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## Who Is The Most Pleased Pedestrian?

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### Abstract

This paper presents some results concerning pedestrian comfort from the PROMPT project (New means to PROMote Pedestrian Traffic in cities). PROMPT is a research project within EU's Fifth Framework under the Key Action "The City of Tomorrow and Cultural Heritage", involving six European countries. The project is based on case studies.

Comfort is one of several aspects affecting pedestrians being studied in the PROMPT project. Safety, accessibility, attractiveness and intermodality are among other aspects looked upon. Pedestrian comfort is a positive emotional reaction to external surroundings (the walking environment) and to situations, including physiological, physical, social and psychological reactions. Absence of discomfort means that nothing is unpleasant for the pedestrian. Comfort is also a cognitive comparison between actual objects and some point of reference, meaning that earlier experience and what the pedestrian is used to affects her evaluation of comfort.

The feeling and degree of comfort is dependent on the surroundings, the situation and the individual. To assess the pedestrian comfort in the case areas, both mapping and interviews have been undertaken. We interviewed pedestrians on the street asking questions about the actual walking trip and situation there and then.

A factor analysis based on the Norwegian interviews revealed four different pedestrian types:

- For the *easy-going* pedestrian the weather is important as well as to find her way easily. The typical easy-going pedestrian is a younger person.
- For the pedestrian seeking *security* away from traffic the important factors are safety, noise level, comfort and traffic conditions. The typical security-seeking pedestrian is a busy, middle-aged woman on a shopping trip, and she likes to walk.
- For the pedestrian seeking fresh *air, space and light*, it is important whether the surroundings are open or narrow. The typical pedestrian seeking air, space and light is an elderly woman going on a walk in the evening.
- The pedestrian seeking *social pleasure* stresses the presence of others, the presence of places to sit and to be able to meet requirements, as well as the condition of the street surface. The typical social pedestrian is an elderly person doing shopping in the downtown area during the daytime.

Making a better walking environment means taking into consideration the needs of the different pedestrians.

This paper will give a presentation of this typology, as well as try to give an answer to the title question. Finally we will answer the following questions: Do we find the same pedestrian types in Finland, in Belgium, in Switzerland, in France, and in Italy? And do we find some other pedestrian types, adding to the knowledge of pedestrians and the environment they appreciate?

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### Studying pedestrian comfort in European cities

This paper presents some results concerning pedestrian comfort from the PROMPT project (New means to PROMote Pedestrian Traffic in cities). PROMPT is a research project within EU's Fifth Framework under the Key Action "The City of Tomorrow and Cultural Heritage", involving six European countries: Belgium, Finland, France, Italy, Norway and Switzerland. Comfort is one of several aspects affecting pedestrians being studied in the PROMPT project. Safety, accessibility, attractiveness and intermodality are among other aspects looked upon. The project is based on case studies. The case areas are shown in table 1, and they cover *city centres*, *residential areas* and *suburban areas* in European cities with differences in city size, climate, topography and culture.

Table 1: PROMPT case areas and interview sites

<i>Country</i>	<i>City</i>	<i>Case Areas</i>	<i>Interview period</i>	<i>No of interviews</i>
Belgium	Liege	City centre	Aug 01	209
	Eupen	City centre	July 01	42
	Ans	Suburb	Aug 01	53
Finland	Helsinki	Centrally located residential area and suburb	July/Aug 01	79
	Jyväskylä	City centre and suburb	Aug 01	80
	Kuopio	City centre	Aug 01	40
France	Amiens	Residential area	May 01	67
	Nantes	Residential area	May 01	52
Italy	L'Aquila	Residential area	July 01	40
	Frascati	Residential area	July 01	65
	Modena	Suburb	Sept 01	54
Norway	Trondheim	City centre, residential area and suburb	April 01	119
	Lillehammer	City centre and a village	May 01	61
Switzerland	Zürich	Residential area and suburb	June 01	53
	Geneve	Residential area	May 01	41
	Sursee	Centrally located residential area	June 01	37

The theory on comfort presented in previous public transport studies formed a background when designing the work package on comfort for pedestrians. The work package on comfort has a double task, both to explore what comfort is for pedestrians and to find a way of measuring comfort for pedestrians.

