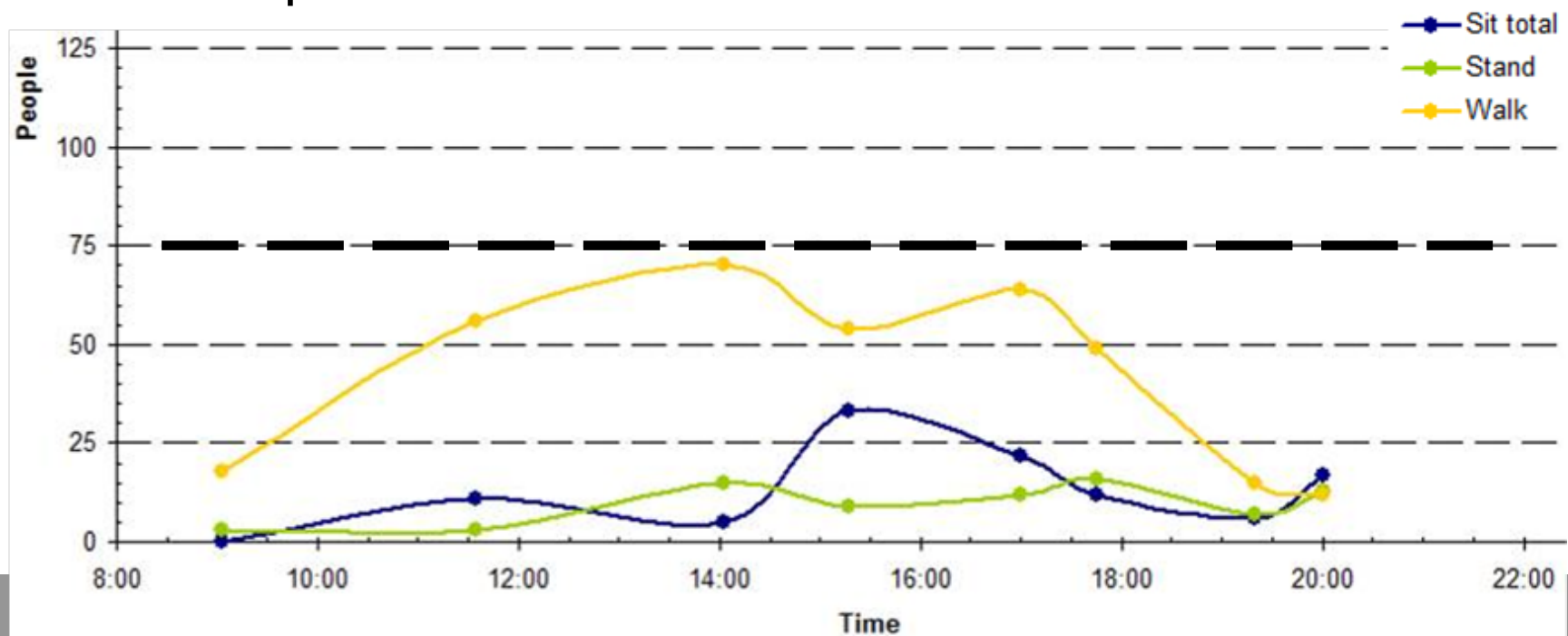
Almere

Project Results

Case for improvement

Liveliness

- **People**
- Public furniture
- Dominant functions
- Changes of activities
- **Relation in-/outdoor** →
- Public network

