

DOWNLOAD PDF THE SOCIAL LIFE OF SMALL URBAN SPACES WILLIAM WHYTE

Chapter 1 : The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces by William H. Whyte

In , 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.

He spent much of his life studying corporate norms and organizational structures. While writing for Fortune Magazine, Whyte coined the term " Groupthink ". After releasing his book The Organization Man , Whyte turned his attention to cities. Whyte took to studying how people use our cities; how they interact with one another, with their environment. These were plazas that were provided by builders in exchange for increased floor area ratios. Builders installed more plazas, but what resulted was empty spaces. Whyte is famous for his quote, "It is difficult to design a space that will not attract people. What is remarkable is how often this has been accomplished. The same holds true today. Whyte from Nelly Oli on Vimeo. Some plazas did have lots of people though. So, Whyte and his research team went to work to figure out what made them work. The main activity in plazas and open spaces, claims Whyte, is simply people looking at other people. Their first recommendation was to provide sittable space in open areas at the rate of one linear foot per 30 square feet. This artifact is a design object, the purpose of which is to punctuate architectural photographs. It has some utility as a bench, but it is usually placed in isolation. And the dimensions are exquisitely wrong. Not just for physical reasons, as important as they may be. Small benches are socially awkward. And for that matter, people tend to gather where there are places to gather. How many people is too many in a plaza or open space? They found that each place had its own effective capacity. People could instinctively tell how many people were too many during normal use. This rule can be thrown out the window for special events. They also noted that plazas and open spaces should not be sunken. There may be some activity, but most occurs at street level. Houston Center At the At this time, it was a newly completed structure. The claims of the development of the Houston Center likely rival what Whyte thought was important in cities. It was intended to incorporate "all forms of public and private transit, both vertical and horizontal. These are a sort of urban fortress. Their common denominator is that they take you away from the street. The plazas and the terraces are two and three levels above the street. From the street you are completely insulated. You can drive from the suburbs in the morning, into that garage there, walk through the skyways to the office, and spend the whole day without ever having to set foot in Houston at all. This is its streetscape. No stores, no windows. Not many pedestrians, either, for that matter. Street level is for cars. The one activity is a bank window for people in cars. It is a fortress and isolated from street level. It was, however, designed as part of a larger Houston Center that was imagined but never thankfully realized. Other parts of downtown Houston do provide inviting public spaces. But, it seems the number of those that do is less than those that do not. Entire city blocks devoted to parking or a single building do not readily offer an inviting public experience. And, somewhat ironically, there is record of people sitting out in front of the bank on its planters. As Whyte goes on, he mentions a key person in public spaces: In actual fact, these people are harmless and sometimes very well-behaved. Most often, they are to be found in the places that other people are not. Ledges also receive those bumps to prevent skateboarding. Related to this topic, Whyte suggests that spaces be open to the street and without a fence. Then there are the people who do odd things, like drumstick. In many ways the odd people do a service for the rest of us. They reassure us of our own normality. In well used public places people are tolerant of the odd ones. Life goes on with little fuss or trouble. Here is a pigeon lady: Effective Ingredients for a Successful, Social Public Space Whyte highlights a few things that every public space should have: Sun " Successful spaces should have a warmth about them and be naturally lit, as much as possible. Many times this can be indirect due to reflections off of other buildings. Water " The sound of it, accessibility to it; either way, have it! Houston certainly has not taken advantage of its position near Buffalo Bayou, but there are a great number of fountains or pools downtown breaking up the noise of the city. The recommendation is to plant them in small groves, creating a

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defined canopy. Thankfully, Houston has a great deal of street trees, even within our downtown. Food “ If you want to see a place with activity, put in food. The vendors provide a service that people want. Houston still does not allow food push carts except ice cream treats. Jones Plaza will now have many more people in it on Tuesdays, all thanks to food trucks. Triangulation “ This is a characteristic of a public space that brings people in, brings them together. It could be a mime, a street performer, a sculpture, public art, something of the sort. People are drawn to the sculpture. They touch it, walk under it, stand around it. Again, much like food carts or trucks, sculptures provide the connection between a public space and its people. A bit hidden near the parking garage of Discovery Green, the sculpture will surely see a greater number of visitors. Many of the recommendations made by Whyte and his team were included in the zoning ordinance of New York City. Plazas could not be set more than 3 feet above or below grade level, easily accessible to all. These were factors that Whyte found created spaces and places people would use. Not to be forgotten, Whyte covers the idea of scale. The sprawl of squares or public spaces can render them useless. It is well-enclosed by surrounding buildings and provides a variety of choices of sitting spaces, activities and food options. But, the most important thing about this plaza is its relationship to the downtown district as a whole: In a recent Strong Towns article , Charles Marohn sums up the wealth that is found in experiences, which is applicable to our cities. It feels like progress to the cold, rational parts of our brains. When we focus on experiences, however, we bind people to a place. And to each other. And these bonds run deep, last forever and are easily transferred to others. But we need even more sticky places! This is especially true if the park is ever able to re-create itself as presented by Houston First. William Whyte would also contend that the same should be applied to city streets. He says, "The street is the river of life of the city. They come to these places not to escape it, but to partake of it. Following those are some pictures from the present day.

