

Vestre Journal



Vestre Journal



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Issue 1
Social Meeting Places

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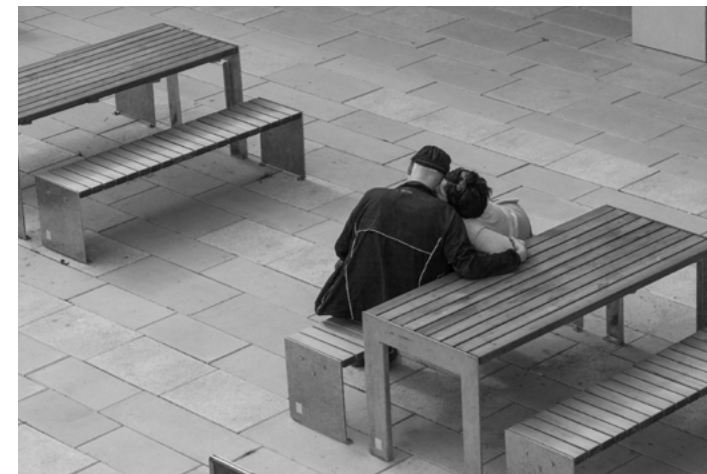
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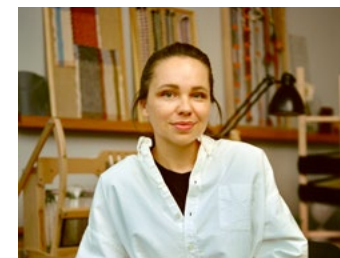
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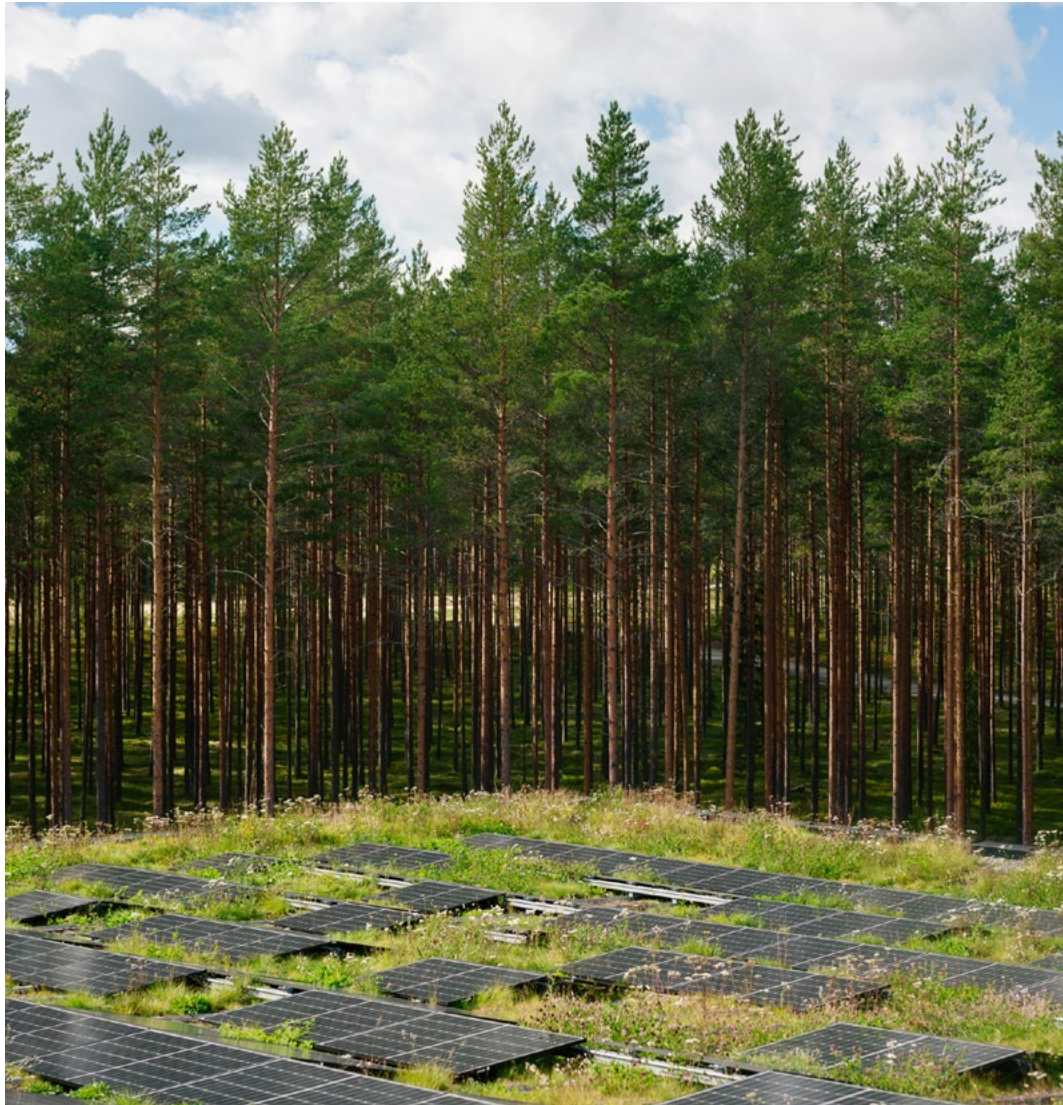
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The History of Vestre



