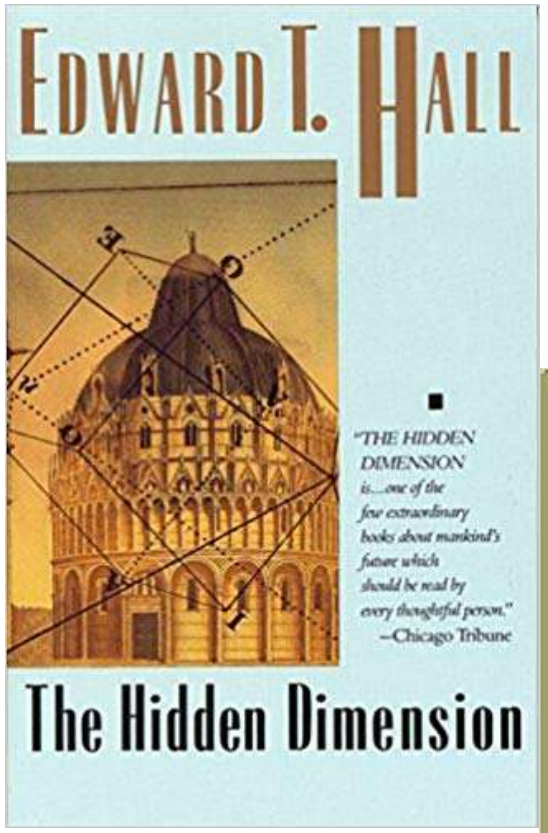
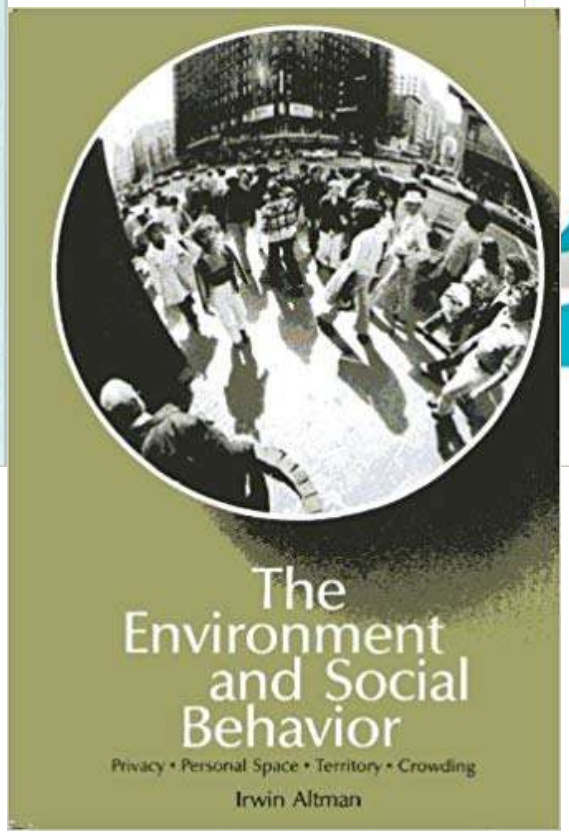
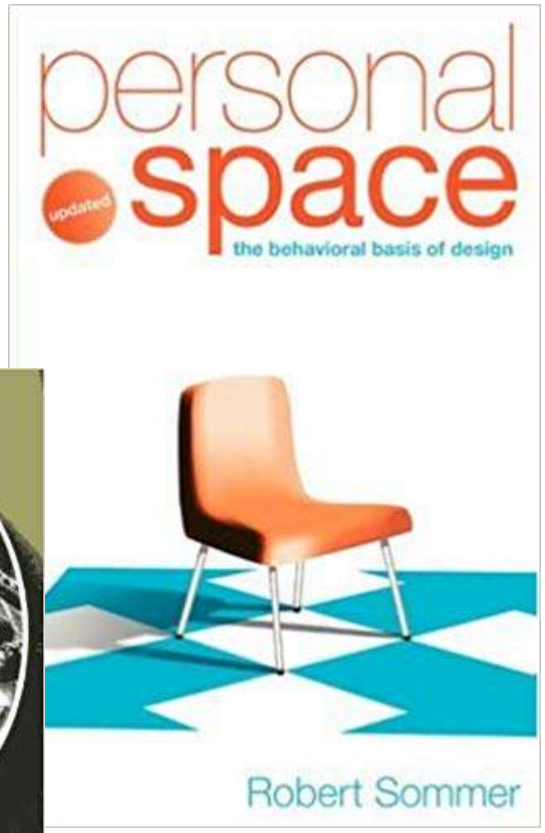
# Psychology in Architecture

