

Why not?

I would like to see the need of movement explicitly incorporated into criteria for a healthy environment.

Surprisingly, discussion of planning and design both inside and outside buildings seldom mentions movement except when describing processions and pedestrian flow, and even then it is done in rather abstract, bird's-eye terms. Design evaluation would be improved if critics routinely asked how postural variation is accommodated in every setting.

Are users locked into only one body posture in this environment, or are more options provided? Is there a place to do stand-up clerical work? Is there a place to lie down? Is it possible to sit cross-legged? Or to kneel or squat? Different types of buildings must accommodate difference repertoires of postures. In a nursery for small children, an especially wide range of movements and postures should be accommodated. In the more formal areas of corporate offices, the current range of acceptable postures is generally too limited, and perhaps especially for women where dress codes are most constraining.

Is it all right for both men and women to lie down? Previously, of course, women's restrooms have included (in a separate area) cots, platforms, or other spaces for them to use when suffering from menstrual symptoms. But generally, women cannot lie down anywhere in public –indoors or out- without arousing comment from passersby (except at a swimming pool). Would women lying down be viewed as offering a sexual invitation? Would they be viewed as lying down on the job? There are certain tasks such as talking on the phone that could be accomplished productively in an office while lying down. Why not?

G. Cranz

*From The chair: rethinking culture, body and design
(WW Norton: New York and London, 2000)*