Based on the theory, comfort for pedestrians is a positive *emotional* reaction to external surroundings (the walking environment) in different situations, including physiological, physical, social and psychological reactions. Absence of discomfort means that nothing is unpleasant for the pedestrian. Comfort is also a cognitive comparison between actual objects and some point of reference, meaning that expectation and earlier experience affects her evaluation of comfort.

The feeling and degree of comfort is dependent on the *surroundings*, the *situation* and the *individual*. To assess the pedestrian comfort in the case areas, both mapping and interviews have been undertaken. The general idea was to ask individuals about comfort factors in the interviews (subjective data) and to map data concerning the same comfort factors (objective data).

Because we think comfort is short-lived emotional reactions rather than cognitive reflections, we interviewed pedestrians on the street asking questions about the actual walking trip and the situation there and then. Totally we made 1092 interviews.

We found many similarities between the pedestrians being interviewed in the six participating countries. Most of the respondents were quite familiar with the area in which they were being interviewed. Only about one out of ten respondents said that they seldom walked in the areas or had never been there before. There were a high percentage of the respondents in all countries that stated to appreciate walking. Only 3-9% stated clearly that they did not appreciate walking, fewest of them in Finland and most in Switzerland. To go for a walk showed to be the main purpose of the trip when being interviewed for about one out of nine respondents in France and Switzerland, one out of six in Finland, and one out of five in Norway, Belgium and Italy. *This shows that walking is an activity by itself that is being practised to a great extent in all participating countries.*

In Italy, France, Finland and Norway, nearly 60% of the respondents walked all the way on the current trip, while 23% in Belgium and only 8% in Switzerland did the same. In Switzerland nearly 55% did combine walking with bus transport and about 20% combined with cycling. Also in Finland there was a relatively high share of respondents who combined with cycling, 16%. In Belgium and Italy we found the highest shares of pedestrians who combined walking with car driving on the current trip, around 30%.

### **Which are the factors influencing pedestrian comfort?**

The definition of comfort, including physiological, physical, social and psychological reactions to external surroundings depending on the individual and the situation, includes a large number of factors to affect the perceived comfort level. The comfort level we perceive is the result of our reactions to all these factors, but discomfort can emerge from any one of them. It is also thought that at least for some of the factors, there can be threshold levels, but also these depend on the individual and the situation.

One example is that it might be enjoyable to walk a busy pedestrian street with loud voices, children playing and birds singing, while the sound of lorries and buses nearby feels uncomfortable. But maybe the traffic is intolerable on a lazy Sunday afternoon walk, while it is quite tolerable on a hurried trip home after work!

The factors that may influence pedestrian comfort are numerous and great more than we are able to ask people about on an on-street interview. We call these factors comfort factors. We included questions concerning *thermal comfort, visual comfort, acoustic comfort, tactile comfort, smells, air pollution and allergens, the ease to move and the feeling of security* as well as a few questions about the individual and the situation. The interview design also had to take into consideration that people were asked in case areas with very different walking situations; both in areas with cold winter climate and on baking hot streets in more southern parts of Europe.

For each factor the pedestrians were asked to evaluate the situation there and then on a scale from 1 to 7 with 7 as the best value, as well as stating how important each factor was for them when walking. One of the questions asked was: *How comfortable do you feel it is to walk here just now?* This question was used as a yardstick to which all other 35 comfort factors were compared.

Based on all the answers, we went through with a factor analysis to identify underlying dimensions in the assessments made of each respondent. These dimensions are factors that seem to be assessed in the same way, which means they seem to belong together when assessing any of the 22 interview sites. These dimensions are shown in figure 1. The name of each dimension is given after the factor analysis, when looking into which factors that were grouped together.