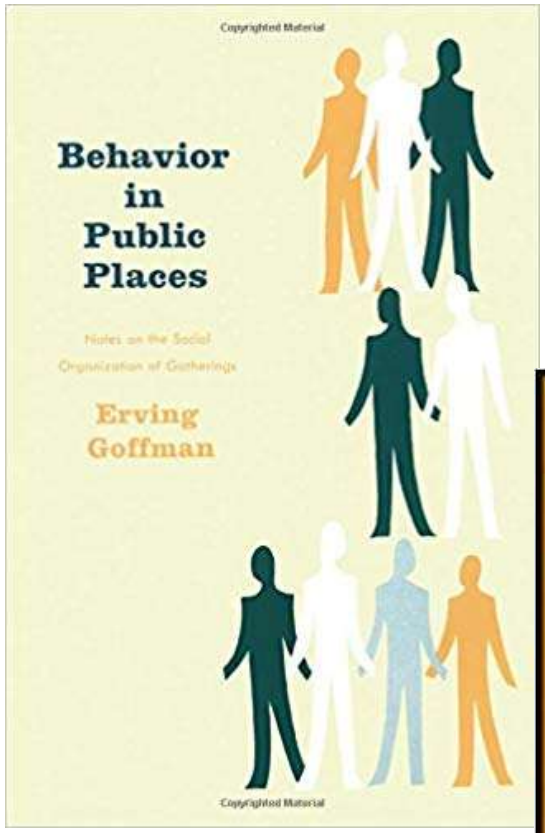
Richard Jedon

25 / 03 / 2025


EDWARD T. HALL
"THE HIDDEN DIMENSION is...one of the few extraordinary books about mankind's future which should be read by every thoughtful person."
—Chicago Tribune
The Hidden Dimension


The Environment and Social Behavior
Privacy • Personal Space • Territory • Crowding
Irwin Altman


personal space
updated
the behavioral basis of design
Robert Sommer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Behavior in Public Places
Notes on the Social Organization of Gatherings
Erving Goffman
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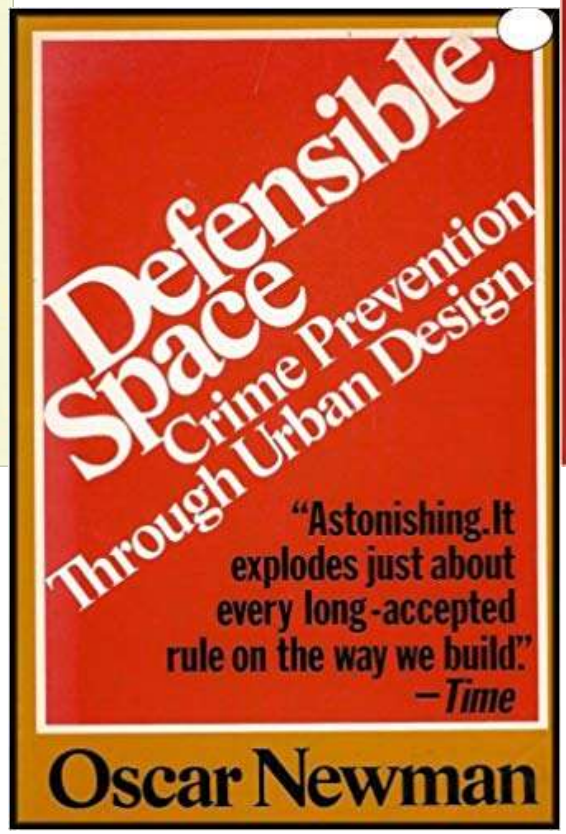
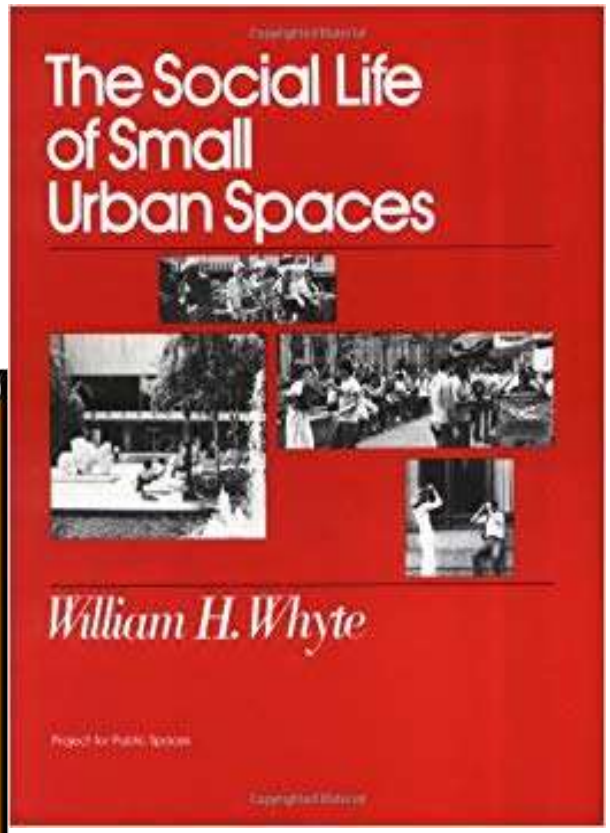

