

# The Social Life Of Small Urban Spaces

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in 1980 william h whyte published the findings from his revolutionary street life project in the social life of small urban spaces both the book and the accompanying film were instantly labeled classics and launched a mini revolution in the planning and study of public spaces they have since become standard texts and appear on syllabi and reading lists in urban planning sociology environmental design and architecture departments around the world

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As population trends continue toward increased urbanisation, a number of cities are addressing rapid urban growth with popular management strategies which call for compacting outward expansion and intensifying urban densities. However, though widely recognised as essential urban spaces, under such policies they become vulnerable and may even be lost, particularly where strategies fail to address and integrate adequate open spaces. Furthermore, as density increases, so does demand, placing strain on existing spaces. Providing relief for denser urban environments and their inhabitants may come from a previously proposed solution. This research focuses on the phrase 'small urban space' as a term, guided by the underlying question: what is a small urban space? In addition, this research questions the term's intermittent use and association with public parks and urban plazas in the literature and further aims to extend understanding and clarify meaning, including appropriate applications of the term. To accomplish these aims, separate but parallel studies were used to investigate the term following different approaches. The first study investigates 'small urban space' as a type and primarily seeks to determine whether the term has the capacity to identify and differentiate such physical spaces as a type. Auckland, New Zealand, and Boise, Idaho, provided contrasting case studies. Candidate spaces selected from the urban centres of these two cities were surveyed observationally and data recorded for a broad range of characteristics. A multivariate analysis identified five type-classifications, while no particular classification offers a definitive description of 'small urban space'. One, in particular, shows greater alignment with the preferred characteristics identified by Whyte (1980). The second study investigates the term as an idea and seeks to extract a

descriptive set of categories from interviews conducted with practitioners in architecture landscape architecture and urban design an analysis of interview content identified several categories which collectively describe considerations essential for quality spaces but not necessarily differentiating small urban spaces practitioners largely understood the term with reference to good urban public spaces especially those that adequately if not exceptionally accommodate human needs and preferences while not discriminating small urban spaces uniquely these outcomes provide the beginnings of an evidence supported understanding of the term and may help to support comprehensive and integrated urban space strategies

public space and street design in commercial districts can dictate the success or failure of walkable community centers instead of focusing our efforts on designing new compact town centers many of which are located in the suburbs we should instead be revitalizing existing authentic town centers this informative practical book describes methods for restoring the health and vibrancy of the streets and public spaces of our existing commercial districts in ways that will make them positive alternatives to suburban sprawl while respecting their historic character clearly written and with numerous photos to enhance the text creating vibrant public spaces uses examples from communities across the united states to illustrate the potential for restoring the balance provided by older urban centers between automobile access and walkability in advice that can be applied to a variety of settings and scales crankshaw describes the tenets of contemporary design theory how to understand the physical evolution of towns how to analyze existing conditions and how to evaluate the feasibility of design recommendations good design in commercial centers crankshaw contends facilitates movement and access creates dynamic social spaces and contributes to the sense of a center a place where social commercial and institutional interaction is more vibrant than in surrounding districts for all the talk of creating new green urban spaces the ingredients of environmentally aware design he points out can often be found in the deteriorating cores and neighborhoods of towns and cities across the united states with creativity planning and commitment these centers can thrive again adding to the quality of local life and contributing to the local economy too

this book explores different emergent spaces where diverse urbanites spontaneously negotiate make and remake urban spaces create opportunities produce social change challenge urban life culture and politics or simply ask for their right to the city the focus of this book is on spaces and contexts where change is seeded regardless of whether it was planned and whether it was or will be successful in the end contributors analyze the seeds of change at their very inception in diverse cultural contexts across four continents how do small groups of ordinary and often also disenfranchised people design suggest and implement ideas of change how do they use and remake small urban spaces to better suit their purposes voice claims to the city create opportunities and design better urban lives and futures the emphasis of this volume

is not on the nature of activities and change but on the minute processes of initiating change

