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Urban open space in the 21st century

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Abstract

This paper asks what should be demanded from urban open space in the 21st century. It explores the social and spatial implications of new lifestyles, values, attitudes to nature and sustainability, and the models for future city life and the patterns of urban open space that might accommodate these. One vital role that urban parks play is providing space for the expression of diversity, both personal and cultural; this raises issues of democratic provision for and access to public open space. It suggests, inter alia, that the role of the urban street as public space may need to be re-thought. The social and cultural values of open space include attitudes towards nature and the desire for contact with it; contemporary understandings of ecology offer new insights into ways to serve both human needs and the broader ecological framework of urban open space structures. It has been suggested that the urbanity of public open space is threatened by the increase in "virtual"™ transactions, obviating the need for real, social interaction, but there is also evidence that use of new communications technology can increase and enhance use of public open space; this may include engagement in the productive aspect of our landscape. A more flexible approach to open space definition and usage is

proposed, recognising "loose-fit"™ landscapes which allow opportunities for the socially marginalised and the ecologically shifting within a dynamic framework of urban structures and networks.



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Keywords

Urban; Open space; Parks; Networks; Nature

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