The Plus, built in the middle of a Norwegian pine forest, has a green roof consisting of 888 solar panels as well as native plants that create a living ecosystem.

Time to tell you the story about Vestre. About how our focus on sustainability, architecture and design came about. This hasn't come to light only in recent years—the whole of Vestre is rooted in these values and they have been passed on for generations.

In 1947, two years after the war, Norway was beset by shortages and poverty, but also by a collective desire to rise again and rebuild the country. Johs. Vestre toyed with the idea of starting a small private manufacturing company making various types of light industrial products. One day, he came across an old military installation in Quindeslandsmarken in Haugesund. It was certainly no factory that he had discovered. It wasn't even a shack, but a ruin from the war. On 20 August 1947, the day Johs. turned 37, he registered the establishment of a trading company under the name "Johs. Vestre Mekaniske Verksted." And with that, Vestre was born. What would be the first of numerous factories for the family business Vestre, was established in an old German barracks in the coastal city of Haugesund.

Vestre's first social meeting places was created using playground equipment. The business attracted attention early on, representing precisely what the industrial sector was looking for: A forward-thinking business with ideas extending beyond those of the traditional industries in the city. As Johs. himself said: "We must constantly make things better for the society in which we and our descendants live, something which cannot be achieved through the constant pursuit of material goods."

This way of thinking has been inherited through the generations that followed Johs. Vestre. Creating attractive outdoor environments for socializing, with materials that

last. Produced in the most sustainable way at our two production facilities in Sweden and Norway. And through those facilities, Vestre controls about 90 percent of our own value chain, making it even easier to make sure all the processes are as green as possible.

In 2013, we opened our Snøhetta-designed Steel Factory in Torsby. Today, it is the workplace for some 50 people and has around 3,500 m² of floor space. On sunny days, it is self-sufficient with renewable energy from solar panels on its roof.

Nine years later, in 2022, we opened The Plus, the world's most environmentally friendly furniture factory in Magnor, Norway, designed by BIG Bjarke Ingels Group. The Plus generates 55 percent less greenhouse gas emissions than a conventional factory, and is also the world's first project of its type to achieve the highest environmental BREEAM rating by meeting the requirements for classification as Outstanding. The Plus also has a green roof, open to everyone day and night, with 888 solar panels installed.

And, just as Johs. created social meeting places with playground equipment and park furniture in the 1950s, Vestre is still working to create sustainable and democratic meeting places, with urban furniture. The result: meeting places that exist across social, cultural and economic differences. From Haugesund to Times Square. ■



SOCIAL MEETING PLACES

and
Allemannsretten

Allemannsretten, meaning the right to roam, has a long history in Norwegian and Scandinavian outdoor life, yet it has also laid the foundations for urban development. At Vestre, it is a given that urban spaces belong to everyone. →



Benches along the paths of Fyresdal in Norway provide a place to rest, chat and drink the coffee you've brought.



Allemannsretten, the Scandinavian term for the right to roam, is integral to our philosophy.

Allemannsretten and democratic design are key principles in Vestre's philosophy. Our goal is to create inclusive spaces for what we call "everyday democracy". Spaces where people can come together despite their differences, share thoughts and experiences, and develop ideas. When we get to know each other, we suddenly discover that there is no us and them; it's only "we". At Vestre, we believe that creating social meeting places dedicated to this is the best way of preventing the polarization of society and avoiding hostility and conflict. And it is with these democratic meeting places that we hope to change the world—one neighborhood at a time.

