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Green Spaces: Their Function, Form and Relevance within Irish History and Future Development

Conor Bailey

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School of Visual Culture

I declare that this **Critical Cultures Research Project** is all my own work and that all sources have been fully acknowledged.

Signed: Conor Bailey

Programme / department: Textiles & Surface Design (Joint Course)

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Introduction

Green Spaces are a space for community, action, socialising and reconnection. They have been pivotal in city planning as areas for use by the people and natural biodiversity. Without green spaces, our health and society's function itself would be very different to how it is today. These green spaces offer a rich history and offer an insight into the needs of people throughout history as our cities were gradually developing. It may also provide an insight into the future of development and mentality after a devastating pandemic.

To understand the current scope of covid's ongoing effect on green space function, it is crucial to look at and compare Dublin's green spaces in the past. There will be specific reference to St. Stephen's Green, ranging from C17th to C21st, to its present-day public green space. This will allow for an understanding of how the public space we know today evolved, and formed with the public and their contemporary needs. I will refer to journalistic newspaper articles, reports, academic articles and city maps throughout this research project as a means to discuss the various aspects of green spaces and their variety in purpose and use. The use of journalistic articles is not any less valid than that of academic articles, as this is a topic that involves community views and interpretations.

This research paper will focus primarily on the history of public parks such as St Stephen's Green and the function behind its C19th design in Chapter

One. Chapter two will investigate a smaller community park built with purpose, Weaver Park, and discuss the intentions behind the project and the relevancy of Guerrilla Gardening in small communities. Chapter three will discuss and analyse SARS- CoV- 2's (Covid- 19) effect on public space, interaction and accessibility. The pandemic changed our relationship with green spaces, and this chapter aims to see how this refreshed view on green spaces in the public realm can help influence future design of public space.

Finally, this research project aims to discuss, observe, and provide insight into the functions and benefits green spaces provide, and the growing need for them in a society becoming more aware of the reality caused by pandemics. This is to be informative of views surrounding the idea of green space, and have some projects and concepts related to it and the objective betterment of such spaces. The overall conclusion is to highlight the importance of green spaces in our everyday lives and how pivotal they are to the urban experience as shared spaces with many benefits.

Chapter 1: Understanding the development of Green Space in Irish history

The history of Dublin's green spaces is intertwined with the development of the city. In the seventeenth century recreational areas, such as parks and promenades, were becoming a common convention in Ireland and Britain. They had been a feature of Continental Europe since the renaissance (Costello, 2007). One of the reasons The Dublin Corporation, established 1840, developed these public spaces, was their perceived healthy nature. As Dublin was in a state of development, these parks were made with another function: enticing people to live there. St Stephen's Green and Oxmanstown, shown in figure 1 and figure 2 below, were developed purely "to add beauty and benefit to the city" (Costello, 2007, p).

fig. 1 John Rocque's map of Dublin, 1756 fig. 2 Map of St Stephen's Green

They were originally commons, a piece of land subject to common use, and used primarily for various things like cattle and sheep grazing. It was only after the turn of the eighteenth century that we saw these grounds being developed. This saw the appearance of smaller, more purposeful parks being built like Fitzwilliam or Merrion square (Costello, 2007). While Oxmanstown ,the area now known as Stoneybatter, was eventually

encroached upon by development and ceased to be a recognisable green space, St Stephen's Green gradually became the park we know and love today.

In 1663 the City Assembly decided that the plot of ground could be used to generate income for the city and a central area of twenty-seven acres was marked out which would define the park boundary, with the remaining ground being let out into ninety building lots. According to the OPW's (Office of Public Works) website on St. Stephen's Green, rent generated was to be used to build walls and paving around the Green (OPW, n.d). Due to the development of several walks, such as Beaux Walk, within the park in the eighteenth century, it became a fashionable place for promenading .

