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Stephen Carr, Mark Francis, Leanne G. Rivlin and Andrew M. Stone
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Public Space

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SERIES FOREWORD

In recent decades the relationship between human behavior and the physical environment has attracted researchers from the social sciences – psychology, sociology, geography, and anthropology – and from the environmental-design disciplines – architecture, urban and regional planning, and interior design. What is in many respects a new and exciting field of study has developed rapidly. Its multidisciplinary character has led to stimulation and cross-fertilization, on the one hand, and to confusion and difficulty in communication, on the other. Those involved have diverse intellectual styles and goals. Some are concerned with basic and theoretical issues; some, with applied real-world problems of environmental design.

This series offers a common meeting ground. It consists of short books on different topics of interest to all those who analyze environment-behavior links. We hope that the series will provide a useful introduction to the field for students, researchers, and practitioners alike, and will facilitate its evolutionary growth as well.

Our goals are as follows: (1) to represent problems the study of which is relatively well established, with a reasonably substantial body of research and knowledge generated; (2) to recruit authors from a variety of disciplines with a variety of perspectives; (3) to ensure that they not only summarize work on their topic but also set forth a “point of view,” if not a theoretical orientation; and (4) to produce books useful to a broad range of students, professionals, and scholars from different disciplines in the social sciences and environmental design fields.

Irwin Altman
Daniel Stokols

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*In memory of Kevin Lynch and Harold M. Proshansky –
teachers, colleagues, friends, and inspirations*

PREFACE

This book is about public space and the life it supports. We see public space as the common ground where people carry out the functional and ritual activities that bind a community, whether in the normal routines of daily life or in periodic festivities. We recognize that in much of the rest of the world, and increasingly in the West, public space is also used for “private” purposes – for buying or selling things, for gardening, for self-improvement through exercise, or for simply finding a place to exist. It can also be the setting for activities that threaten communities, such as crime and protest. As public life evolves with the culture, new types of spaces may be needed and old ones discarded or revived. We need to learn how to create and maintain places that are appropriate to their users and context and are well used over time.

Public Space offers guidance for improving the design, management, and use of public places. We intend the book to be helpful to users, whose needs are not always met in existing spaces; to politicians, public administrators, or private developers, with responsibility for creating or improving spaces, as well as to designers and managers. Our sources include historic and social scientific studies of public space, professional design and planning experience, and the direct observation of many spaces. We propose a specific set of values to organize this information, and an approach and working process for using it in design and management.

Part I provides a critical perspective on public space and public life based on a historical review with an emphasis on our time. In the first chapter, we review the key motives for making public space and the main criticisms of the results. We propose that good public space should be supportive, democratic, and meaningful. In Chapter 2, we analyze public life in historical perspective, examine the forces that shape it, and ask how public space can help create a more humane culture. We conclude Part I by

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showing how the evolution of public life has produced the many types that we have today, including those specifically designed to support public life, such as parks, plazas, and playgrounds, and those appropriated for that purpose, such as street corners, steps to public buildings, or vacant lots.

In Part II, with the aid of existing environmental and social research and many case studies, we describe the human dimensions of public space. Our review of research is supplemented by case studies of public spaces in the United States and Europe. These are drawn primarily from our own site visits and evaluations and occasionally from studies by other researchers and designers. Our approach assumes that any good analysis of a public space must begin by spending time there, watching how the place is used, and recording how it feels. Taken together, these chapters provide a framework for identifying and evaluating people's needs in public space, for securing and protecting their rights, and for enabling spaces to become meaningful.

Part II does not present a comprehensive review of people–environment research on public space. More complete reviews already exist in the two-volume *Handbook of Environmental Psychology* by Altman and Stokols (1987); the multiple-volume series *Human Behavior and Environment*, including as its tenth volume the excellent *Public Spaces and Places* edited by Altman and Zube (1989); and the multiple-volume *Advances in Environment, Behavior and Design* edited by Zube and Moore (1987, 1989, 1991). Our intent is also not to provide another set of guidelines as can be found in *A Pattern Language*, by Christopher Alexander and others (1977); *People Places*, edited by Clare Cooper Marcus and Carolyn Francis (1990); and Geoffrey Broadbent's *Emerging Concepts in Urban Space Design* (1990). Instead, Part II is intended to provide the understanding of fundamentals – the “human dimensions” of public space – that is needed to design and manage spaces more creatively and effectively.

In Part III, we present our approach to design and management. Chapter 7 shows how the dimensions defined in Part II can be used to guide the processes in the context of our polycultural, changing society. We then analyze how design and management are typically carried out and propose a more effective process for our complex culture. We conclude with a discussion of the key social issues we believe must be addressed in the future evolution of public space.

