**Public Space Assignment**

As we work through texts of urban spaces and urban life, many authors have shown that there are times you need more than just words to describe a spatial phenomenon. Sometimes what happens in the city can be best explained visually.

We have read essays on what constitutes public space. Whyte (1980) approached it from a design perspective, advocating that good design emerges from seeing the social life of these spaces - how its used and re-designed; while Mitchell (1995) frames it as a political issue, arguing that in order to understand public space, we need a better understanding of who and what activities are permissible within the public. We have also read about public space’s uneasy relationship with finance and privatization. On one hand, Katz (2005) traces the privatization of public spaces alongside cultural framings of security and terror. On the other hand, Appel (2014) shows us how the gathering, discussions, and experimentation within these spaces can re-enliven our economic imagination. How are spaces (re)produced by the public, and what sort of public do these spaces (re)produce?

For this assignment:

You will record observations about different forms of “[public space](https://www-tandfonline-com.libproxy1.nus.edu.sg/doi/epdf/10.2747/0272-3638.17.2.127?needAccess=true)” - public parks, privately-owned public space (POPS), and community gardens. Your task will be to visit a POPS ([maps here](https://www.nyc.gov/site/planning/plans/pops/pops.page)), a public park ([list here](https://www.nycgovparks.org/parks)), and community garden ([list here](https://www.grownyc.org/gardens/our-community-gardens)) of your choice. **PICK TWO.** It is even better if you could find one close to you!

Spend 1 hour at a location to learn about the place you are in. Pay attention to signboards, activities, and people and jot them down in your field notes. Your goal is to learn what happens. Remember that even moving chairs and furniture indicate some form of activity (Whyte 1980) or that people come together to make lists and rules (Appel 2014), so know that noticing is both an act of sensing patterns and imagining these “open-ended gatherings” (Tsing 2005).

You will submit:

* 12 photos (6 of one place + 6 of another place).
* 3-4 pages of field notes of both places (including details of the location).
* 700 word reflection on how your photos and field notes engage with the themes from our readings.

Purpose, audience, genre

You are trying to tell a friend what a public space is by showing what it looks like and by giving it significance through the themes and keywords we have been working with in class. The purpose of this exercise is to experience field research by engaging with the literature, observing, writing field notes, and reflecting on your data. Field notes clarify your observations and thoughts on a topic, generate and record your questions and new ideas that emerge when you’re out looking. On writing field notes, see: Wolfinger (2002).