Fig 3. Illustration of the Beaux Walk, St Stephen's Green

However, by the nineteenth century the condition of the park had deteriorated to such an extent that in 1814 commissioners representing the

local householders were handed control of the park. They began with making repairs to the park, but these improvements led to the Green then becoming a private park accessible only to those who rented keys to the park from the Commission, despite the 1635 law which decreed that the park was available for use by all citizens (OPW, n.d). This move from public to private was met with criticism not only from the working class of the time, but by some middle class citizens as well. A wealthy landowner and businessman from Drogheda, G. W. Maunsell, campaigned for the return of the park to public hands, but this proposition was met with opposition. There was a preconception that the park would become “the scene of torchlight processions and political demonstrations”. However, in 1877 Sir Arthur Guinness offered to buy the Green from the commission and return it to the public. He paid off the park’s debts and secured an Act which ensured that the park would be managed by the Commissioners of Public Works, now the OPW. Sir Arthur Guinness, later known as Lord Ardilaun, said,

> *It is impossible to overestimate the humanizing effect upon children, and, indeed, upon all, of constant association with trees, flowers, birds, and other objects of nature. The power of innocent, healthy recreation is one of God's choicest bunes, and to have in any measure contributed towards providing such for hard worked townspeople would be in itself as a source of happiness to any man. (The weekly Irish Times 1891, pg 3, taken from Brück, 2013, p.202)*

It was with this purchase that the park was then designed into the pleasure garden we see today - fit with its large lake, bridges and flower gardens for which it is renown. It made its rather unspectacular return to the public on 27th of July 1880 (OPW, n.d). The Daily Express wrote the day after the opening, “the picture is a truly delightful one and cannot fail to impress every visitor to the green with the incalculable benefits which such an oasis must

bestow on the city and its people". However, as it was to be later understood, the park would not necessarily meet the expectations of the people it was opening for. The ornate features and elaborate design of flower beds was not what the working class desired. They wanted more open space that would allow for more recreational activities, than for space to sit and ponder about nature's beauty (Bruck).

C19th Park landscape design

It was during the Victorian and Edwardian periods that Dublin had most of its parks built. Between Dublin and Belfast, there were almost thirty built in the last three decades of the two time periods. St. Stephen's Green is one of such parks that is included in this pursuit. A research paper by Brück (2013) was one of the few sources that had extensive knowledge on the design process and ideology behind parks like St Stephen's Green. Brück (2013) says the creation of parks en masse was because parks were a Victorian solution to social, political and health problems being experienced at the time. To understand this better, surrounding this period, Dublin was seeing large numbers of people crammed into tenant houses. Disease was running rampant, and the wealthy that made their money off the labour of the working class were noticing that the poor health of their workers was affecting business. This issue brought public health to the foreground of discussion. This in turn put the spotlight on St Stephen's Green, one area which they thought would help alleviate the troubles of the working class. It was in the

city centre, and although in a sad state due to a lack of care over the years, it was thought it could be one part to the solution (Brück, 2013).

When designing the park for the grand reopening for public use, it was designed by the upper classes for the working class. This led to a misunderstanding and provides a comment on the social relations of the period, as some features were prioritised over others. The design for this park stuck to the usual park landscape of the Victorian time period. The functional features of these Victorian parks were highly decorative so many of the green's features would include this philosophy. These features were part of a rustic aesthetic trying to be achieved. This was an attempt to give the park more nature-like qualities, an aesthetic that countered the city life they all experienced daily. Benches with iron supports were cast into the shape of branches. The layouts of these landscapes are highly informative regarding the concerns and attitudes of the middle and upper class. Bruck notes that,

> *Most parks could be seen as picturesque in style: they combined formal planting, informal serpentine pathways and wide areas of lawn, interspersed with belts of trees, lakes and rockeries, creating tranquil naturalistic landscapes which provided a deliberate contrast to the dirt and disorder of city life.* (Brück, 2013, p.201)

The design process was thorough and thoughtful, as they plant trees to obscure your vision of any direct border to make the park seem bigger. The finer details such as small iron rails running alongside the edges where path met grass were features common in Victorian design and fit for the purpose of deterring activity on the grass (Brück, 2013).

