
TITLE

Homo Ludens and Recreational Open Spaces: Enhancing Social Interaction Among University Students

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ABSTRACT

The concept of Homo Ludens, introduced by Johan Huizinga (1938), identifies play as a fundamental element of culture and human interaction. Within this framework, play is not merely a leisure activity but a societal function that fosters connection, creativity, and social bonding. Huizinga emphasized that incorporating play into urban life nurtures the spirit of freedom, encouraging individuals to socialize in open and inclusive environments. However, the design of university campuses often overlooks the importance of dedicated play areas within recreational open spaces. This study investigates the main campus of Bilkent University in Ankara, Turkey, focusing on the role of play in fostering

social interaction among students. Using the Homo Ludens theory as a conceptual framework and employing a qualitative case study method, this research analyzes how existing recreational open spaces facilitate or limit playful interaction. Findings reveal that although certain areas promote informal socialization, structured play opportunities are minimal and underutilized. As a result, the study argues for integrating purposeful play elements into campus planning to support student well-being and social connectivity. These results contribute to a broader understanding of how architectural design can synthesize educational, social, and recreational functions within the university context.