In Scandinavia, *Allemannsretten* is so strong that the idea that our shared spaces belong to everyone is deeply engrained in all of us. Vestre believes that this should apply to all urban spaces and the meeting places there. Good design shouldn't be reserved for a small group of people who have the resources for it. By furnishing public places, we make good design accessible to everyone.

At Vestre, the principle that design must be democratic and accessible to everyone comes above all else. It guides our decisions and defines our culture and the way we do business. The story of the right to roam and inclusive design is gaining a greater foothold beyond Scandinavia, and over the recent years we have had an export share of nearly 80 percent—with deliveries to projects in over 30 countries. And we are still growing. Meaning we are bringing more and more people together through good design worldwide. ■



The Bench, Young Women, and Public Life

Dr. Julia King

Policy Fellow, LSE Cities &
Director, Julia King & Associates



Olivia Theocharides-Feldman

Research Officer, LSE Cities &
Associate, Julia King & Associates



Benches are essential to our public lives. They are invitations to be, to pause, and to linger in public spaces. In our research with young women, we found that benches, as spaces to “hang out”, were essential but also contentious spaces for this demographic.

Since 2021, we have run a program at LSE Cities, called *Young Researchers-in-Residence*, a paid learning and working opportunity focusing on the public-realm experiences and needs of young individuals identifying as women. LSE Cities is a research center at the London School of Economics that focuses on how the physical form and design of cities impacts society, culture, and the environment. We partnered with the charity Make Space for Girls, which campaigns for parks and public spaces to be designed with teenage girls in mind. We worked with young people aged 16 to 27 from seven sites in the UK.

A closer look at public-realm experiences

The importance of the bench was made clear to us in the small town of Trowbridge in the southeast of England. Here, a beautifully maintained park connects Trowbridge’s two main attractions—a relatively

new retail area and the historic town center. The park has large manicured green spaces, tree lined paths, and in the middle a small shop serving tea and snacks. In many ways it is a typical green space.

It was in a walk-around of this park that one of the young women we worked with, pointed out that most of the benches felt too small to hang out in groups and that she felt “on display” using them due to their placement along central paths. Indeed, while many girls and young persons hang out in groups, sometimes for fun and other times simply for safety, bench spaces typically have a two to four linear seat arrangement, with armrests that dictate that one must sit neatly in an upright position. They don’t allow groups of people to face one another, and as they often border paths this doesn’t invite groups of people to congregate.

To the other side of the park was a wooded area, with a circular set of seating in the middle. While they described the seating itself as appealing to them (because it was sociable and accommodated groups), its remote and hidden location made it feel unsafe. They wouldn’t use it. Some benches were too small and exposed, others too hidden.

How urban design shapes social realities

We heard stories like this over and over. How certain “benches are not for us...”, with the context and even the very design of the bench making them feel that way. However, all the young women we worked with also felt benches were highly important to them. They wanted to see more of them, with →

social seating on high streets and in green areas. Because most of the young women we worked with did not use the youth facilities provided for them in the public space, such as football pitches and skate-parks; our work found that the bench was instead their most used public good and an essential gathering place. As one young woman put it: “What I most use is a bench, I don’t use the MUGAS (*multi-use games area eg. football pitch*).” Benches not only allowed them to sit and chat, but for teenagers who do not have the same purchasing power as adults, to do that for free.

What our research shows is that the seemingly innocuous bench is essential to our, and particularly our young peoples’ lives. Indeed, objects like benches are artifacts of our society. They are not static cultural products, instead they have the power to reflect our social worlds. For example, a typical bench demonstrates how our society views an appropriate number of people congregating, way of sitting (upright), and type of user. As one young woman we worked with explained: “The size of benches is important because it decides who sits on it.” But more important still, objects don’t just echo society, they reinforce, normalize, and entrench social realities—such that, once made, a typical bench may proliferate the idea that large groups are not welcome in a space, or that it might be so horribly wrong to lounge rather than sit primly in public.

Benches have also therefore been objects of conflict in public life. It is common in many places for benches to be removed—notably under guise of “security measures”—when there is a perception of anti-social behavior in the local area, or when groups that authorities deem “undesirable” make use of these spaces (teenagers or those precariously housed, for example). Many benches have also either had armrests added to them or been replaced with slanted seating to ward off precariously housed individuals. These resulting architectures (or lack thereof) are

hostile, enabling forms of exclusion to be perpetuated through urban furniture, in a way that comes at a cost for public life and rights. The feminist urbanists Lapalud and Blache put this well, stating that “urban planners and politicians alike tend to suppress benches when they are seen as a zone of conflict, rather than creating the conditions for an inclusive, mixed usage.”