It is within these details that we can see the detachment of the class expectations. While middle class society wanted decoration and formal gardens, working class citizens would have preferred a space for recreation. Although the park serves more to the middle class than just a place for a stroll. Donald J Olsen, in his book review comparing two journals referring to Victorian park landscapes (1993), mentions the notion of parks being built to raise the land value around them. Therefore, this would imply that the ninety lots surrounding St Stephen's Green simultaneously would have their value raised when the construction was completed in 1880. This occurrence still happens today, as having a park in proximity is an attractive amenity that can raise the value of your house by up to 5% (Loza, 2011).

While lacking the modern understanding for how disease spreads, open space and connection to nature was often thought to be the solution. Parks were designed to provide open space and purify the spirit, while features such as lakes inspired tranquility and contemplation. Benches and other features allowed people to rest and evaluate their surroundings (Brück, 2013). These parks became the lungs for cities, helping to alleviate stress and provide rest and refuge from city living (Olsen, 1993).

The history behind St Stephen's Green is rich and provides a commentary on the past. We can see, just from a simple public park, what the values of the people throughout the C17th to C20th were. The redesign of the green space lacked understanding in the purpose it was built for. Although thorough in planning and elaborate in design, it lacked a key understanding of purpose. Many like Lord Ardiluan intended to create a space for all classes to interact

and understand, but instead showed how great the gap in class and values was. This leads one to think about contemporary green spaces being built in the modern era. Are they designed with the people's interest at heart, or are they projects that are just as disillusioning as the past?

Chapter 2- Modern Parks: form, function and relation

Modern parks need to be built with more purpose in mind, and take into account the various multi-faceted needs of the local community that would be using the space the most. Communities are areas with large amounts of people interacting and engaging with one another. It is key that these developments to improve the quality of life in an area consider their aims. Research into the benefits of green spaces within urban developments are essential to understanding how to engage with the communities with these projects. To explore this, this chapter will research and explore the small community focused park, “Weaver Park” and the Liberties Greening Project, and the aims of these projects on the communities they are impacting. It will then move on to analyse the small, community-driven movement of guerrilla gardening. Guerrilla gardening is a small movement that is gaining traction in areas with little green space and shows the silent but powerful determination behind people and plants.

Weaver Park and potential benefits behind the Liberties Greening Project

In a construction project along Cork Street in 2017, Weaver Park was built. This park was built on a derelict site, and the park was proposed by skaters who wanted a space within the city centre to skate. This is because many public spaces have anti-skate surfaces designed into benches and railings and the like, and they will often be asked to move away from areas by authorities leaving them with little space to practice their skill (Ní Aodhna, 2017). What is so significant about this development, is it was the second

park within The Liberties to be developed in 100 years, not including St. Patrick's Park situated beside St. Patrick's Cathedral on Patrick street (Ní Aodhna, 2017). This park was designed with the people playing an active role as they had been asked what essential features the park needed. According to the Dublin City Council (DCC) , established 1840, in one of their reports it was part of The Liberties Greening Project, a project aimed to promote and build more green spaces within The Liberties. This is in part due to the fact it is one of the most sparse areas in Dublin in terms of quality green spaces. There are a few small green spaces, namely Park Terrace, Oscar Square, St. Audeon's and St. Catherine's Park, but they aren't substantial as green spaces for children to play in or for any other activities such as skateboarding or other sports (DCC, 2015). Figure 4 on the next page shows the existing open green spaces within The Liberties. As the area is home to 23,000 people, according to the latest 2016 census, the access to green spaces is very limited and restricting.