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Chapter 2 : Rebel Metropolis | Revisiting "The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces"™

A few years later I met Fred and Ethan Kent at Project for Public Spaces. I got a copy of Whyte's classic, The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces, which in its marvelously-written, straightforward style is the one book all burgeoning urbanists should start with.

The social life of small urban spaces. The methods of study included time-lapse filming, interviews, and direct observation. Demography of plaza users. Whyte suggested that the effective market radius for a plaza is about three blocks p. The most-used places tend to have a higher than average proportion of women. Men show a tendency to take the front-row seats. Women tend to favor places slightly secluded p. Rhythms of plaza life. In the mornings hours " hotdog vendors, elderly pedestrians, a delivery messenger, a shoeshine man, some tourists and a scavenger woman. After 11am " hard hats with beer cans and sandwiches. Noon to 2pm peak time - some 80 Percent of the total hours of use will be concentrated. Self congestion- What attracts people most, it would appear, is other people p. They stayed in it or moved into it, and the great bulk of the conversations were smack in the center of the flow p. Whyte discovered that one of the major elements in plaza use is sittable space. Sitting should be socially comfortable that provides flexible choices: Even though benches and chairs can be added, the best course is to maximize the sittability of inherent features p. Height-people will sit almost anywhere between a height of one foot and three p. Whyte found that people tend to sit in the sun if the temperature is comfortable. Sun light, reflected light, warmth, and cool weather are important for the comfort as well having choice of sun, or shade, or in-between p. The absence of winds and drafts are critical for these as sun p. Affording a good look at the passing scene and the pleasure of being comfortably under a tree provide a satisfying enclosure; people feel cuddled, protected. Developers should be encouraged to combine trees and sitting spaces. They should also encourage planting trees in groves p. One of the best things about water is the look, feel and sound of it p. Water should be accessible, touchable, splashable p. Whyte presented a correlation between the lively social activities in a plaza and the presence of food cart. Whyte argues that the key space for a plaza is not on the plaza. A good plaza starts at the street corner. Retailing stores, windows with displays, signs, doorways: Developers should be required to devote at least 50 percent of the ground-floor frontage to retail and food uses p. Relationship of the space to the main pedestrian flow: The area where the street and plaza or open space meet is a key to success or failure. Steps, a slight elevation, sightlines are important. If people do not see a space, they will now use it p. Plazas tend to be self-leveling " The places that carry the most people are the most efficient in the use of place as well as the most pleasant. It is people who determine the level of crowding, and they do it very well p. Indoor spaces atriums, galleries, courtyards, through-block arcades, indoor parks, covered pedestrian areas The principal needs for successful indoor space are much the same as with outdoor spaces p. Movable chairs are best for indoor parks. The basic combination is snack bars and chairs and tables. Shops are important for liveliness and the additional pedestrian flows they attract. The existence of toilets could have a considerable effect on the shopping patterns of many people, older ones especially. One benefit of an indoor space is the through-block circulation it can provide for pedestrians p. A good internal space should be visible from the street; the street and its surroundings should be highly visible from it; and between the two, physically and psychologically, the connections should be easy and inviting p. One way to provide a good entrance is to have big enough crowds p.

Chapter 3 : The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces William H Whyte 1 - Decorating Ideas

The Organization Man, The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces William Hollingsworth "Holly" Whyte (October 1, - January 12,) was an American urbanist, organizational analyst, journalist and people-watcher.

