



The Street: A Quintessential Social Public Space

By Vikas Mehta



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Received the Environmental Design Research Association's 2014 Place Book Award

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Good cities are places of social encounter. Creating public spaces that encourage social behavior in our cities and neighborhoods is an important goal of city design. One of the cardinal roles of the street, as public space, is to provide a setting for sociability.

How do we make sociable streets? This book shows us how these ordinary public spaces can be planned and designed to become settings that support an array of social behaviors. Through carefully crafted research, *The Street* systematically examines people's actions and perceptions, develops a comprehensive typology of social behaviors on the neighborhood commercial street and provides a thorough inquiry into the social dimensions of streets.

Vikas Mehta shows that sociability is not a result of the physical environment alone, but is achieved by the relationships between the physical environment, the land uses, their management, and the places to which people assign special meanings.

Scholars and students of urban design, planning, architecture, geography and sociology will find the book a stimulating resource. The material is also directly applicable to practice and should be widely read by professional urban designers, planners, architects, and others involved in the design, planning, and implementation of commercial streets.

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Editorial Review

Review

Mehta's description of the street as social space is a welcome reminder to those who see it simply as pattern or movement channel. The book is required reading for all who want more livable cities. ?
Sidney Brower, Professor Emeritus, School of Architecture, Planning & Preservation, University of Maryland

A readable and engaging people-focused book about high streets ? *Marc Furnival, Urban Design, Issue 128, Autumn 2013*

With his fine-grained analysis of the design and use of three Massachusetts streets, Vikas Mehta reveals the particular qualities of road way, sidewalk and building frontage that together create vibrant public spaces – for people and for businesses. ? *Karen A. Franck, Professor, School of Architecture and Department of Humanities, New Jersey Institute of Technology*

This important book returns designers' and policy-makers' attention back to the street as a place of social, economic, and cultural exchange. Using empirical observation and survey methods in the tradition of Lynch, Whyte, and Gehl, urban designer Vikas Mehta defines factors associated with socially successful, multi-use streets. They range from seating and shade (crucial) to economic policy to support the critical ingredient of independent, speciality businesses that add cultural and visual interest. Required reading for anyone concerned with re-animating the public realm of the city. ?
Robin C. Moore, Professor of Landscape Architecture, College of Design, North Carolina State University

A fresh take... [Mehta] conducted user interviews and performed multiple regression analysis on his frontage variables to determine the relative contribution of each to social activity. I cannot do justice to this full-length book in a short column, but I can say from experience that the book goes well with a glass of merlot while seated at an outdoor cafe. ? *Reid Ewing, Journal of the American Planning Association*

From the Back Cover

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[...] few books on urban design cover the details of social behaviour, and even fewer do so with reference to the street. And this is exactly what Mehta aims to do in this book: provide readers with the tools to create 'sociable streets'. -- Iris Levin, Southgate Institute, Flinders University, Australia, in the Australian Planner

About the Author

Vikas Mehta, PhD, is the Fruth/Gemini Chair, the Ohio Eminent Scholar of Environment/Urban Design and Associate Professor at the School of Planning, College of Design, Architecture, Art and Planning at the University of Cincinnati.

Users Review

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Gregory McCormick:

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