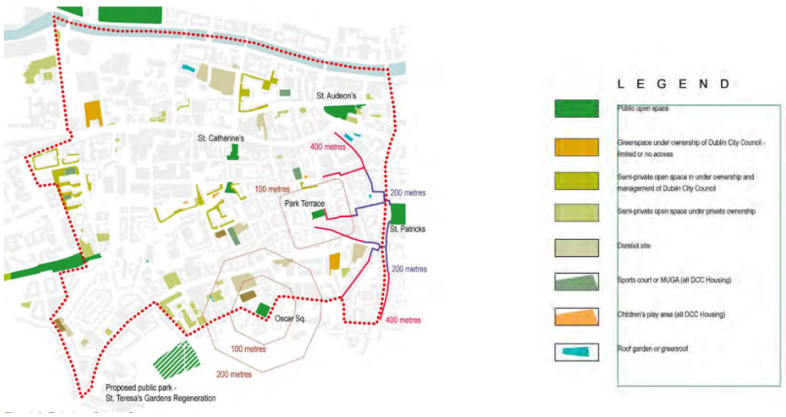

Fig. 4 Displaying the existing green spaces within the area of the Liberties

The Greening Strategy seeks to capitalise on the value and benefits of the existing green spaces such as improving access to green spaces. The strategy seeks to ensure all children living in The Liberties are within a short

5-8 minute walk of a high quality and secure play space and all residents are within a short 2-5 minute walk of high quality green space (DCC, 2015). Parks have more uses than just aesthetic and recreational benefits, which DCC are aiming to achieve by implementing more green space in this community. The most notable of these are: enhancing biodiversity; improved air quality; managing local flood risks; and providing a cooling effect during hot weather periods. These additional benefits are supported by a document written by Taj Schottland (2019). Taj Schottland is a Climate-Smart Cities Program Manager. Schottland states that parks which incorporate the correct installation of “green infrastructure” can benefit from pollutant filtration from storm water. This has been stated by Schottland to filter up to 95% of major pollutants from the stormwater, and that associated ‘rain gardens’ can prevent up to 90% of rain water runoff. Schottland also includes the benefits of shady green spaces that can reduce the “heat island” effect thus protecting people from extensive heat caused by the weather. This effect spreads out further than the park, also affecting the local area. Schottland suggests that the local area surrounding these parks can see the temperature cool by around 17 degrees Fahrenheit (approximately 8 degrees Celsius). Most notable of these benefits is the carbon sequestering nature of green spaces, said to segregate 90 million metric tons of carbon within the US alone. These benefits from green spaces are increasingly needed in a society where climate change is a growing threat and global pandemics are leaving people without access to green spaces.

Equally important to the environmental aspect of these parks, is how parks can be used to create a ‘sense of place’ and resonate with one’s identity. In a research paper by Jennifer Adams, et al (2016), ‘sense of place’ describes our relationship with places, expressed in different dimensions of human life: emotions, biographies, imagination, stories, and personal experiences (Adams, 2016). It is described within her research, that it is particularly important within cities to establish a sense of place with our spaces, as a sense of place affects how we view areas, and that we carry those experiences with us through life. How we view one place will inherently affect how we view another. The key to this idea is the establishment of a “home”. It is a vested interest of Dublin City Council that they establish this ‘sense of place’, as the factors that will establish this ‘sense of place’ are also factors that will entice future people to migrate to these areas. The development of more natural spaces within communities are highly beneficial. Green spaces hold the inherent ability to get the community involved by encouraging people to take care and nurture these spaces, through transformative experience-based means. This is why Guerrilla Gardening is so effective, even as a practice that is usually done alone. Guerrilla Gardening holds the ability to connect people.