Defensible Space
Crime Prevention Through Urban Design
"Astonishing. It explodes just about every long-accepted rule on the way we build."
—Time
Oscar Newman


The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces
William H. Whyte

# Territoriality

**Territoriality** can be defined as a **boundary regulation mechanism** that involves **marking an area or place** and identifying it as belonging to an individual or group (Altman, 1975)

**Ownership** ranges from having actual ownership over a space (being the legal landowner) to having perceived control over (parts of) the space (like the seat and table in a train)

# Three types of territories (Altman & Chemers, 1980)

**Primary territories:**

Most important to people; include all spaces that are owned or controlled on a more permanent basis (e.g., a child's bedroom, one's house).

**Secondary territories:**

Moderately important to people; include semi-public spaces may be permanent or temporary; more often shared with others (e.g., a locker at the swimming pool, one's office desk)

**Public territories:**

Areas open to almost anyone (e.g., park, shopping center, side road).

# Personalization

**Identity:** Workplace personalization helps employees to develop a workplace identity. When there is no real possibility to do so, employees may devise substitutes or “proxies” for lost identity markers as a means of affirming their workplace identities. (Elsbach, 2003)

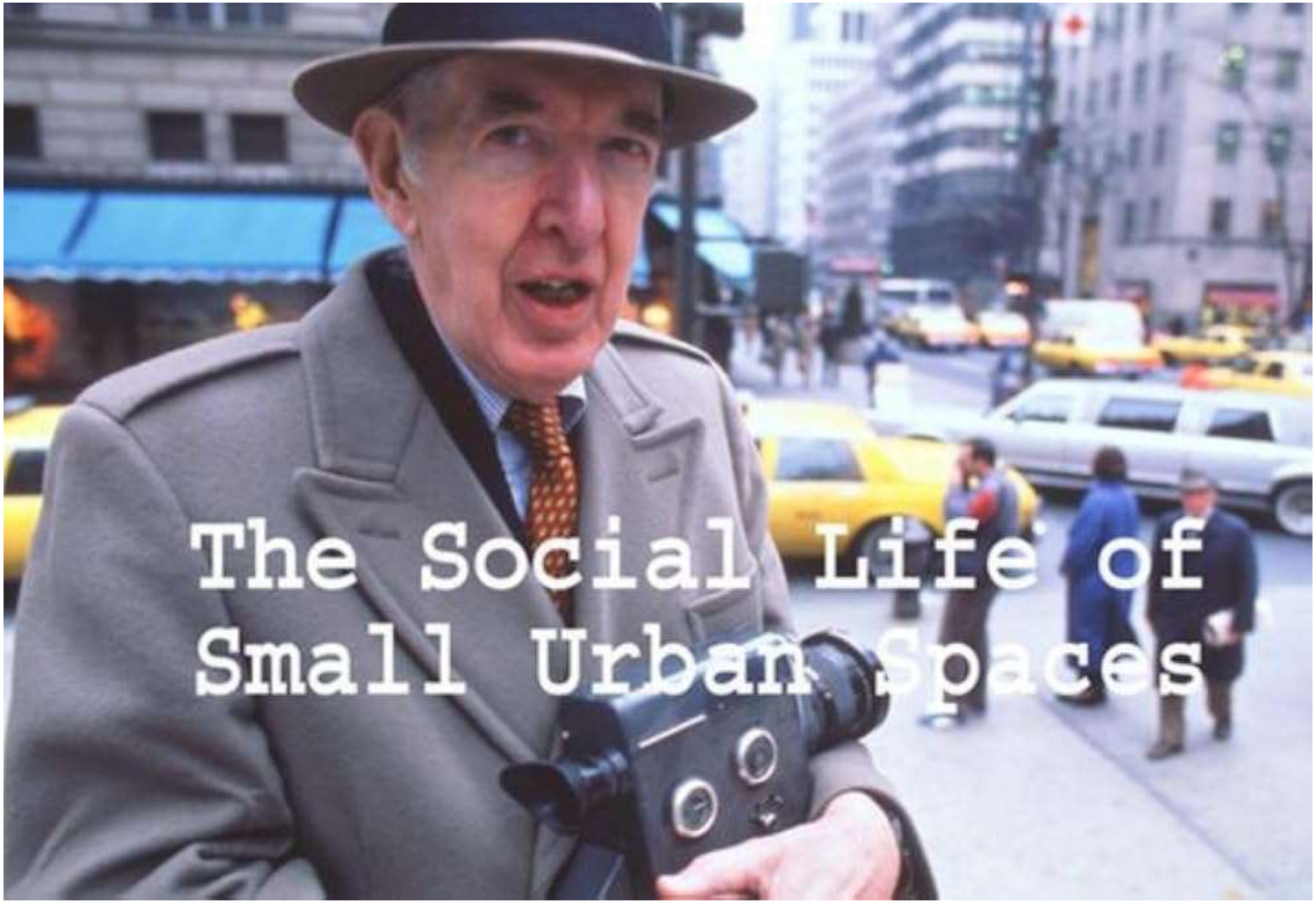
Emotional: “personalization is used as an unconscious outlet of emotions and to provide specific and concrete stimuli. It acts as reflexive communication and as indication of individuals and their relationship with the organization, of their organizational identity” (Scheiberg, 1990)