Stadhuisplein

Almere

Grote Markt

Stadhuisplein

Town hall
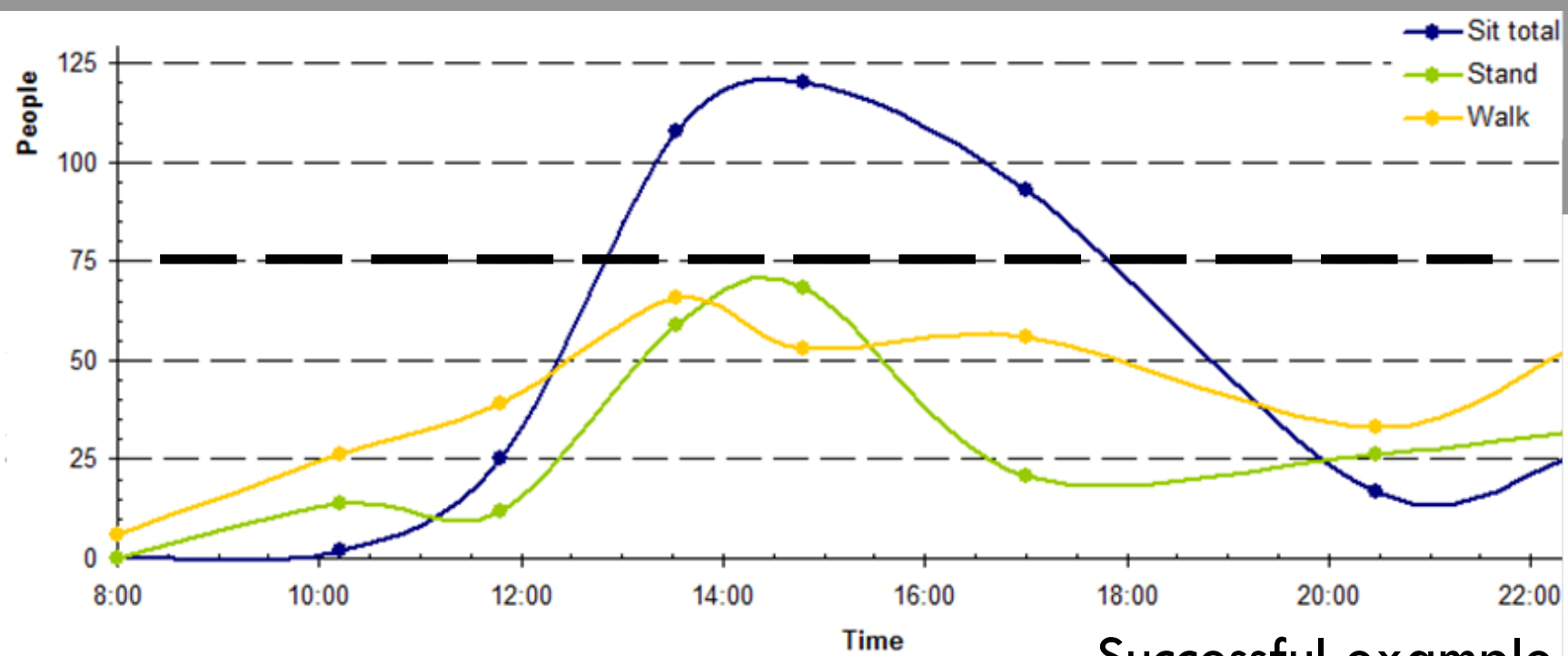
Almere

LEGEND
→ Civic functions
→ Shopping
→ Café, Restaurant,
→ Cultural functios
→ Offices
→ Residences

