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# Furniture for Public Use

It is illegal for a resident of Mexico City to put furniture on the sidewalk in front of his or her property, unless the property is a shop that sells food and beverages. If that is the case, one can get a “permit for placement of furniture on public roads,” as long as the furniture is not fastened to the street. The local government charges annual rent for the area in use, and the total cost per square metre—almost as high as commercial rent—depends on the price of real estate in the neighbourhood.

By paying rent, businesses effectively acquire semi-exclusive rights to public space. Because owners need to maximize the productive area in order to recover the investment, this sidewalk furniture is typically reserved for paying customers. While the city could use this collected money to improve public space, the privatization of sidewalks has a larger negative impact on the public realm. What would happen if instead of allowing shops to pay rent and take possession the sidewalk, any person could donate furniture for the public in a joint venture with the city?

Furniture for Public Use is a project that rethinks the use of sidewalks through a public-private program where anybody can purchase and place concrete plant pots and furniture on their sidewalks. The goal of this easy-access program is to incentivize and actively contribute to the use of public space at a local scale.

This project is currently in a pilot phase in Mexico City, where it aims to partner with the local government to provide affordable sidewalk furniture and create relationships with individuals to improve sidewalks. Within this model, anybody can transform



his or her sidewalk into a quality space that encourages public social interaction. The use of the furniture demonstrates the potential of sidewalks not only as pedestrian passageways, but as places to rest, work, eat, and participate more actively in outdoor city life.

The first prototype is located on the sidewalk of Avenida Sullivan, between Miguel Schultz and Serapio Rendón, colonia San Rafael, delegación Cuauhtémoc, 06470, Mexico City, Distrito Federal, Mexico.

The second prototype is temporarily located, from December 2013 to March 2014, on the sidewalk in front of the Border Warehouse of the bi-city Biennale of Urbanism/Architecture in Shenzhen, China.