Designing for inclusion

So how might we imagine a better, more inclusive, more enjoyable politics of the bench?

It is impossible to completely “design out” social realities such as exclusion, ageism or sexism, by simply having social benches, in the same way that by removing a bench we cannot design out crime. But we can acknowledge that social issues are reinforced by our material or physical worlds in ways which let people know if they are included and on what terms. Designing a fun social bench for a group of young women could be transformative to their experience of their local area. ■

Dr. Julia King and Olivia Theocharides-Feldman have worked together at LSE Cities on various projects, including Making Space for Girls, Spencers Park Engagement Programme, and Young Researchers-in-Residence. Julia has a background in architecture and Olivia in anthropology. They continue to work together at Julia King and Associates (JK&A), specializing in brief-development, community engagement and participatory design. They devise tools and processes that enable diverse voices to contribute to design and planning decision-making, and to shaping the future of places in imaginative and equitable ways.



MEET THE



STOOP by Julien De Smedt

POP by Kristine Five Melvær



DESIGNER

Meet POP with



Kristine Five Melvær

Photography by Lasse Fløde

Can you tell us a bit about yourself as a designer?

With dual degrees in industrial design and graphic design, I enjoy working on a variety of projects across different categories and materials. My focus often gravitates toward textile projects, creating items like cushions, blankets, and clothing, for brands like Røros Tweed and Longchamp. In addition, I have been involved in the design of tableware in glass, wood, stone, and ceramics for manufacturers like Poltrona Frau, HAY, and When Objects Work. Beyond these, my creative endeavors extend to other categories, encompassing the realms of lighting, furniture, and floor mats.

What are your passions in your profession?

My goal is to design products that enrich the user's everyday life and last for generations. I want the products I design to be meaningful objects that bring joy throughout their lifecycle. This means that the products should not only have excellent function, quality, and durability but should also speak to users emotionally. Ideally, I want users to fall in love with them and want to live with them for a lifetime.

How did the collaboration with Vestre start?

In the years when I established myself as a designer, I had two jobs. I worked as a graphic designer in a communications agency during the day and as a product designer in my own company in the evenings.

"My objective is to design products that enrich the user in everyday life and last for generations."

In my graphic design job, I was fortunate to work on the visual identity of Vestre. Vestre is a manufacturer that you instantly develop a fondness for. They have a great team of solution-oriented "yes" people

who truly understand what designers can contribute, and they always do things properly. A few years later, around 2015, when I decided to focus solely on designing products in my own company, both Vestre and I were interested in collaborating on products as well.

What really drew me to Vestre, is that we are both committed to producing durable products with sustainability in mind. Many manufacturers talk about sustainability, but you can tell a significant difference between those who do it out of necessity and those who are genuinely passionate about it. With the new factory, The Plus, Vestre's commitment to action matching their words is even more apparent. But you can also see it in the products themselves, with their uncompromising quality and the care Vestre shows for their products even after they are out in the world. →

What did you want to create?

The goal with the POP series was to create green oases in cities. Warm and inviting spaces for people, animals, and plants. I also found it very motivating that this project would be so democratic. I am very committed to ensuring that my products have superior quality and long-lasting durability. This often limits their accessibility to a wealthier audience. What I found incredibly beautiful when I was designing POP was that even though the series was to be produced in top quality, it would be accessible to everyone in public spaces.

How would you describe the design language of POP?

The expression of POP is situated in the tension between architecture and nature. The series draws inspiration from nature, yet the materials and design language are industrial. The construction of the benches and tables resembles twigs branching out from thicker to thinner limbs, supporting delicate leaves. The perforations in the city walls create a foliage-like interplay of shadows on the ground. The perforations in the benches and tables are smaller but large enough to allow rainwater to pass through. Although the construction is super-solid, these perforations give the design a sense of lightness and transparency.

The bench comes in several variants, with or without a back and armrests. The combination of a steel frame

and perforated aluminum plates on the seat and back offers numerous color possibilities, as they are powder-coated separately before assembly. You can choose a monochromatic solution or two contrasting colors that pop. This also applies to city walls and tables and is one of the reasons for the name “POP.”

The geometric design language of the benches is also reflected in the four planters. With their varying widths and heights, they can be combined in different ways to create various spatial situations. They can also be prepared for city walls and irrigation systems.



POP can act as a plant trellis, for a greener cityscape.
Photo: Nicolas Tournenc

What sets POP apart from other furniture?

