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Book Reviews

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BOOK REVIEWS

Gehen: Plädoyer für das Leben in de Stadt (Walking: In Defense of the Life in the City). By Dietrich Garbrecht. Weinheim, West Germany: Julius Beltz, 1981, 232 pp.

This essayistic, narrative, argumentative book seeks to improve possibilities for pedestrians in cities. It attempts to explain comprehensively the importance of pedestrians to city life, defending their rights against the motorist and establishing rules for interpersonal behavior on streets. It also describes the everyday occasions for walking that arise in every person's life before it briefly sketches the historical development of the sidewalk. The second half of this book is programmatic and exposes the author's ideology and concept of a continuous network of walkways that would cross streets without breaks or steps. This is part of the concept of adaptation of the urban environment to the needs of pedestrians. Automobile traffic would be reduced by making use of the car more difficult. Although Garbrecht presents these programmatic issues in an argumentative fashion, they are normative rather than the results of empirical research.

The book is not based on evidence from scientific experiments, because that was not the author's intent: He sees the necessity for polemics and political action rather than for scientific argument. His book, however, is difficult to follow, because he relies on words alone to describe what could be more effectively presented visually.

Unfortunately, environmental psychologists will not derive much pleasure from reading this book. Even if some readers are not disappointed to discover that the book is not based on empirical research, they might at least prefer more arguments from environmental psychologists in favor of greater emphasis on pedestrians. Although the book contains an impressive reference section, many of the more important contributions of environmental psychologists or other environmental researchers are not cited. So the author creates the impression that psychology and sociology are less relevant to improving the walkability of our towns.

This is a great pity, because writing this book presented the chance to compile all the different and fascinating approaches in the field, of which I highlight only a few:

- Chris Alexander's timeless patterns concerning human movement in built environments;
- Bernhard Rudolfsky's historic perspective on the development of streets and sidewalks;

- Gordon S. Cullen's discoveries of the beauty of environmental perception in urban outdoor spaces that can be experienced by walking around the buildings in city streets;
- research on aspects of mental mapping that showed the significant impact of anxiety and motivation on the perception of closeness, distance, and accessibility in towns;
- Amos Rapoport's plea for the right mix of complexity, choice, and diversity of streets, walkways, arcades, and so forth in *Human Aspects of Urban Form*;
- Venturi's lesson from Las Vegas where impact on architectural significance is related to the difference between walking and driving;
- Jane Jacob's classic, explaining the importance of social control of streets;
- Oscar Newman's "defensible spaces," a concept that includes streets and other spaces for walking;
- the work of Andrew Seidel, Wolfgang Preisler, and others with wayfinding experiments, cognitive mapping, or orientation problems of the blind;
- Erving Goffman's approach, which includes body movement as part of the body language in human interaction.

This list could be continued endlessly to show what the evaluative, comparative, and imaginative book required by environmental researchers could have contained. Maybe some future author will take a chance and write such a book?

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Accommodating the Pedestrian: Adapting Towns and Neighborhoods for Walking and Bicycling. By Richard K. Untermyer. New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1984, xi and 232 pp., ill., index, \$34.50, 8¾ x 11 inches.

Untermyer undertakes to provide design professionals and other decision makers with a down-to-earth, practical guide for converting existing automobile-dominated urban areas into bicycle and pedestrian-oriented neighborhoods and cities. Based primarily on his personal observation, experience, and professional predilections, Untermyer lists the presumed "needs" of pedestrians/bicyclists and