Project Results

Proposal

Almere

Case for improvement

Grote Markt

Stadhuisplein

Town hall

Proposal

LEGEND
→ Civic functions
→ Shopping
→ Café, Restaurant,
→ Cultural functios
→ Offices
→ Residences
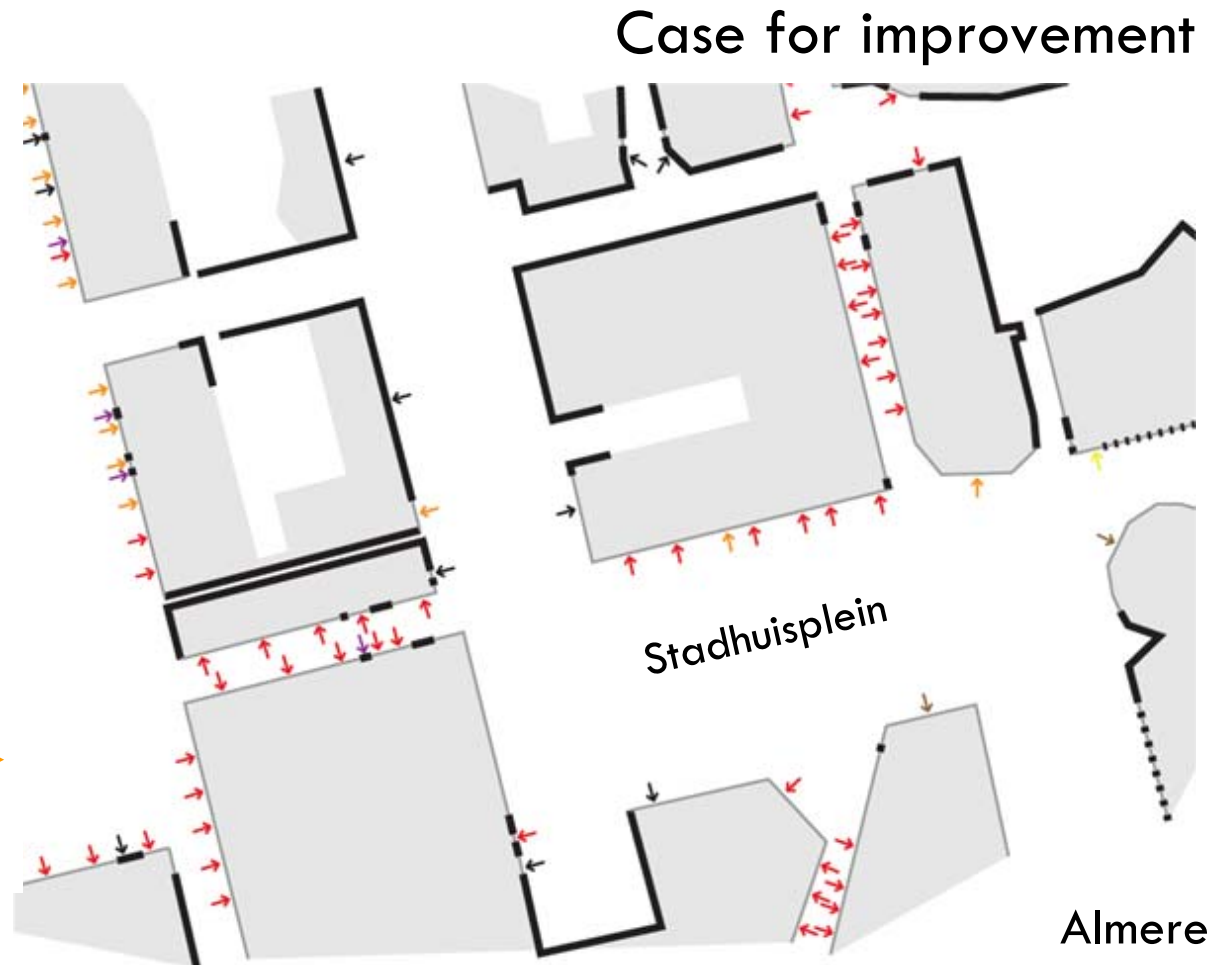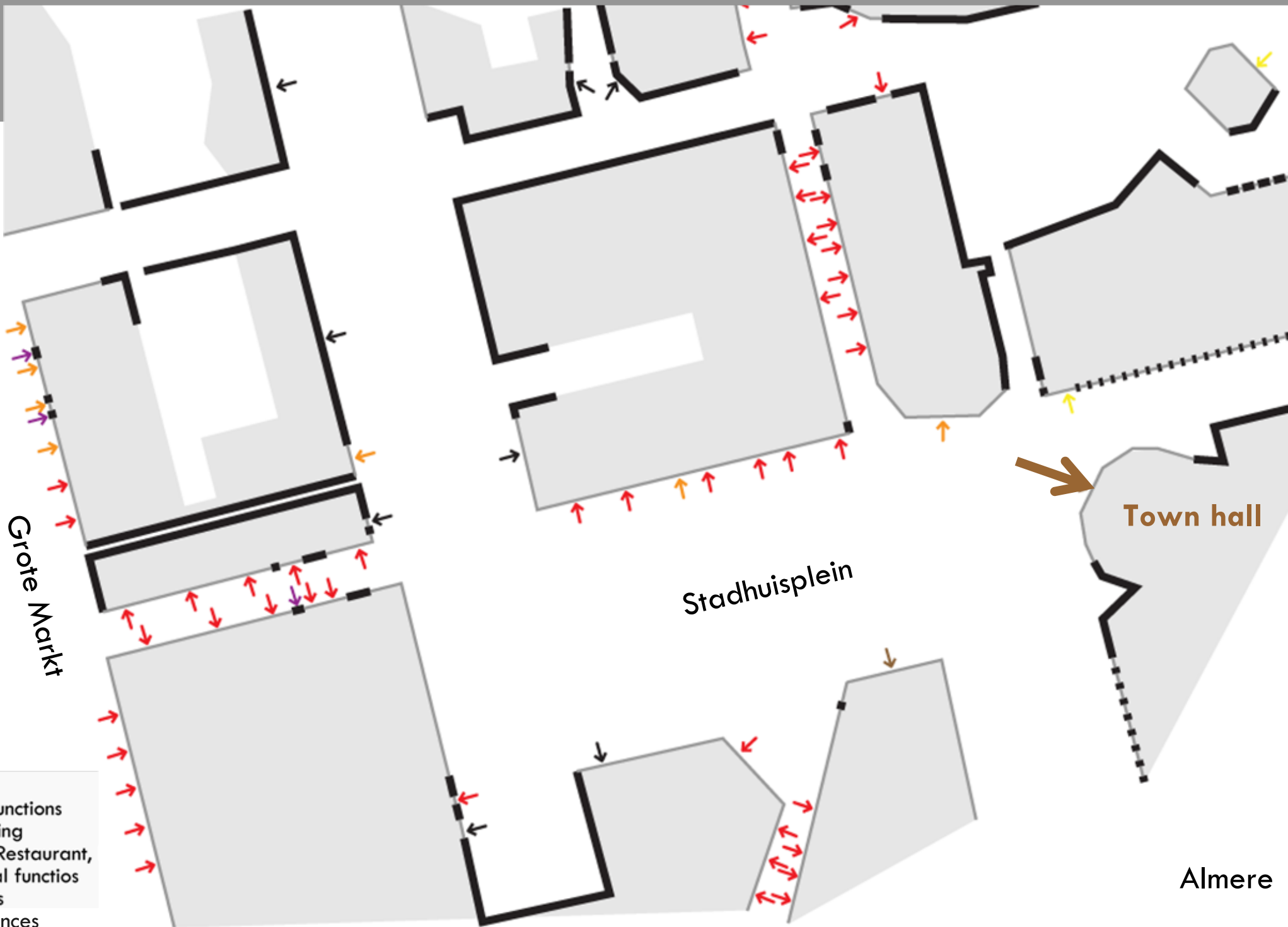
Project Results