Within the POP series, we introduced a category that didn't exist before and therefore needed a new name — city walls. They can be used as standalone pieces or integrated into planters, and they serve the function of trellises but are considerably more robust, opening up many other applications. They can be used as a more protective backrest between two benches, as semi-transparent walls that provide a sense of protection from the urban environment, or customized for various activities in a backyard, where items like flower pots, light bulbs, or messages can be hung on the perforations. ■



3D models were used to find the correct style of perforations.

Meet STOOP with



Julien De Smedt

Photography by Katrine Møbius

Can you tell us a bit about you as a designer?

In 2013, I founded a design studio called “Makers With Agendas” where the idea was to turn research and societal investigations into relevant products. With that, we targeted issues such as domestic health or compact production and living, to create objects like a dining table that unfolds into a ping pong table or a trestle that can fold into a single stick for easy storage. I have also designed various products for Muuto like the Stacked shelving system which allows its users to make endless configurations of shelves and therefore enables them to be reused wherever they move.

As a designer, what drives you?

I’m interested in the specifics of a situation and how we can derive a principle or a system from it that allows others to answer their own needs. This is applicable in smaller scale designs such as furniture as well as in larger projects of architecture.

How did the collaboration with Vestre begin?

In 2011, I was selected by “101% Designed in Brussels” as one of the designers to be promoted throughout the year at major design trade fairs. This led to a showcase of my prototypes at the Stockholm Furniture Fair. At the

“Urban spaces should be humanly designed, politically engaged, financially viable, structurally realistic, and of course, skateable!”

fair, the “Stair” prototype, a stepping bench made of plywood elements, caught the eye of Vestre’s second-generation owner, Jan Vestre. As visionary as he was, he suggested that we meet after the fair to develop this prototype into a product.

With Vestre’s team, we embarked on a journey that resulted in the bench STOOP.

What’s great about working with Vestre is that I share many values ingrained in their DNA when it comes to public space. We both strive to improve and activate spaces by the use of furniture, with a strong focus on social interaction. Our shared motivation is to discover new typologies of furniture that can foster a more inclusive and balanced public environment.

Additionally, we both share a desire to create a more sustainable production and a form of resilience so that our products are sturdy and built to last for generations.

What did you want to create together with Vestre?

As I recall an email I sent to Jan and Elisabeth Vestre early on: “We think Vestre needs an Urban Auditorium. The Urban Auditorium would be a new piece of outdoor furniture, made for all situations that need seating for a diverse group of people.”

The idea I wished to develop with STOOP was a two-way condition, where people are both →



The design language of STOOP is based on the universal idea of using steps as places to sit.

interacting with each other and their surroundings, enabling them to see and be seen in a way that activates relationships. STOOP is a furniture piece that facilitates that.

What inspired the design?

Firstly, we were intrigued by locations where benches were not readily available, and people resorted to sitting on doorsteps, handrails, and stairs that served as impromptu gathering spaces. We stumbled upon the iconic 1958 photograph by Art Kane, "A Great Day in Harlem," which captured a gathering of renowned jazz musicians from the 20th century, posing alongside members of the local community on and around an actual front door stoop.

Whether it was waiting in front of a friend's house on a stoop in Brooklyn, posing with a tourist group on the Spanish Steps in Rome, or having a picnic on the steps of the Sydney Opera House, we decided to incorporate the universal concept of using stairs as a seating element into our bench design.

Did the end result align with your initial vision?

The initial STOOP was a complete response to our early principles, but it marked just the beginning of our journey. More recently, we returned to the drawing board, and with the assistance of Vestre's development team, we broadened the STOOP concept into a product family. This expansion includes a smaller version and a picnic table, with additional variations in the works. Since these developments, the product has become more versatile and has garnered a better understanding in the market. Creating this product family truly enabled individuals to envision the product's potential.

How would you describe the design language?

The design is a hybrid object that bridges the divide between furniture and architecture in terms of scale. The large laser-cut steel side panels essentially serve as an all-in-one solution for various functions: supporting the seating surfaces, providing structural integrity, imparting robustness to the public seating unit, and minimizing the requirement for extensive welding or manual labor during production. Simultaneously, every effort is made to reduce the amount of steel used by cutting away excess material. Any resulting offcuts are recycled and reintegrated into Vestre's production cycle.

What sets STOOP apart from other urban furniture?

STOOP serves not only as a bench or table-bench but also as an urban auditorium. It provides the perfect platform for a father to watch his son's football game →

while surrounded by friends, facilitates important meetings at work, and serves as a spot for lunch with colleagues. STOOP creates a gathering space, allows for multiple uses, and has been designed as a skateable urban element.