Guerrilla Gardening

Guerrilla gardening is a relatively new phenomenon, occurring all around the world. Guerrilla gardening is defined as “the act of gardening on land that the gardeners do not have the legal rights to cultivate, such as abandoned sites, areas that are not being cared for, or private property” (Coyle, 2020). It was

reported in a journalistic newspaper article written by Yvonne Gordon (2009). Gordon states the movement was pioneered by Richard Reynolds when he decided to blog his “illegal” activities on his own website. After founding and blogging the website, he started catching the attention of many other like-minded people. Guerrilla gardening is usually practiced locally by members of the community. They notice an unattended plot of land, usually the council’s, and take it upon themselves to make it a little more beautiful by making it a small garden. However, while this activity is pure at heart, it is viewed as illegal activity as you are altering someone else’s land without their permission (Gordon, 2009). It is within this detail that the activity becomes more than one of leisure, and evolves into a form of protest. In an article written in It’s Freezing In LA (IFLA) by Alexander Harris (2020), he supports this movement. Harris notes how in London, there are signs of public land being handed over to private developers through the form of a piazza. He coined this as “piazza-fication”. Through this, he adds that these plots of land have very little function. “This is a phenomenon whereby powerful corporate bodies, usually developers, acquire ownership of prominent sites and redevelop them – read: concrete over – along slick, private lines, whilst giving these areas the veneer of a public space” (Harris, 2020). It is in moments like this that guerrilla gardening becomes profound as a movement. It is in trespassing, altering and cultivating forgotten and unused land that the quiet rebellion stands tall. Creating a garden, a space of growth and reconnection, should be the priority of these plots of land, rather than an empty space lacking true thought or consideration for the ones living around them.

However, protest and gardening aren't the only aspects of guerrilla gardening. Guerrilla gardening has roots dating back centuries, as a way to produce food for low income areas. It is interesting to note how this practice naturally increases the biodiversity of the local area, allowing for more variety of species and providing a healthier natural experience. Biodiversity is now an aspect within modern parks that is lacking, due to homogeneous park designs favouring certain species of plants over others for a more clean, minimalist and contemporary design.

Biodiversity in Green Spaces to enhance experience and prevent possible pandemics.

A question remains: why do parks need biodiversity? Urban green spaces often enhance the urban experience of residence as they are often the only access to nature some people have. Most research into the topic of biodiversity in parks and other urban public spaces is focused within North America. Research shows that some people are becoming more aware of where their food is coming from so the cultivation of edible plants within urban areas is increasingly more popular. There are a number of studies in North America which show that gathering wild plants is a practice that is highly relevant in human plants interactions as a surprising number of wild Flora species are made use of in foraging activities. However, there is a lack of diverse plants in favour for homogenous monocultures within green spaces, thus reducing this foraging capability.

Climate change is causing outbreaks of disease to be more common, thus making it a more dangerous threat. This is evident from a rise in infectious diseases coming from birds and bats, including coronaviruses, that have mutated and have started infecting people. Lustgarten claims that these diseases have always been there but were restrained within nature. However, this is beginning to change due to climate change. The rapid loss of biodiversity is critical because a greater variety of species of flora and fauna lends itself to greater resiliency. A journal in 2010, by Keesing et al, claims that waning biodiversity leads to the increased likelihood of pathogen transmission. In their journal they explores whether biodiversity may cause an increase or decrease in the spread of pathogens. Logically one might think that more species potentially equals more opportunity for disease to spread. However, as their research has found, it tends to be a decrease in biodiversity that leads to an increase of infection from pathogens. The root cause of this is the dwindling numbers of predators due to loss of biodiversity.

A key example of this was found in the U.S in 1999 when the loss of two predators of mosquitoes, the dragonfly and frog, led to a drastic increase in their population. The subsequent infections of the West Nile virus from more infected mosquitoes being able to travel and spread to a human populace (Lustgarten, 2020). While this is an issue unrelated to Ireland, it frames the potential threat caused by loss of biodiversity within current park design.

The recent development of parks and the many benefits associated with them are encouraging, but we need to practice this on a large scale for it to be really

effective. Additionally, the rate of decline for diversity is alarming, and action needs to be taken to assist in slowing down climate change and decreasing the chances for pandemics, like coronaviruses, from spreading. This chapter investigated the positive effects of parks prior to covid, but what are the ongoing effects of covid as it still runs rampant across the world?

