

Flexible Furniture in Urban Open Spaces: A Tool to Achieve Social Sustainability

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Abstract : In urban open spaces, furniture plays a crucial role in meeting various needs of the users over time. Furniture consists of elements that not only can facilitate physical needs individually but also fulfill social, psychological, and cultural demands on an urban scale. Creating adjustable urban spaces and using flexible furniture can provide the possibility of using urban spaces for a wide range of uses and activities and allow the engagement of users with distinct abilities and limitations in these activities. Flexibility in urban furniture can be seen as designing a number of modular components that are movable, expandable, adjustable, and changeable to accommodate various functions. Although there is a great amount of research related to flexibility and its distinct insights into achieving spaces that can cope with changing demands, this fundamental issue is often neglected in the design of urban furniture. However, in the long term, to address changing public needs over time, it can be logical to bring this quality into the design process to make spaces that can be sustained for a long time. This study aims to first introduce diverse kinds of flexible furniture that can be designed for urban public spaces and then to realize how this flexible furniture can improve the quality of public open spaces and social interaction and make them more adaptable over time and, as a result, achieve social sustainability. This research is descriptive and is mainly based on an extensive literature review and the analysis and classification of existing examples around the world. This research tends to illustrate various kinds of approaches that can help designers create flexible furniture to enhance the sustainability and quality of urban open spaces and, in this way, act as a guide for urban designers in this respect.

Keywords : flexible furniture, flexible design, urban open spaces, adaptability, moveability, social sustainability

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