What is your favorite project with STOOP and why?

We were very excited to see STOOP become part of Times Square renewal in New York City. We have seen videos of rappers freestyling on it as a stage and skaters using it as an obstacle for their tricks. That is exactly the type of intent we had when designing the bench. ■



STOOP's versatility brings life to many places around the world, notably as part of the revitalization of Times Square. Photo: Júlia Martins Miranda

“We have seen videos of rappers freestyling on it as a stage and skaters using it as an obstacle for their tricks.

That is exactly the type of intent we had when designing the bench.”

SOCIAL MEETING PLACES

(Part 2)



How Space is Used in Human Interactions

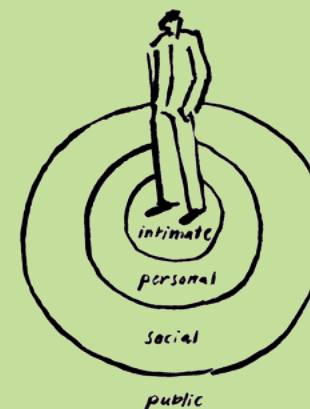
Allan Hagerup
Designer
Hagerup Design



Have you ever wondered why *small talk* can feel awkward in an elevator, or why you rarely see more than two people sharing a bench together? The answer may lie in a theory known as *proxemics*, described by Edward T. Hall in the USA in the 1960s. After studying human interaction closely, he discovered that we maintain different distances from those around us, depending on how well we know them and the situation we are in. The non-verbal aspect of communication plays a key role in our social interactions.

Four categories of social zones

According to the proxemics theory, the distances can be grouped into four main categories. We can imagine these zones as invisible bubbles around a person, and they vary in size depending on the relationship between the people concerned. The innermost zone is *intimate distance*, reserved for those closest to us, such as a partner, immediate family or close friends. In this case, the distance is so small that it is possible to whisper things to each other or give each other a hug. *Personal distance* is used for relaxed and friendly conversations with friends or during an evening meal with family. *Social distance* is ideal for conversations with acquaintances, such as colleagues at work. The tone in this case is polite and professional, and it is a natural distance for informal *small talk*. The fourth category to be defined is *public distance*,



typically used for one-way communication to a gathering of people, such as a teacher talking to pupils in a classroom.

Every day, we navigate between these zones and try to maintain our social boundaries, while at the same time avoiding invading those of others. The examples at the start of this article illustrate this principle. In a confined space such as an elevator, you will inevitably end up within the *personal* or *intimate distance*, zones which are normally reserved for those closest to us. In situations like this, it is not possible to use non-verbal signals, like moving out of the zone in order to bring a conversation to an end. This can lead to feelings such as stress and discomfort. On a long bench, two people who do not know each other can sit at either end without encroaching on each other's personal zones. If a third person sits down between them, all three will find themselves within each other's personal zones, which can be perceived as invasive.

The role of the senses in social interaction

Our senses play a decisive role in how we perceive the world around us. Our sight is the dominant sense and enables us to identify individuals and interpret body language and movements at distances of up to a hundred meters. It is a fact that we humans like to observe other people, but it is only when the social distance is reduced

that we really allow ourselves to become engaged. We start to perceive facial expressions at a distance of around 20–25 meters. If we move even closer, we can gradually start to strike up conversations. Senses such as smell and touch are activated when we come within the personal and intimate distance.

By using proxemics in the design of public spaces, we take account of people's personal space and not just the physical dimensions. In a more insightful way, it is possible to create varied and engaging social spaces which appeal to the senses and personal preferences of users. Such places give visitors a sense of being cared for, and they perceive it to be both pleasant and safe to be sociable on their own terms there.



From theory to practice

Below are some pointers which can help to incorporate the theory of proxemics into developing good social outdoor spaces:

- Give people the opportunity to “negotiate” their personal space with other people around them. Offer open and →

- spacious benches which give users the opportunity to adjust the distance to each other, and ideally choose the direction in which they face. Movable furniture can also be a good alternative.
- Vary the distances between different items of furniture. Groups of furniture placed varying distances apart will create a social landscape which can range from challenging the personal zone to offering people sufficient space in which they can be themselves.



- Avoid limiting use of the area by specifying too many social settings. Choose flexible furniture configurations and generous furniture which can be adapted to suit different social situations.
- Create space for corner conversations. Break up a row of benches by placing a few benches at 90-degree angles. This creates ideal circumstances for conversations with eye contact.
- Enable people to watch the world go by. Place furniture with views to where things are happening, and on the same

level, so that people have social contact with what is happening around them.