Jun 01, Andrea rated it really liked it Truly one of the greats of urban planning, I loved this pivotal look at how you study public space and what you learn from the practice. Instead it is steady and deep, and based on actual observation. For instance, their study of the spaces that are most used and where most people sit, after sifting all the evidence they find the one common variable is: People tend to sit where there are most places to sit. This may not strike you as an intellectual bombshell, an Truly one of the greats of urban planning, I loved this pivotal look at how you study public space and what you learn from the practice. This may not strike you as an intellectual bombshell, and, now that I look back on our study, I wonder why it was not more apparent to us from the beginning The sad reality is that almost no one planning and building public spaces actually fills them with places to sit. The sad fact of common sense, is that design often draws on different understandings of the world that clash with how spaces are actually used and loved. Books like this allow you to bring this up in an educated manner with a weight of evidence behind you. Or carry out your own study. The importance of this cannot be underestimated, public space is key to our wellbeing and getting it right changes how we live and how we move through the city: A good new space builds a new constituency. It stimulates people into new habits -- al fresco lunches -- and provides new paths to and from work, new places to pause. It does all this very quickly. Look for people in groups -- people meet places that are known, that are liked and that are safe. They have decided to go there on purpose. You also look for a higher than average number of women: Women are more discriminating than men as to where they will sit, more sensitive to annoyances, and women spend more time casting the various possibilities. An interesting note on behaviour, and one that rings true even though I have greater hopes for squares and things: Plazas are not ideal places for striking up acquaintances, and even on the most sociable of them, there is not much mingling. When strangers are in proximity, the nearest thing to an exchange is what Erving Goffman has called civil inattention. I love the insight that people say one thing when asked what they want, but actually they want a particular version of it: What attracts people most, it would appear, is other people. If I belabor the point, it is because many urban spaces are being designed as though the opposite were true, and that what people liked best were the places they stay away from. People often do talk along such lines; this is why their responses to questionnaires can be so misleading. How many people would say they like to sit in the middle of a crowd? Instead they speak of getting away from it all, and use terms like "escape," "oasis," "retreat. Though sometimes I like being alone. There are plenty of insights about sitting here Hell, I do it too. Circulation and sitting, in sum, are not antithetical but complementary. You walk, you sit, the two go together. And where do you sit? For all the sitters in the world this rings true:

Chapter 4 : The Architectural Student: William H. Whyte - Social Life of Small Urban Spaces

The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces Does this still apply The William Whyte The Social Life of Small Urban Places Andrea Gibbons. The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces Fabrica William H Whyte and the Social Life of Small Urban Spaces JJ

It is often assumed that children play in the street because they lack playground space. But many children play in the streets because they like to. One of the best play areas we came across was a block on st Street in East Harlem. It had its problems, but it worked. The street itself was the play area. Adjoining stoops and fire escapes provided prime viewing across the street and were highly functional for mothers and older people. There were other factors at work, too, and, had we been more prescient, we could have saved ourselves a lot of time spent later looking at plazas. Though we did not know it then, this block had within it all the basic elements of a successful urban place. As our studies took us nearer the center of New York, the imbalance in space use was even more apparent. Most of the crowding could be traced to a series of choke points—subway stations, in particular. In total, these spaces are only a fraction of downtown, but the number of people using them is so high, the experience so abysmal, that it colors our perception of the city around, out of all proportion to the space involved. The fact that there may be lots of empty space somewhere else little mitigates the discomfort. And there is a strong carry-over effect. One, the plaza of the Seagram Building, was the place that helped give the city the idea for the plaza bonus. In the middle of the lunch hour on a beautiful, sunny day the number of people sitting on plazas averaged four per 1, square feet of space—an extraordinarily low figure for so dense a center. The tightest-knit CBD central business district anywhere contained a surprising amount of open space that was relatively empty and unused. The city was being had. For the millions of dollars of extra space it was handing out to builders, it had every right to demand much better plazas in return. As a matter of fact, I entrapped him into spending a weekend looking at time-lapse films of plaza use and nonuse. He felt that tougher zoning was in order. Since we could expect the proposals to be strongly contested, it would be important to document the case to a fare-thee-well. It ought to be done for its own sake. For economics alone, it makes sense. An enormous expenditure of design expertise, and of travertine and steel, went into the creation of the many really bum office-building plazas around the country. As this manual will detail, it is far easier, simpler to create spaces that work for people than those that do not—and a tremendous difference it can make to the life of a city. Project For Public Spaces, Inc.

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Chapter 5 : The social life of small urban spaces william h whyte 1 - Decorating Ideas

Whyte argues that the key space for a plaza is not on the plaza. It is the street. Street corner: A good plaza starts at the street corner. If it's a busy corner, it has a brisk social life of its own(p).

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Chapter 6 : William H. Whyte - Wikipedia

I got a copy of "The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces" () which in its marvelously-written, straight-forward way is the one book all burgeoning urbanists should start their world exploration.

Chapter 7 : William H. Whyte Quotes (Author of The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces)

Slim but fantastically insightful, The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces is a foundational piece of today's thinking on what makes a great city and a fine addition to these essential reads on urbanism.

Chapter 8 : Streetfilms | William H. Whyte in His Own Words: "The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces"

The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces William H. Whyte () was an American urbanist, organizational analyst, journalist and calendrierdelascience.com writing a book about corporate culture, he started to research human behavior in urban settings.

Chapter 9 : [William H. Whyte] The social life of small urban space | New Media Urbanism

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