

problems, poverty, and restricted participation in the outside world. Yet most positive challenge has been removed from our public environment, although it may be one of the key reasons to have public space.

Their active qualities may be among the most important influences on the staying power of places, separating the ones that are boring and not worth a second visit from those of enduring interest. There are risks that are unnecessary and frightening and others that are stimulating and growth-producing, and it is the latter that should be identified and incorporated into public sites.

Ceremony, celebration, and festivity are other qualities that people often seek in urban public places. People require joyousness to refresh their lives. We speak here of a distinctive quality of life – the pleasure in engaging in a multifaceted activity that encompasses people-watching, socializing, being entertained, and consuming or buying food and other goods. The popularity of flea markets is one sign of this need where affordable merchandising and carnival spirit combine to draw crowds. Public places can become the stage of gatherings, special events and performances (Brower, 1977). For many decades this type of activity was characteristic of the market areas and entertainment strips of most American cities. With the growth of suburbs, the invention of television, and the increasing prominence of supermarkets and shopping centers, celebration became less a characteristic of American cities, while remaining prominent in many other parts of the world. The periodic events that attract large numbers, such as the yearly street fair in Brooklyn called “Atlantic Antic,” the Italian saint day festivities, and the carnivals for which New Orleans is so noted, suggest that the capacity to enjoy is there, given the opportunity and the place. In these instances city streets become the fairgrounds for a wide range of pleasures.

Market areas providing the festivity of an earlier era still persist in many places. Philadelphians of all types gravitate to the Italian Market where vendors sell fresh produce, meat, poultry, and fish of all varieties, other foods, and bargain merchandise. In Seattle, for eighty years Pike Place Market has withstood many threats to its survival to retain its variety of shops and stalls in a seven-acre area overlooking Elliot Bay. New Yorkers still flock to the Lower East Side, especially on Sundays, to streets like Orchard, Delancey, and Essex, which specialize in discounted clothing and a wide variety of foods associated with this neighborhood. In many small towns residents visit weekend farmers’ markets, which serve as a town center or gathering place (Sommer, 1981, 1989).

Farmers’ markets have been returning to cities, as well. In New York City, eighteen locations host Greenmarkets that enable produce from regional farms to be sold by the people who grow it. Many visitors to these market areas are primarily in search of bargains or particular wares, but others are seeking engagement with the diversity of sights, sounds, and smells of these quintessential urban areas. In comparing the “behavioral ecology” of farmers’ markets with that of supermarkets, Sommer (1981) finds the former friendlier, with more contacts with people.

Many merchants and planners are interested in this public design solution to revitalize areas of towns and cities. New retail spaces such as the Faneuil Hall Marketplace and Harborplace use prominent display of produce near entries to attract customers. However, these are not farmers’ markets and the cost of food is much higher. These markets have much less social diversity and exchange than places like the Davis Farmers’ Market.

While a handful of the old markets persist, a new phenomenon has recently arisen: a sort of in-town shopping mall, which nevertheless is quite different from the suburban prototype. Many of these places have adopted the name “market” – the Market at Citicorp in New York, Boston’s Quincy Market, the Newmarket and Reading Station Market in Philadelphia – suggesting a parallel with the diverse, colorful, often chaotic marketplaces of an earlier era. Some of these “new markets” do bear similarities to their predecessors. For example, Quincy Market provides a wide variety of attractions, and on a busy day it is full of energy. Others, like the Market at Citicorp, are pleasant places to linger or pass through, but offer little that resembles the variety, excitement, and spontaneity of the old markets. In general, these contemporary, highly designed, largely artificial and costly to use “marketplaces” lack the liveliness, disorderliness, and unexpected possibilities of places like Philadelphia’s Italian Market and New York’s Lower East Side. It is odd to realize that pushcarts have largely disappeared from the Lower East Side but can be found in the South Street Seaport development in New York. One commentator (R. Campbell, 1980) accurately described these new markets as reflecting a yearning for the marketplaces and main streets of America’s past but representing a very self-conscious re-creation of these prototypes. As Campbell states, these developments cater to people “who yearn for town life but who are not quite ready for the real city” (p. 48).

There is another kind of festivity common to public spaces that also seems to have considerable