- *Safety and security*: Feeling safe when walking at the site, confident in walking alone at the site both during daytime and when it is dark, not afraid of whom to meet
- *Attractiveness*: Not too easy to get an overview, appealing surroundings, not unpleasant odours
- *Traffic conditions*: Pleasant sound level, pleasant and exiting sounds, no bothersome car traffic, fresh air
- *Social meeting places and pleasantness*: Easy to meet requirements for rest, food and toilet, enough places to sit down, be protected from the weather by buildings, vegetation or topography, smooth and nice pavement surface
- *Move efficiently*: Minimal differences in altitude, not too windy, feel free to choose your own speed, not too much presence of vegetation, nature and water
- *Physiological factors*: Not too high temperatures, not too hard/exhausting trip, not too dry air, not being blended of light
- *Dressing*: Not too little clothing, not too thin shoes
- *Space and light*: Not too narrow surroundings, not too dark
- *Comfort*: Comfortable weather for walking, comfort feeling

Figure 1. Dimensions describing the pedestrian environment. Each dimension is characterised by several comfort factors.

When stating the importance of different factors regarding comfort, we found that in all six countries the feeling of *safety and security* was regarded as *the most important factor* for the respondents when being pedestrians. The comfort feeling and the air conditions/air quality were also regarded as factors of high importance in most of the countries. The factor regarded as *least important in all countries was the presence of other people*.

Analysis of all interviews show that there are significant and positive correlation between the assessment of comfort and many of the other comfort factors that are included in this study. We find the highest correlation (0,368) between the feeling of comfort and the feeling of safety and security (the higher feeling of safety and security – the higher comfort feeling). Significant correlations between 0,2 and 0,3 are found between the feeling of comfort and the traffic conditions (the less bothersome car traffic – the higher comfort feeling), the pavement surface conditions (the more smooth and nice surface – the higher comfort feeling), and the surroundings (the more appealing surroundings – the higher comfort feeling).

The dimensions in figure 1 show that the comfort feeling is strongly related to the weather conditions, this is also shown in correlation and the regression analysis. When exploring the connection between the different elements of weather conditions and the comfort feeling, we find that the weather conditions during interview do not affect the feeling of comfort directly. What affects the feeling of comfort is how the respondents assess the weather conditions. The interviews cover periods where the temperature varied between 0 and 33°C, there was snow, rain, clear sky, sunshine and darkness, calm and windy. To the question “*Do you find today’s weather comfortable for walking?*” there is a tendency that temperatures between 16 and 22°C are regarded as the most comfortable for walking, and that temperatures between 0 and 15°C are regarded as a bit less comfortable than temperatures between 23 and 33°C. Breeze is regarded as more comfortable than strong wind, and sunshine is regarded as more comfortable than snow and rain.

#### **4 types of pedestrians in the city of Trondheim, Norway**

A factor analysis based on the interviews in the three different case areas of the city of Trondheim revealed four different pedestrian types:

- For the pedestrian seeking fresh *air, space and light*, it is important whether the surroundings are open or narrow. The typical pedestrian seeking air, space and light is an elderly woman going for a walk in the evening. We find that the pedestrians seeking fresh air, space and light are also the pedestrians who *give the highest average comfort score (5,48)*.
- For the pedestrian seeking *security* away from traffic the important factors are safety, noise level, comfort and traffic conditions. The typical security-seeking pedestrian is a busy, middle-aged woman on a shopping trip, and she likes to walk. The pedestrians seeking security away from traffic give a comfort score in between (5,38).
- The pedestrian seeking *social pleasure* stresses the presence of others, the presence of places to sit and to be able to meet requirements, as well as the condition of the street surface. The typical social pedestrian is an elderly person

shopping in the downtown area during daytime. The pedestrians seeking social pleasure give a comfort score in between (5,35).

- For the *easy-going* pedestrian the weather is important as well as to find her way easily. The typical easy-going pedestrian is a younger person. The easy-going pedestrians give the *lowest average comfort score* (5,02).

When we included the interviews from Lillehammer, we found that the pedestrians seeking social pleasure can be divided into two groups: Those who find the presence of other people important as well as surface conditions and light conditions. The other group stresses the presence of seating and the possibility to meet needs for food, toilets and so on. These pedestrians may value the possibility to sit down because they need the rest rather than for social pleasure. About Norwegian pedestrians we also found that:

- People in a hurry evaluate comfort to be lower than people having sufficient time.
- Women evaluate comfort to be lower than men do.
- It seems like increasing age leads to increasing valuation of the importance for all comfort factors.

