




# New city, new rules

By Dr. Hadrien Dubucs





## Sorbonne University Abu Dhabi is at the forefront of studies into public spaces, helping to create cities where we all want to live.

Sustainable urban living has never been in greater demand throughout the world. Forward-thinking cities are searching for intelligent approaches where design and function can thrive together. Shady pathways and benches for pedestrians, safe tracks for cyclists, grassy parks for barbecues and contemplating a sunset; these are the ingredients that make cities more liveable, healthy, and inclusive.

For Abu Dhabi's city planners, the sky's the limit – but that's not to say the local climate hasn't proved a challenge. Both ambition and a large dash of ingenuity, however, have allowed vibrant pavement spaces, children's playgrounds and sophisticated parks to thrive amid the skyscrapers and dusty landscape.

Spearheading Abu Dhabi's rapid development is the Department of Planning and Municipalities, and with the help of the Abu Dhabi Public Realm Design Manual, it has set about answering one key question: how can well-designed public spaces enhance people's lifestyles and meet their differing expectations?

In search of an answer, it has turned to a team of specialist researchers in social sciences and urban studies. In January 2018, with the support of Abu Dhabi Department of Education and Knowledge, a new two-year project was launched, titled Redefining Abu Dhabi's Public Spaces: Urban Classification and Social Interaction.

Geographer Hadrien Dubucs and sociologist Clio Chaveneau of Sorbonne University Abu Dhabi have been collaborating with architect Apostolos Kyriazis from Abu Dhabi University, backed by the assistance of recent graduates.

The team has been monitoring a sample of 14 public spaces throughout Abu Dhabi, carrying out an extensive study of the communities, practices and interactions taking place, supported by photographs and on-site interviews.

This wide-ranging project is helping everyone – from students and visitors to families and local businesses – get the most out of Abu Dhabi's public spaces. Over time, the team's observations will build up an intelligent picture of their needs to enable a greener, more sustainable future for everyone.



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