

Public and Private Places

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Public and Private Places

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**Jack L. Nasar
Barbara B. Brown**

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Introduction

The transformation of physical spaces into meaningful places involves an array of people, actions and experiences. How this occurs in public and private settings and how these settings merge or separate provided the theme for EDRA27/1996. Places for individuals and groups often serve to include some, exclude others. Further, boundaries between public and private are being redrawn, renegotiated, and re-conceptualized. How does publicness and privateness work for or against the identity and interests of members of society? How does the tension between public and private change over time? How do the issues of public and private become manifest in our policies, beliefs, buildings and actions? As the papers and abstracts will show, public and private are categories of meaning that explicitly tie together social and physical processes and vary across levels of society, from individuals to families, to communities and society. The ideas of public and private are codified in laws and customs, yet ever changing with new designs and social forms. As such, they make particularly provocative themes in times of social and cultural change.

The call for proposals attracted approximately 350 proposals for sessions, papers and design projects. In the proceedings, the accepted proposals appear in one of four sections: 1) Invited papers, 2) Peer-reviewed papers, 3) Abstracts of sessions, and 4) Abstracts of presentations. As we included only those abstracts that arrived in the correct form by the deadline, the proceedings may not include abstracts of all conference presentations.

Following a request from the EDRA Board of Directors, this year's proceedings has a new feature. It opens with a distinguished set of invited papers that relate to the conference theme, keynote and plenary sessions, new directions, or broad area of interest.

The EDRA27/1996 Keynote Speaker, architect/planner Peter Calthorpe, questions past models of urban and suburban development and proposes instead new models that strive to be environmentally sound, economically diverse, and socially progressive. A leading advocate of what is broadly referred to as the new urbanism, Calthorpe contends that the suburbs "have come to represent and facilitate the privatization of our lives in social form, in political priorities, and in physical character" (1983, p. 37). His focus on mixed use, transit-oriented developments is intended to "reestablish and reinforce the public domain" (1983, p. 15), especially by

remaking the traditional town to fit new realities. This design/planning movement addresses fundamental issues of how individuals and communities define public and private places; perhaps because of the important questions the movement addresses it has received widespread media coverage, including *Consumer Reports* (May 1996) and *Newsweek* (May 1995). Salt Lake City is an appropriate context for focusing on these issues, as a heritage of a strong community fabric is increasing pressured by rapid growth.

Many developers use the term new urbanism to market their development, but what exactly is neo-traditional planning or the new urbanism? The opening paper, by Christoforidis, provides a thorough description and overview of the historical precedents and characteristics of development under the rubric of the new urbanism. The second paper also examines a public private issue in relation to community. The architect/planner, Oscar Newman, presents a detailed description of his EDRA26/1995 keynote speech, in which he spoke about three projects, one involving street closings to prevent crime and improve community, another involving scattered-site affordable housing and the third involving a defensible space design for a homeless shelter. This article is followed by an interview with Newman by Karen Franck, which not only gets a broader picture of the street-closing work, gated communities, but also includes a pointed critique of the new urbanism.

Growing from intensive sessions at previous conferences, the next paper, by Gary Gumpert and Susan Drucker, discusses the ascendancy of the private realm and the challenge of designing public cyberspace. Then, Tetlow's EDRA94 Plenary speech addresses knowledge and research needed by the interior design profession. Finally, Randy Hester, a leader in participatory design, revisits participatory design and planning, providing various snapshots of the history, developments and changes in citizen participation. He argues for reinventing the process to support "local participation with a view."

The peer-reviewed papers follow. Arranged in four sections, they address general Public/Private Issues, Private Places, Public/Private Boundaries, Public Places and Research and Problem Solving Methods.

With regard to issues, Schneekloth opens the section with an inquiry into the notion of public and private, the essential malleability and ambiguity of the

concepts, and our emphasis on the private often at a cost to the public (or community) space. Struglia discusses the ways in which Jane Jacobs opened the way for participatory methods, alternative viewpoints, concern for the needs of users (particularly women) and mixed use development (the form of development now advocated by the new urbanists). The Private Places section opens with three papers relevant to Jacobs' concern for women (Alder, Smith) and children (Wright). Other papers turn to other aspect of the meaning of and response to private objects and places (Schwarz, Brent, and Berry; Devlin et al.; Oseland and Raw). The next set of papers extend to the boundaries between private and public spaces, touched on earlier by Schneekloth. Dealing with visual privacy in Islamic societies (Al-Kodmany), physical measures for security in Brazil (Reis and Lay), and exurbanites' preferences in the U.S. (Szczygiel), they show some convergence on the importance of physical barriers, such as those proposed in Newman's invited paper.

Two papers discuss public places. Sivakumaran discusses child play and development and Mackintosh comments on homeowner efforts to discourage public use on "public" waterfront walkways. Although we know about territorial markers, we know less about ways to ensure that a space remain public.

The final section of refereed papers focuses on methods. Bardwell uses case studies of successes to suggest a framework for explaining successes in environmental problem solving. Stamps discusses the relevance of using effect sizes to evaluate how well design review interventions work. Georgiou and Carspecken show how the merging of Barker's concept of behavior settings with Carspecken's 5-stage qualitative approach can illuminate the cultural conditions and meanings behind the behavior circuitry. Rounding out Tetlow's comments about designers' needs from researchers, Kaplan discusses the ways in which appropriate conceptualization, sampling, tracking and dissemination can make small studies effective for practical concerns. Lopez Lena and Flores Pérez presents citation research to identify directions and productivity in the field of environmental design research as seen in *Environment and Behavior*.

Although we organized the papers into discrete categories, they cut across this simple organization referring to one another and to the broader theme of the public/private space. The abstracts of sessions and presentations (in alphabetical order by author) supplement the perspective offered by the refereed papers. The proceedings do not provide final answers to the questions about the public/private realm posed in the call for papers, but the presentations do highlight

the role and importance of physical boundary regulation in the public/private.

We are very grateful to people who submitted proposals, reviewed papers, attended the conference, and helped in other ways. The front cover and index lists many of your names. Thank you.

Barbara Brown, University of Utah
Jack L. Nasar, The Ohio State University

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