Spatial Organization

Accessibility & Connectivity

Civic Program

Identity

Liveliness

Safety & Comfort

*"The Degree of **Maintenance** is an Important Factor in the Quality of Public Space"*

(Lynch, 1981)

*"The Pleasantness of a Place **Protects** One from Danger"*

(Gehl, 1996)

Project Results

Safety & Comfort

Pedestrians do not have Priority

Milton Keynes
(Picasa)

*"The Pleasantness of a Place **Protects** One from Danger"*

(Gehl, 1996)

Project Results

Successful example

Haarlem

Safety & Comfort

- Climatic conditions

- **Greenery** – – – – →

- Maintenance

- Lighting

- Physical safety

Proposal

Almere

Case for improvement

Successful example

Haarlem

Proposal

Project Results

Successful example

Haarlem

Safety & Comfort

- Climatic conditions

- **Greenery**

- Maintenance

- **Lighting** – – – ➔

- Physical safety

Project Results

Case for improvement

Successful example

Almere

Proposal

Project Results

Criteria for Quality of Main City Squares:

- Spatial Organization

- Accessibility & Connectivity

- Civic Program

- Identity

- Liveliness

- Safety & Comfort

Research Question

"How can we **Define** and **Improve** the

Social-Spatial and Spatial-Functional **Qualities** of

Today's **Main City Squares** in North-western Europe?"

Conclusions

- **To Define the Quality of main city squares:**

    – Theoretical list of 'Criteria for Quality'

    – Examples from Actual cases

- **To Improve the Quality of main city squares:**

    – Use 'Criteria for Quality' as checklist

    – Make use of successful examples

Conclusions

How can we Use this List of Criteria in Practice:

- To analyze individual aspects of one case

- To compare results of similar research

- To propose and underpin interventions

Brugge

Conclusions

- **What is Going Wrong?**

  – **Top-down** Planning & Design (literally)

  – Thinking in **Built Form** instead of Creating Space

- **What can we learn?**

  – **Discover** the Quality of Main Squares...

  ...from the Perspective of its **Users**!

  – **Implement** the Appreciated Qualities in the (Re)Design of Squares

Today's Main City Squares

in North-western Europe

Thank You!