As part of the PROMPT project, children aged 6 and 11 answered a questionnaire. When children tell about what makes a walk pleasant, they tell about other people, traffic conditions, surface and weather, and the benefits of fresh air and exercise when walking. They prefer little car traffic or none at all, sufficient street lightning, nice and wide sidewalks, walkways and safe pedestrian crossings. Some children say that to feel safe and not have to look out for cars make them feel comfortable when walking.

### **Different types of European pedestrians**

When we look at the respondents in all six European countries we find two main types of pedestrians:

- Pedestrians seeking *ease and social pleasure*: For them presence of other people is important as well as places to sit, requirements met, weather and light conditions, surface conditions, the open/narrowness and layout of the surroundings.
- Pedestrian seeking *security* away from traffic: The important factors are safety, noise level, comfort, air conditions and traffic conditions.

This corresponds with the two groups of female pedestrians interviewed in the survey. Looking only at the men, we find that they divide into more groups:

- Men stressing security: comfort, safety and security
- Men stressing traffic conditions and street environment: sound, traffic and air conditions as well as the open/narrowness of the streets
- Men stressing the social pleasure: presence of others, light and surface conditions and the open/narrowness of the streets
- Men stressing the ease and comfort: places to sit and requirements met, to find the way easily as well as weather conditions

We have already stated that the pedestrians in the different European countries have a lot in common. Are there any differences?

Factor analysis made for each country did not give exact corresponding pedestrian groups as found in Norway. We recognized the pedestrian seeking fresh air, space and light in Belgium, France, Italy and Switzerland. The pedestrian seeking security away from traffic was also found in Belgium and France. The pedestrian seeking social pleasure was found in France and Italy. And the easy-going pedestrian was found in Switzerland.

When stating the importance of each factor, the respondents in France and Belgium seem to judge most factors to be of higher importance than the other countries do. Respondents from Finland and especially Norway seem to do the opposite, using a lower part of the scale when stating the importance of each factor.

**Where are the most pleased pedestrians?**

The mean value of the pedestrian’s assessment of the feeling of comfort (on a scale from 1 to 7) varied between 4,16 (Uptown central square, Eupen, Belgium) and 6,60 (Parco, L’Aquila, Italy). There may be many explanations for the differences found. In figure 1 we presented different dimensions describing the pedestrian environment. We calculated the mean value for all these dimensions by entering the respondent’s scores for each factor contributing to each dimension. These mean values are shown in table 2, and compared to the mean comfort score for each case area. There were not any clear pattern from this comparison, but we found that L’Aquila, Italy (the highest average score on the comfort feeling) and Modena, Italy (the third highest average score on the comfort feeling) also had the highest scores on the *Space and Light* and the *Attractiveness* dimensions. The table demonstrates that the relationship between the comfort feeling and the other dimensions is no straightforward relation.

	
<p>Highest mean comfort score was given in Parco, L’Aquila, Italy</p>	<p>Lowest mean comfort score was given in Uptown central square, Eupen, Belgium</p>

Figure 2: Pictures from the case areas with the highest and the lowest comfort score.

Table 2: Mean values for the assessment of different dimensions describing the pedestrian environment, based on interviews where pedestrians assessed different comfort factors on a scale from 1-7. Each dimension is described by several comfort factors. The green colour shows the three case areas with the highest average values, the dark green marks the highest value. The red colour shows the three case areas with the lowest average values, the dark red marks the lowest value. The average comfort score is shown in the last column.