- Scale down to the sensory space. Wide open places with large distances between buildings and people offer little for our senses to work with. Reduce these distances by including elements such as lush trees, greenery, inter-active water installations or large islands of seating.
- Make sure there are sufficient seats. Studies have shown that popular public places should have at least 10 percent of their area dedicated to seating.
- Encourage people to linger. By creating a sensory environment and slowing the tempo, it is possible to inspire people to explore the urban environment through varied activities, shops and cafés at street level, and the like.

Design with dialog in mind

My interest in proxemics was stirred during my time as a student, when I explored the design of benches for public urban spaces. I noticed that people who were sat on benches often stayed about an arm's length away from people they did not know. It became clear that our senses play an important role in how people perceive sitting together on a bench. You can see people sitting back-to-back on a two-sided bench with people they do not know, but they will still maintain an appropriate social distance when they are in each other's field of vision.

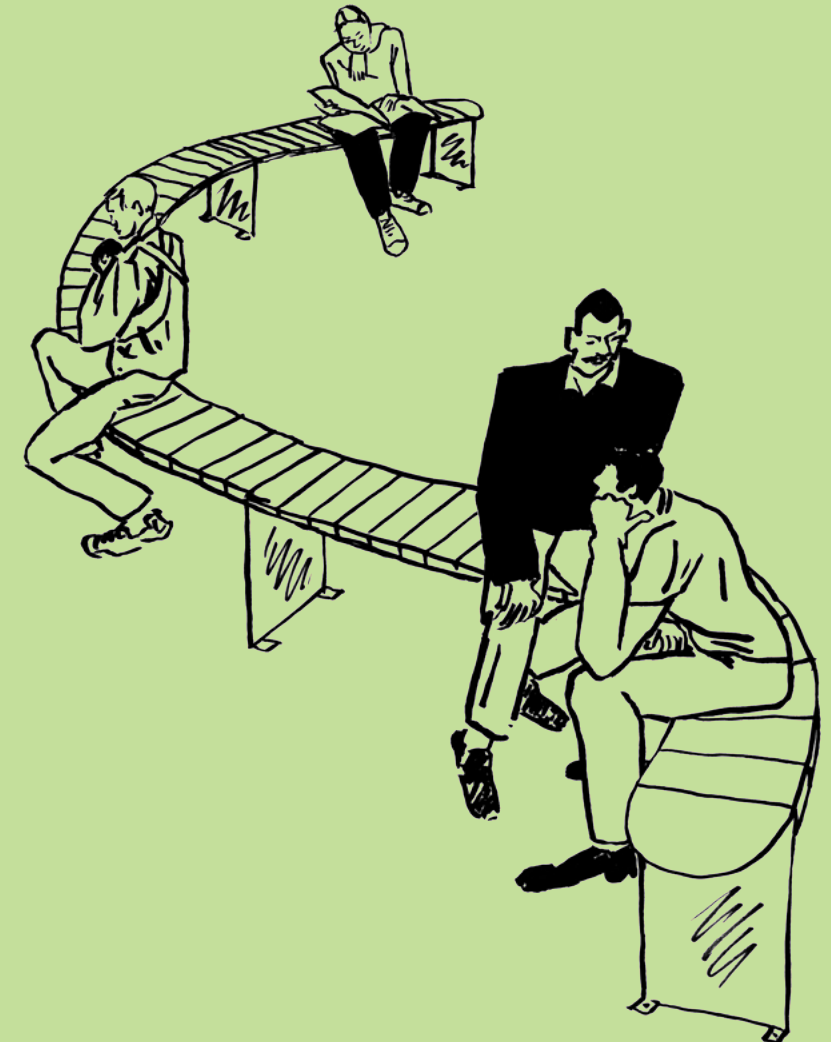
The shape of the bench seat influences how people perceive the distance to those around them. On a curved or circular bench, a social zone is created on the inside of the curve, where people naturally sit facing each other. On the outside, the curve ensures that people face away from each other and avoid conflict with the social zones of those sitting next to them. The classic, rectangular urban bench represents a compromise. People can sit side-by-side and be at the periphery of each other's field of vision, yet they can

also turn towards someone sitting next to them and strike up a conversation.