Chapter 3- Green Space: how COVID-19 and climate change will affect future development

After analysing the significance of Green Spaces in Irish history and to the city of Dublin and its inhabitants, we are left wondering what this means for the future of green spaces. Will they have the same significance in the future? What will they look like? Will they be accessible? To explore these questions, I will be investigating the purpose of parks in the context of climate change and pandemics in the future development of green spaces. This chapter will discuss what the future of green spaces might look like through contemporary examples and what attitudes should be present when thinking about how green spaces play a role in climate change efforts.

Covid and its relationship with public parks

Public parks have always served a critical function as free recreational spaces, particularly for low income and immigrant communities, as seen in Weaver Park. Parks and green spaces more generally are known to have positive impacts on mental health, with demonstrated mental health benefits. Also, parks can be quite expansive, allowing for safe enjoyment while maintaining social distancing. As such, parks may serve an important, and as yet unquantified, function for people in coping with the COVID-19 pandemic (Volenec, et al, 2021). In an academic article written by Maller, et al (2009), it was indicated that exposure to nature, in the context of parks, can foster well-being, reduce stress, boost immunity and is pivotal to long term health and well-being, amongst other things.

However, even with their notable benefits, policies made during the pandemic made it very difficult for some people to access parks. Parks have many shared surfaces, such as benches, paths and play areas, which were suggested to result in increased disease transmission. Furthermore, parks are often unsupervised and lack guidelines for visitor capacity, making it difficult to regulate their usage (Volenec, et al, 2021). Parks around Dublin saw the emergence of signs dictating what two metres was, and also saw it painted along the path, as seen in figure 3.

fig. 5. Two metre sign in St Stephen's Green

This paired with the two kilometre and five kilometre restrictions left some people without the option to access needed quality green spaces. This is partly due to Dublin's poor city planning, where green spaces are often a mere after thought in some areas, such as the Liberties. The dissatisfaction with this was evident from the complaints on platforms such as twitter, as seen in figure 6.

Fig. 6. Screenshots of tweets about displeasure surrounding covid regulations

However, this wasn't the case for all residents of Dublin. Research found by Dr Gerald Mills of UCD's geography department, along with the OPW, et al, "showed Dublin city's green spaces are most concentrated in the southeast of the city and residents of Ballsbridge were up to 20 times more likely to have a tree on their street than those living in the north inner city" (Martella, 2016). This is shown below in figure 7, taken from the same report by Dr Gerald Mills.

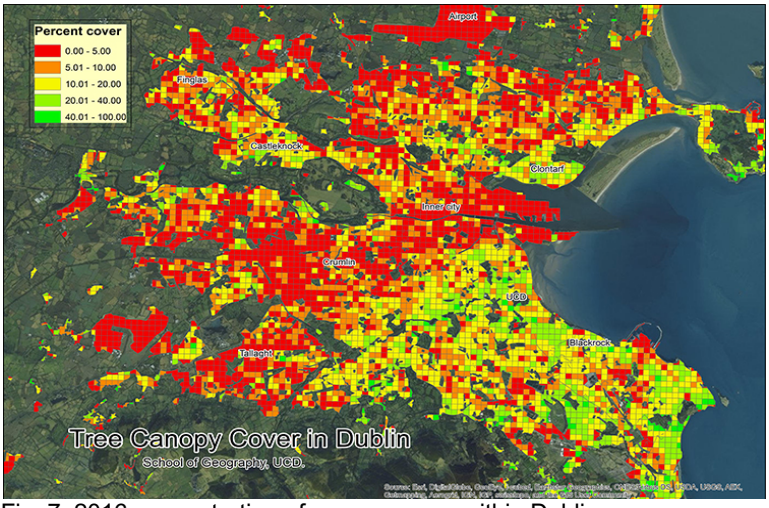

Fig. 7. 2016 concentration of green spaces within Dublin

From this, we can ascertain that the two and five kilometre restriction were inherently unfair, leaving many without access to substantial quality green spaces. This point is further enhanced by the World Health Organisation's (WHO) recommendation for green spaces in well planned cities. It says in this report that "urban residents should be able to access public green spaces of at least 0.5-1 hectare within 300 metres' linear distance of their home" (World Health Organisation, 2016). If Dublin were planned in a better way it would follow WHO's recommendations. However, we can see that there is movement towards this, with projects such as the Liberties Greening Project. The benefits of such improvements are clear. Outlined in the same

