

Your name

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The Importance of Public Spaces

There are more people on Earth who live in cities than ever before. Urban environments have become a place where many people feel safe and comfortable. That's why city populations continue growing. In 2011, 52 percent of the world's population lived in urban areas (towns and cities) compared to 48 percent in 2003. This share will only keep growing as urban regions become the economic engines of the future (Merchant, 2013).

That is why it is important to plan and design cities, whether they are new or old cities that keep growing, to make them a comfortable place to live. Great attention should be paid to parks and public spaces. Public space is a literal commons—the common ground where people come together as friends, neighbors and citizens. Places we share together, such as parks, streets, sidewalks, squares, trails, markets, waterfronts, beaches, museums, community gardens, public buildings and more. These are the primary sites for human exchange, upon which our communities, economy, democracy and society depend. After years of neglecting public spaces as old-fashioned and unnecessary, there is a growing realization of how important, lively, and appealing gathering places are to every aspect of our lives (Walljasper, 2012).

It is a pity that there is a tendency to overlook the problem of the lack of public spaces and parks nowadays. Cars took over the streets in industrialized nations (and in wide swaths of the developing world as well), putting many more places within easy reach but making walking and biking dangerous. Towns and cities are spread out with many merchants moving to outlying shopping malls. Telephones, refrigerators, televisions, computers, and suburban homes with big

yards transformed our daily lives. People withdrew from the public realm. No longer essential, public spaces were neglected. Many newly constructed communities simply forgot about sidewalks, parks, downtowns, transit, playgrounds, and people's pleasure in taking a walk and bumping into their neighbors. Today, many folks wonder if public spaces serve any real purpose anymore (Walljasper, 2012).

Public spaces are favorite places to meet, talk, sit, relax, stroll, flirt, girlwatch, boywatch, read, sun, and feel part of a broader whole. They are the starting point for all community, commerce and democracy. Indeed, on an evolutionary level, the future of the human race depends on public spaces. It's where young women meet and court with young men—an essential act for the propagation of the species. Numerous studies in fields ranging from social psychology to magazine cover design have proven that nothing grabs people's attention more than other people, especially other people's faces. We are hard-wired with a desire for congenial places to gather. That's why it's particularly surprising how much we overlook the importance of public places today (Walljasper, 2012).

Developing public spaces will give people an opportunity to be protected from the noise and traffic of a big city; they can enjoy walking and being involved in social activities there. That's why it is important to pay more attention to public spaces if we want our future cities to be great places to live.

Works Cited

Merchant T. *The Importance of Parks and Public Space*. 2013. Web.

Walljasper J. *Public Spaces Make the World Go 'Round*. 2012. Web