This inspired me to design a bench where such observations of social use formed the primary driver behind the design. I decided to work with a classic rectangular seat and try to encourage dialog and interaction to an even greater degree. The solution was an organic sidecut into the seat, designed to create a natural and inviting position for turning to the side, thereby encouraging dialog. This design could give the impression that conversations taking place between people over a period of many years had caused certain parts of the seat to wear away. The idea was both a visual and a practical

invitation for people to come together and strike up a conversation.

The bench, which was given the name DIALOG, was made from solid wood, a material that is ideal for organic designs and comfortable to sit on in both hot and cold weather. DIALOG is manufactured by Vestre. ■



Enhancing Urban Learning Spaces

Location:
Year of completion:

69 schools in San Bernardino, California
2023

San Bernardino, with roots dating to the 19th century, blends history with the scenic San Bernardino Mountains. The city embraces diverse cultures and communities, celebrating this richness with a tapestry of cultural events, festivals, and culinary delights. And as an original Route 66 stop, it's a captivating Southern California destination. In a transformative project spanning 69 school sites and 45 000 students, The San Bernardino City Unified School District (SBCUSD) together with Vestre has enhanced the outdoor learning spaces.

SBCUSD is a renowned institution with a steadfast commitment to nurturing the educational aspirations of its students—as their slogan says: “Where we make hope happen for students!”. Located at the heart of the Inland Empire, the SBCUSD has positioned itself as a leading authority in the field of human learning. Its overarching mission is to ensure that all students, from early education to career readiness, acquire the fundamental knowledge, skills, and proficiencies necessary for success in higher education, professional endeavors, civic participation, and economic prosperity.

They have succeeded in adapting the education to the diversity in the schools, where many do not have English as their first language. The transformation project of the schools had a primary focus on transforming the outdoor areas of the schools to meet various needs. In areas where you have socio-economic variations,

outdoor spaces, and especially school premises, are particularly important. They provide students with safe spaces for expression and places where they can meet, spend time together, and get to know each other. As Vestre says, good design should not be reserved for a small group who can afford it; good design should be accessible to everyone. By furnishing the schools' areas with beautiful design furniture, this is precisely what they are doing, while also providing students and the local community with spaces they can be proud of and want to spend time in.

Enriching outdoor education

SBCUSD wanted to create dynamic and inviting environments where scholars could gather, collaborate, and engage in outdoor learning. The vision extended beyond classrooms, aiming to provide scholars with accessible spaces before and after school and during breaks. The project sought to →

**Vestre Furniture at 69 School Sites
in San Bernardino, California**



The benches at Palm Elementary offer a wide variety of play options for kids.



Similarly, the benches cater to activities for older kids too. Scene from Cajon High.

“Our students were thrilled with the installation of this playground furniture, which created vibrant spaces on our blacktop areas. The natural aesthetics not only enhance the outdoor space but have provided areas for students to sit, play, and have conversations.”

— Principal Adrienne Ortega from Oehl Elementary

“Our students enjoy the new seating areas. They like to relax and hang out together. They use them often and would like additional spaces to recreate.”

— Vice Principal Lawrence Smith at Cajon High School

inspire creativity and fresh air, ultimately enhancing the overall learning experience within the urban community.

The selection of furniture was motivated by its unique qualities. Bright and playful colors, combined with robust construction, made Vestre stand out. The creative designs added an essential element of fun to outdoor spaces, making them not only functional but also highly inviting to students and the community.

Tailored to needs and age

The customization of furniture packages played a pivotal role in this project. Middle and high school campuses were furnished in their school colors, effectively enhancing campus branding and showcasing school spirit. In contrast, elementary sites opted for primary colors to inject a spark of creativity into the urban learning landscape.

The strategic placement of gathering spaces ensured equal access for all students and catered to specific use cases. For instance, schools with a strong soccer influence positioned larger seating options for game viewing. The age of the students was also considered, with elementary sites receiving curved and circular bench options from our VROOM series for added playfulness and secondary sites receiving stand-up tabletops with chairs for a more mature feel. Picnic tables from BUZZ and APRIL for social eating was also integrated, some with chess board tops for games and play.

The preliminary response from students has been overwhelmingly positive. The innovative designs and functionality of the furniture have resonated with the students, and specific pieces may have emerged as favorites due to their appeal and practicality. ■



The varied assortment of seating types fosters a dynamic and natural environment in the schoolyard.

We would love to get your feedback on the Vestre Journal, whether it's suggestions for how we can make it even more relevant for you or questions about some of the topics or Vestre in general. Please find a quick survey at the QR code to leave your much appreciated input.