report by WHO (2016), “urban green spaces can reduce environmental health risks associated with urban living… they support and facilitate health and well-being by enabling stress alleviation and relaxation, physical activity, improved social interaction and community cohesion”. In the wake of a pandemic, all of these factors are needed to ensure healthy and happy communities and people.

In terms of percentage of green space per capita, Dublin has a seemingly good 20% in terms of green space coverage (Kelly, 2017). However, this statistic is slightly misinforming when used in conjunction with green space in city planning. This statistic includes Phoenix Park, which covers 1,752 acres (707 hectares). This makes it one of the largest city parks in Europe (Daly, 2012). Unfortunately the Phoenix Park, despite its large size, is not within five kilometres of over two thirds of Dublin’s population (Nevin, 2021). Although some were left without access to a considerable green space, it is important to note the social benefits experienced by those who did have access to these green spaces.

It could lead to a considerable change to the layout and planning of future development. An article published by RTÉ suggests that “During the pandemic, Dublin parks have clearly been a valuable resource for citizens” (Dias, et al, 2021). St Stephen’s Green is a park that has stayed open for most of the pandemic, with a reopening happening a month after it was shut in March of 2020 (due to the announcement of additional restrictions on movement)(Kelly, 2020). The infrastructure of St. Stephen’s Green is part of

what makes it such a popular spot for youths and others to gather there. It has large green areas, benches and covered stands which people can use to sit and take shelter in. In the analysis by Dias, et al (2021), they stated “the lack of infrastructure in parks is one of the main issues pointed out by respondents, with a lack of toilets being the number one issue”. St Stephen’s Green has rather good infrastructure as Dublin parks go, and has access to public toilets outside St. Stephen’s Green shopping centre just outside its main gate. However, there were reports of “overcrowding”, which is understandable given the lack of choice for activities people had during the lockdown period at thus time (Dias, et al, 2021). This did lead to an incident in June, 2021, when crowds broke through fencing at the Victorian bandstand and began to rave (Lyne, 2021). The park was closed for the remainder of the day by the Office of Public Works due to the disturbance. Maller, et al (2009 state in their academic article, *Healthy Parks, Healthy People: The Health Benefits of Contact with Nature in a Park Context,* more green spaces can decrease crime. This suggests that if quality green spaces with proper space and amenities were more in abundance and dispersed throughout the city to be readily available to everyone, there would be less anti-social behaviour. While the breaking down of the barrier to rave was in protest of the restrictions being imposed on the youth, it is antisocial behaviour in the eyes of An Garda Síochána that could have led to arrests (Lyne, 2021).

Pandemics in shaping the future of Green Space design

> *The current pandemic is a reminder that the history of cities is bound up with the history of disease. As dense concentrations of people living and working together they are a target rich environments for disease, virus transmission, plagues, and epidemics. (Martinez , 2021, 13)*

As mentioned earlier in this research paper, it is evident that disease is a driving force in many aspects of our cities' histories. St Stephen's Green was remodeled due to the urgency of public health decline caused by cholera and other diseases (Brück, 2013). The facilities in Dublin's current parks are limited, as stated earlier. This doesn't mean it has to stay this way. Looking at the experiences that occurred during the lockdown, we can see a shift towards temporary structures during this time such as those to accommodate outdoor dining. This was seen on the streets of Dublin City centre. There are efforts to pedestrianize areas, giving more access to spaces like outdoor dining. Journalist Mark Hilliard wrote in the Irish Times "Despite being the product of pandemic necessity, efforts to rid the streets of cars and expand seating areas may have captured enough public support to become an increasing part of urban life" (2021). Council workers began to strengthen outdoor dining options with measures to either partly or fully pedestrianize South Anne Street, South William Street, Drury Street, and Dame Court (Hilliard, 2021). In addition to this, the prospect of adding temporary structures has been seen prior to the pandemic. FreeThink, a channel on YouTube, discussed the prospect of reimagining public spaces with professionals such as director of Gehl Architects, Ewa Westermark . New York City saw this occurrence with its famed Times Square. Initially a space that prioritised cars over pedestrian space, Westermark assisted in the design process to convert

