

Book Review:

Public Space: Notes on Why it Matters, What We Should Know, and How to Realize its Potential

By *Vikas Mehta*

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In Vikas Mehta's new book, *Public Space: Notes on Why it Matters, What We Should Know, and How to Realize its Potential*, he builds on his significant scholarly contributions to understanding the social, political and physical complexities of public space. Dr. Mehta approaches public space from a deep disciplinary grounding in planning, urban design, sociology and architecture and his experience as Professor of Urban Design, the Fruth/Gemini Chair and Ohio Eminent Scholar of Urban/Environmental Design at the School of Planning, College of DAAP, at the University of Cincinnati.

The central premise of the book is to capture in one conversation the diverse disciplinary ways of understanding and knowing public space conversation. The book can be read straight through or slowly over time picking up sections in random order. With an A5 format (~4"x6") the book is 'approachable,' circumventing the heft of a college textbook. The viewer is drawn in by the cover with bright green block text on a black background. The simplicity of the cover conceals the visual complexity and richness that pulls the reader through the pages. The combination of disciplinary concepts is constructed through a diverse display of descriptive text, diagrammatic symbols, sketches, typographic hierarchy, graphic page design and color blocking. The page layouts make following the author's intended flow natural and creates space for pause and reflection. Each section is an approachable self-contained dialogue, like moving from conversation to conversation at a party with planning theorists, sign makers, and economists; landscape architects, historians, and social activists; architects, psychologists, and politicians; legal scholars, business owners and artists. Through the lively debate, readers are encouraged to broaden their understanding, or be gently reminded of how disciplinary

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Figure 1 /

Example diagram from *Public Spaces*.



