

a street and interact while driving cars slowly, sitting in cars, sitting on cars, and strolling.

Another type of space that is important in facilitating interaction between strangers is the small square or piazza, most commonly found in the old residential districts of Mediterranean cities. Alexander argues that with a few exceptions, such as Venice's Piazza San Marco and London's Trafalgar Square, such squares are most successful when they are under seventy feet in diameter (Alexander et al., 1977). In a plaza of this size people are able to "make out the faces and half hear the talk" (Alexander et al., 1977, p. 313) of those around them, which encourages a sense of social connection, increasing opportunities for interaction.

Public spaces also play a crucial role as a setting for socializing with relatives, neighbors, acquaintances, and friends. Although public space activities such as picnics and Sunday outings cut across class, less affluent people, particularly in cities, are clearly more dependent upon outdoor spaces close to home. The public spaces that play the most important social function in many older, working-class, and low-income neighborhoods are the streets and sidewalks (Fried & Gleicher, 1961; Jacobs, 1961). In fact, streets and sidewalks abound as public spaces supporting a range of child and adult activities. But some streets are more successful settings than others. In a study of informal or "found" public spaces we have observed places that are popular ones for street peddlers. The traffic of people is critical to drawing vendors to a site, but the width of the pavement and the attitudes of local shopkeepers are important factors as well.

The life of the street that Jane Jacobs (1961) has described so well as a complex *mélange* of tolerance, friendliness, mutual concern, and resources. However, young people are not necessarily welcome users of either commercial or residential streets. Whether it is casual "hanging out" by teenagers or the lively ball playing of younger children, complaints are commonplace. It may be easy to romanticize the streets as natural playgrounds for children as they are growing up but the reality often is less ideal. In the inner city the street is filled with dangers – vehicular and drug traffic, broken glass, and filth. In affluent areas the streets rarely are used for play. Children are transported to special play facilities – parks, gymnasiums, and the like – or they remain within their own homes. In both settings, the slum and the high-priced residential area, parents' fears for their children's safety make the street as a context for play and development an ideal rather than a reality.

But we can question whether this situation could be changed. The complex cultural and economic factors that underlie it cannot be ignored, but there are design and management alternatives that can alleviate some of the difficulties. The work of Appleyard (1981) has demonstrated that when residents were able to control the speed and volume of traffic on their streets, their use of the streets and attachments to them increased. Similarly, through the introduction of *woonerven*, zones where traffic is slowed down and play and planting areas introduced, many towns and cities in the Netherlands have made their streets safer and more pleasant. This approach has been adopted in other countries, as well, including in selected new developments in the United States.

During different stages in the life cycle, spaces assume a particular importance as a setting for interaction with friends and acquaintances. Parents caring for young children depend on nearby parks and playgrounds not only as facilities to occupy their children but also as places to enjoy contact with others, particularly other parents. Play areas that can accommodate a long social visit by parents supervising their children require comfortable seating arranged to enable face-to-face interaction, tables, running water, and ideally, restrooms.

Another group whose social life often centers around public spaces is the elderly. Brown, Sijpkens, and MacLean (1986) report that a number of elderly welfare recipients who frequent *Complexe Desjardins*, an indoor shopping center in downtown Montreal, "have refused to be moved further than a reasonable walking distance" (p. 170) away from the center. Groups of elderly people often are most concentrated in sitting areas around the perimeters of parks and other public areas. At this location there is a feeling of safety provided by passersby, and friends and acquaintances are most likely to be spotted.

In New York City's vest-pocket Greenacre Park, while the majority of users position their seats to view the waterfall at the back of the space, the elderly regulars are an exception. They seat themselves near the entrance, generally facing the street, so as to watch the pedestrian flow and greet acquaintances.

For adults, particularly young adults, considerable socializing occurs in the context of recreation. A study of a small park adjacent to a Delaware campus (Ulrich & Addoms, 1981) found that although students visited the park primarily to engage in sports activities, considerable socializing occurred there. The study did not reveal a strong connection between socializing and recreation at facilities such as the