this space to an area where people were prioritised over cars. It was completed with temporary structures that could be taken down within forty-eight hours, and is still there today (FreeThink, 2022). Analysis of this shows that features where people are prioritised, will see an increase in usage for that space. The temporary aspect of this proposal would mean if ineffective and largely a wasted effort, they could be easily removed and the space these took up in green or public spaces could be returned to their previous state.

> *Since the flu of 1918, at least eight pandemics with global social and economic effects have been documented pandemics are part of the modern world. About 14 million people die annually because of a pandemic. (Martinez, 2021, 13)*

This pandemic has hit hard, and the extract of Martinez et al goes to show the prevalence of disease within the modern world. It is a necessity of cities to adapt how we view and use public spaces, especially ones pertaining to Green Spaces.

Conclusion

This research project examined the need for attention to be placed on the importance of Green Space within our modern society. Green spaces are an invaluable resource for the people, allowing space for recreation, connection, and action. They provide an insight into the past and reflect the needs of society. It is from this exploration into green spaces that we can ascertain the benefits for the public urban experience.

Initially this research project discussed the history of green spaces within Dublin, the function behind the C19th design and their purpose within society. St Stephen's Green provided a functional space for promenading and was meant as a space for classes to mix after the park moved from public, to private and returning finally to public. Although flawed in application, the intention behind the park's redesign was in the interest of the people, hoping to address and assist the health issues of the working class. St Stephen's Green is a green space rich in history and has been central in the development of the city. It has undergone changes and has become a figure of the Irish identity. It also serves as a point of comparison, as we can compare it to smaller community parks being built recently in Dublin. Weaver Park has features unseen in St Stephen's Green, and allows insight into how society has grown and developed over the centuries. In the past, parks were a heavily relied upon solution to problems within the cityscape. However, Dublin has considered it an afterthought in some cases until recently. The Liberties Greening Project addresses this issue, as they plan to rejuvenate areas by renovating vacant public land that has been left unused, into green

spaces that provide social betterment within the area. These key green spaces allow for local community members to experience the benefits of green spaces, such as improved air quality and spaces for socialising and biodiversity.

Akin to this, guerrilla gardening takes on a similar approach of small scale rejuvenation of plots of unused land. These miniature local gardens are often found in communities like the Liberties where little green space is available, and allow locals to reconnect with nature, while calling out processes like ‘piazza-fication’ taking public land and turning it into structures without consideration of the people using it. The creation of these green spaces offer a release from the strains of city life, where nature is scarce and not easily accessible, as the pandemic starkly pointed out.

Parks were given a second look as spaces that were largely taken for granted. In contract to this, the understanding and view prior to the pandemic saw research into the pivotal influence green spaces bring to establishing a sense of place within communities. Covid-19 saw people cherish these spaces as areas of reprieve. Although this brought attention to issues such as green space dispersal within the city, and the lack of amenities within, there is evidence to suggest that these are issues that can be remedied. If New York, a dense area of traffic and roads, can reclaim streets for public use, these local parks can be addressed and the problems associated can be solved. This pandemic has brought a refreshed view on everyday life, particularly on the current urban living. It is not over, but there is enough

sources to show how vital green spaces are within the public realm. It could be suggested from the research undertaken, that there is great need for access to nature via green spaces in the future of development and the urban experience.

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