Although our primary purpose is to assist the producers and users of public space to make and manage better spaces, the book also has three other agendas. First, we hope that this compendium of research and case studies will be useful to environmental psychologists and the other social researchers concerned with public life and public space. To aid future

research, we include a bibliography on past research, theory, and design. We hope our review will help promote long-term case studies, because we have found few of these in the literature. We understand that the time and support required to do this well is often difficult to secure. A good postoccupancy evaluation, which includes extensive interviews of all those involved in the design process, as well as observation and interviews of managers and users, can approximate the in-depth understanding that could be gained from fully observed cases. However, it is our strong conviction that public spaces overall will only be as good as the processes by which they are created and managed and that, therefore, process as well as product needs to be studied. Is it too much to hope that designers and managers might take the lead in creating opportunities for social scientists to observe their work processes?

Our second desire is to inspire increased opportunities for collaboration among social scientists, sponsors, users, designers, and managers in the creation and tending of public spaces. The book attempts to demonstrate the value of this approach. Designers and managers need to provide leadership, but understanding and financial support from clients and users is also needed. The involvement of social scientists is no panacea for the many pitfalls of public space design and management, but the knowledge and perspective they can offer will greatly enrich the social art of making public space.

Finally, we want the education of designers and managers to be significantly broadened. We believe there should be more focus on the human and cultural dimensions of design and management as well as training in group process skills. Design education should not only include lectures and seminars on the social basis of design, but also bring environmentally aware social scientists into the studio to work with students on their design projects, challenging them to investigate the fit between their designs and people's needs. Although most design programs try to provide the experience of working in teams, only a few include learning how to work with groups of users and communities. Real world projects on which students can help can provide this experience, which will be most meaningful if it is guided by someone who is expert in group process. Management training may err in the opposite direction, with too much attention on the techniques of working with people and not enough on the social value of the products of this work.

More research, increased collaboration across disciplines, and broadened training for designers and managers will all contribute to making better public spaces. We are convinced, however, that enough is now known to improve dramatically the typical process and product of space making. This book is devoted to that task.

Preface

When we began, we were intrigued by the large amount of social research that had been done on public space and, even more, by how little of it was known and applied by designers and managers. As we examined this body of knowledge, looked at many existing public spaces, and reviewed our own experience as designers and planners, we reached some definite conclusions. The result of this collaborative exploration, *Public Space*, takes a firm position on the most important values that public space can serve, and on the processes of design and management that can best further those values. We intend that the book go beyond a scholarly presentation of what is currently known to provide inspiration to all those involved in creating, improving, and managing public spaces.

The particular blend of historical, social scientific, and practical knowledge evident in *Public Space* mirrors the interdisciplinary skills and experiences of its authors. Rivlin and Stone are environmental psychologists. Rivlin has consulted on design projects, and Stone is also a practicing planner. Carr is an architect and an urban and landscape designer. Francis is a landscape architect, researcher, and teacher. All four share a long-standing interest in environmental psychology. The book was conceived while the authors were engaged in collaborative teaching and research at the City University of New York doctoral program in environmental psychology.

The overall theory, purpose, structure, and content of the book were jointly determined, with each author taking responsibility for particular chapters. In general, Leanne Rivlin, Andrew Stone, and Mark Francis surveyed the social scientific research and historical studies that form the basis of Chapters 2 through 6. Stephen Carr and Mark Francis collaborated on the critique of present practice, which informs Chapter 1, and on the ideas for a better approach in Chapters 7 and 8. Rivlin, Stone, and Carr jointly worked out ideas presented in Chapter 6.

While working together over a long period of time there has been ample opportunity for cross-fertilization and, by now, there are bits of all of us in all chapters. In final form, Chapter 1 was written by Francis and Carr; Chapter 2 by Rivlin; Chapter 3 by Stone with contributions from Francis and Rivlin; Chapters 4 and 5 by Stone and Rivlin with input from Francis; Chapter 6 by Rivlin and Stone, with contributions from Carr; and Chapter 7, 8, and 9 by Carr, with suggestions from all. Illustrations were jointly selected by Carr and Francis. Final production was coordinated by Francis.

This book would not have been possible without the support and assistance of many organizations and individuals. The National Endowment for the Arts provided funding for our background research and the documentation of case studies. Our own institutions – the Cambridge, Mas-

sachusetts, design firm of Carr, Lynch, Hack and Sandell; the Department of Environmental Design at the University of California, Davis; the Environmental Psychology Program at the City University of New York; and the Trust for Public Land were generous in providing free time for this pursuit and in other significant ways. Lyn Lofland reviewed an early draft of the manuscript and made useful suggestions for improvements. The editors for this Cambridge University Press series, Irwin Altman and Daniel Stokols, were encouraging, thoughtful, and challenging in their most valuable comments on a late draft of the manuscript. Elizabeth March assisted with the case studies in Boston and Washington, D.C., helped us greatly with our early definitions of the dimensions, and, in the process, sharpened our thinking. Mary Naki, Marti Martino, Joe Fajen, Anne Marie Sadowski, and Beth Meres typed the many manuscript drafts with skill and good humor. Tom Frye assisted with preparing the illustrations.

We appreciate our readers' interest and invite their comments. We know that this would have been a better work if carried out in dialogue with you, and we hope to learn from your responses. In the continuing process of making and remaking the human environment, many conversations are needed and many voices must be heard.