Report

case area		move efficient	safety and security	traffic conditions	social meeting and pleasantness	space and light	physiological factors	attractiveness	clothes and shoes	How comfortable do you feel it is to walk here just now?
Trondheim-Midtbyen N-E-Norway	Mean N	5,6413 23	6,0649 37	4,5486 36	4,2770 37	4,3529 34	5,1216 37	3,7685 36	3,9189 37	5,75 44
Trondheim-Lade-Norway	Mean N	5,3800 25	5,9385 26	3,7200 25	2,9348 23	4,1552 29	5,1354 24	3,7391 23	3,8800 25	4,94 36
Trondheim-Tillerbyen-Norway	Mean N	5,5750 30	6,0600 30	4,4667 30	3,6111 27	4,5625 32	5,0086 29	3,2667 30	3,9333 30	5,66 38
Lillehammer-town centre-Norway	Mean N	5,4018 28	6,2286 28	4,5446 28	4,6071 28	4,2024 42	4,9464 28	3,4881 28	4,3214 28	6,17 42
Lillehammer-Vingrom-Norway	Mean N	5,3409 11	6,3455 11	4,6136 11	3,5455 11	4,4211 19	4,8636 11	3,4848 11	4,6818 11	5,26 19
Ans-Belgium	Mean N	5,5100 25	5,6818 22	4,2600 25	5,5100 25	4,5851 47	5,3400 25	3,8533 25	3,9000 25	5,49 53
Eupen-Belgium	Mean N	5,0395 38	5,3737 38	4,7763 38	3,9936 39	4,1774 31	4,9408 38	4,3426 36	4,0769 39	4,36 42
Liege-Belgium	Mean N	5,2059 170	4,5183 169	4,0334 172	3,9779 170	4,5000 202	4,4687 168	3,2597 172	4,1784 171	5,05 208
Nantes-France	Mean N	4,8750 48	4,6286 49	4,0931 51	3,5255 49	4,0750 40	4,9600 50	3,4837 51	3,8922 51	5,71 51
Amiens-France	Mean N	1,9102 64	6,2369 65	4,5040 62	4,0769 65	4,5645 62	5,0000 62	3,1026 65	4,3308 65	4,96 67
L'Aquila-Italy	Mean N	4,3013 39	5,6308 39	3,5962 39	5,3013 39	5,6125 40	4,8397 39	4,5043 39	4,1154 39	6,37 40
Frascati-Italy	Mean N	4,0921 57	5,4807 57	4,1096 57	4,1886 57	4,9538 65	4,5351 57	4,2222 57	3,8509 57	5,00 65
Modena-Italy	Mean N	4,5469 48	5,3333 48	4,1875 48	4,0885 48	5,2685 54	5,0156 48	4,6458 48	4,0104 48	6,15 54
Geneva-La Cluse-Switzerland	Mean N	4,9146 41	5,0098 41	3,3963 41	5,2073 41	4,0000 10	5,3232 41	3,6341 41	3,9103 39	5,15 41
Sursee-Switzerland	Mean N	5,3214 28	5,6538 26	4,0179 28	5,4516 31	4,2500 34	5,1379 29	3,7241 29	3,8824 34	5,78 36
Zurich-Langstrasse-Switzerland	Mean N	5,3696 23	4,9840 25	3,1058 26	5,4896 24	3,7826 23	5,5543 23	3,6250 24	3,8913 23	5,23 26
Zurich-Schwamendingen-Switzerland	Mean N	5,2292 24	5,3556 27	3,8241 27	4,3958 24	3,8333 18	4,9022 23	3,9103 26	4,0400 25	6,15 26
Kuopio-Centre-Finland	Mean N	5,0705 39	5,5150 40	4,5125 40	4,5250 40	4,2500 40	4,9000 40	3,7583 40	3,9375 40	5,48 40
Jyvaskyla-Centre-Finland	Mean N	4,9750 40	5,7450 40	4,4875 40	5,0875 40	4,2125 40	4,9875 40	3,5812 39	4,0875 40	5,13 40
Jyvaskyla-Kortepohja-Finland	Mean N	5,2237 38	6,1189 37	4,8077 39	4,0270 37	4,2308 39	4,9687 40	4,0000 37	4,3375 40	5,70 40
Helsinki-Myllypuro-Finland	Mean N	5,1167 30	5,4645 31	5,4113 31	4,1694 31	4,7353 34	4,8306 31	3,9140 31	4,2742 31	5,94 35
Helsinki-Töölö-Finland	Mean N	5,2557 44	5,1907 43	3,7443 44	4,7841 44	4,0341 44	5,2443 44	3,8182 44	4,1591 44	6,11 44
Total	Mean N	4,8311 913	5,3916 929	4,1895 938	4,3371 930	4,4826 979	4,9088 927	3,7132 932	4,0775 942	5,44 1087

### Other Findings

*Safety and security* were considered as very important issues, but on the other hand, the case areas were not considered to be problematic in this regard. Insecurity related to traffic at potentially conflicting spots is mostly related to peripheral main streets.