a study of public recreation space and how urban developers can encourage ethnic diversity through planning that supports multiculturalism urban parks such as new york city s central park provide vital public spaces where city dwellers of all races and classes can mingle safely while enjoying a variety of recreations by coming together in these relaxed settings different groups become comfortable with each other thereby strengthening their communities and the democratic fabric of society but just the opposite happens when by design or in ignorance parks are made inhospitable to certain groups of people this pathfinding book argues that cultural diversity should be a key goal in designing and maintaining urban parks using case studies of new york city s prospect park orchard beach in pelham bay park and jacob riis park in the gateway national recreation area as well as new york s ellis island bridge proposal and philadelphia s independence national historical park the authors identify specific ways to promote maintain and manage cultural diversity in urban parks they also uncover the factors that can limit park use including historical interpretive materials that ignore the contributions of different ethnic groups high entrance or access fees park usage rules that restrict ethnic activities and park restorations that focus only on historical or aesthetic values with the wealth of data in this book urban planners park professionals and all concerned citizens will have the tools to create and maintain public parks that serve the needs and interests of all the public

william h whyte s curiosity compelled him to question the status quo whether helping to make fortune magazine essential reading for business leaders warning of groupthink in his bestseller the organization man or standing up for jane jacobs as she advocated for the vitality of city life and public space this compelling biography sheds light on whyte s bold way of thinking ripe for rediscovery at a time when we are reshaping our communities into places of opportunity and empowerment for all citizens backcover

this book explores potentialities and emerging issues to strategies and waterside planning and design developing research results and detailed cases of interest in response to city change to promote sustainable development in a variety of ways it seeks to include some key waterfront matters in linking new spatial patterns to social dynamics and climate change for future practice the book is structuring into two parts the first one advancing riverfront transformation examines proposals on urban waterfronts and relations between urban spaces and social dynamics to revitalise and re appropriate urban environment with sustainable design solutions the second one outlining blue green opportunities develops proposals on waterfront urban spaces and places with promotion of sociability and enjoyment integrating cultural and economic values health and wellbeing

this important work provides a clear analysis of the nature of many of today's design problems identifying their causes in history and suggesting a basis for coordinated solutions

research in social factors also called environment and behavior studies or person environment relations is research into the human experience of the built environment even since its heyday in the 1970s and 1980s as a response to the perceived failures of modernism social factors continues to ask questions about how people use space and what meaning that space holds this edited collection brings together cutting edge research and contemporary issues into one book divided into two parts the chapters in this collection demonstrate the continuing relevance of and the wide array of topics in the field the first section history and future outlook addresses the field itself investigating its history and common terms and updating seminal work the second section perspectives on the user surveys contemporary research into the human side of design understanding the built environment through the lens of valuing the user a term which encompasses everyone from native americans to children to adults with disabilities to entire cities devastated by tornadoes contributors to this volume include emerging and established scholars as well as practitioners and touch on issues of sustainability history culture new media disaster recovery health and recreation this book will particularly appeal to scholars looking to keep abreast of current issues students of the field endeavouring to understand their chosen subject and practitioners exploring new strategies in understanding the clients they serve the array of topics and perspectives examined here demonstrates a renaissance of social factors

what is a microcommunity how does microcommunity contribute to the study of urban spaces what role does microcommunity play in the future design or outcomes of urban space this thesis examines the idea of microcommunity and how it contributes to creating more meaningful urban spaces this idea is achieved through the defining what a microcommunity is and what purpose it serves in determining stronger outcomes for urban spaces to identify a microcommunity it is important to understand the context of the space as well as how it creates the idea of destination or place within the urban environment this idea relates to spatial and social qualities that contribute to the idea of a microcommunity and how they form the idea of location and place spatial social and temporal aspects begin to help expand this idea defining important elements of an urban space that contribute to the definition of microcommunity as a result of these aspects it can be understood that microcommunal space is the heart and child of opportunism both socially and spatially social opportunism deals with the idea the people congregate to a space for the social opportunity that lies there regardless of the spatial elements that exist there in opposition to this is the spatial opportunist is more concerned with the spatial elements and spatial qualities that exist in an urban space but are not necessarily concerned with the social opportunity that exists there in microcommunal spaces it is important to include both types of

opportunism so that it better establishes a sense of location and place as well as does not create exclusivity of groups in urban spaces and environments the basis of microcommunity begins to revise existing ideas and urban design principles from urban theorists such as Jan Gehl and William H. Whyte and begins to modernize them based on current and changing necessity for different types of opportunism microcommunity provides a strong lens to understand how to improve current urban design principles looking at how existing spaces could have been or could be better established to form a stronger urban pocket and space by establishing a better foundation to create stronger more identifiable urban pockets microcommunity begins to reshape how urban spaces are thought of creating a better vision and outlook of how small urban spaces are designed

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