Also interesting is that presence of other people seems to be unimportant. This can be interpreted in two ways, either that they are not walking just for meeting people or for looking at them (which have been emphasised by architects), or they have been thinking of walking solely as walking and not as a part of for example a social activity. It seems like there is always some other purpose for walking: going to work, school, shopping, restaurant etc. Also jogging or taking a dog for a walk are reasons for walking. However, the young people make an exception. They are also just hanging around, especially in the evening.

Men worry less about walking when it is dark, while women are more confident on getting help if they need it. The pedestrians are very sensitive to the street lighting (sufficient and pleasant). When dark, pedestrians feel safer walking along a street with vehicle traffic than walking in pedestrian streets and walkways. Respondents in pedestrianised streets are more concerned about the presence of others, places to sit down and fulfilling of other needs, than respondents in streets with car traffic are.

The importance of *light and sound conditions* is regarded highest on the sites with most traffic. In central areas, where the traffic volume is rather high, the interviewed people saw mostly the noise level, traffic volume and air quality being the worst cases as regards walking comfort. The *quality of air* was also considered very important. On the other hand, in areas with a large extent of separated walkways or low traffic volumes, these issues were correspondingly not considered to be problematic. The evaluation of the interviews and site mapping show many things in common and few differences. Unexpected was the better assessment of “feel safe/secure” and the stronger assessment of air pollution compared with noise pollution in the interviews. The urgent need for action concerning traffic and air pollution was to be expected.

Very interesting is that weather was not considered an important issue nor to be problematic either. It is also interesting that people in general do not see the light or space (narrow or wide) as an important issue and these things were also considered to be quite good in the areas.

Orientation i.e. finding easily the right route and place was considered to be a rather important issue, but people did in general not find this problematic in the case areas, possibly because they already know the area quite well.

In general it was considered that in the pedestrian routes and places, there are not enough benches and other resting facilities, as well as a shortages of other equipment intended for pedestrians and freely accessible sanitary amenities. From our point of view the missing public seating provisions with protection from weather and wind are more important than so far assumed, especially in connection with tram and bus stops. In Norway and Switzerland this was considered important, while in Finland this was not regarded clearly problematic.

### **Who is the most pleased pedestrian?**

By this question we mean: who is the pedestrian that feels the highest degree of comfort? It can very simply be put this way: the most pleased pedestrian is a person not being in a hurry, walking with a dog, bringing children or others or just going for

a walk. Also a pedestrian who combines the trip with train, seems to be more pleased than most other pedestrians. There are no big differences between ages and gender, nor between the countries. Pedestrians who enjoy walking are, not surprisingly, more pleased than pedestrians who don't appreciate walking. Also pedestrians walking in residential areas, either in suburbs or centrally located, feel a higher level of comfort than pedestrians walking in the typical city centre areas.

We should also ask: who is the pedestrian feeling the highest degree of discomfort? We find that pedestrians that appreciate walking, but at the same time regard walking as bothersome, feel a higher degree of discomfort. Especially people sitting in wheelchairs, using rollators or canes are overrepresented in the group of pedestrians feeling low comfort. Also pedestrians who had never been at the interview site before felt a higher degree of discomfort than other, as well as people being in a hurry, and people being on a trip to or from work or a work related trip.

This paper has shown the importance of planners being aware that pedestrians are not a uniform group, but individual people with different needs and desires. However, the pedestrians being interviewed in all six countries did agree that the feeling of safety and security was the most important factor for them when being out walking. The correlation analysis did also give the highest correlation between the feeling of safety and security and the feeling of comfort, indicating that the feeling of safety and security is the most basic condition for the feeling of pedestrian comfort. The ease to move, possibility to meet basic requirements and social meeting places were also important for different groups of pedestrians. To make a good pedestrian environment, one should take all this into consideration. A better understanding of pedestrian comfort, as well as knowledge about universal design, may help to plan better pedestrian facilities in the city of tomorrow.

More information about the PROMPT project can be found on <http://prompt.vtt.fi> .