Companies that allow more personalization have a more positive organizational climate, a more positive social climate, greater levels of employee morale, and reduced turnover (Wells, 2000)

# Sociopetal vs. Sociofugal arrangements

# Space organizes interaction

# William H. Whyte



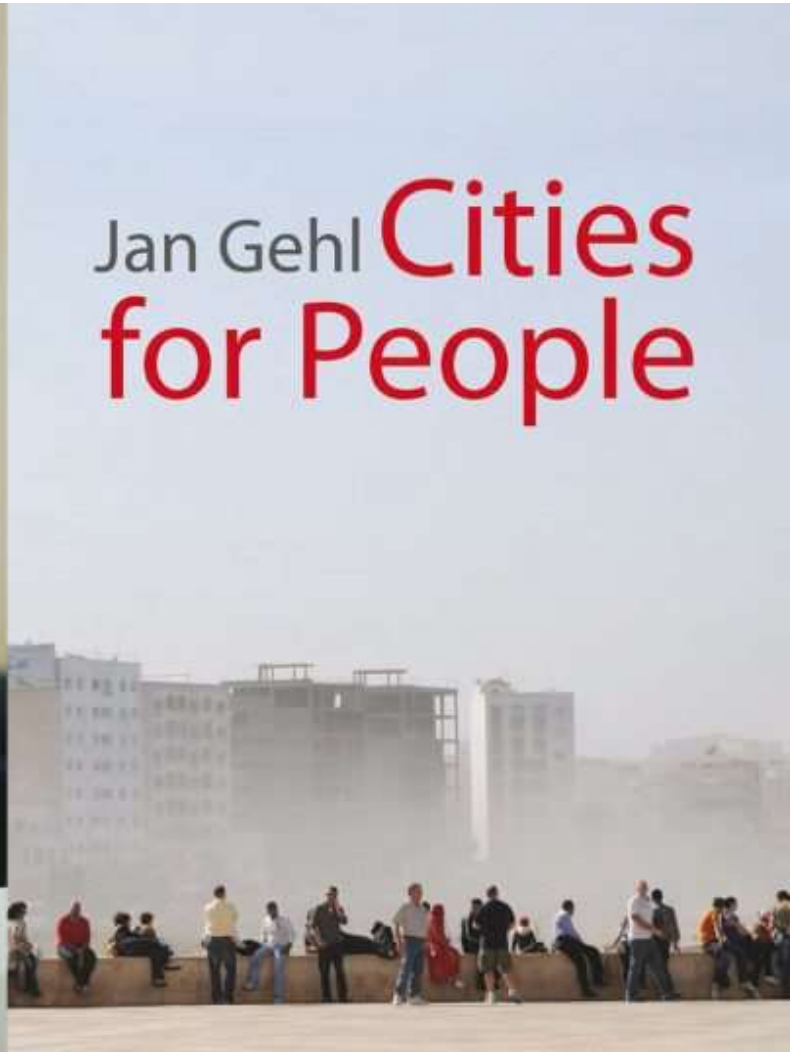
# Six general principles explaining the sociality of spaces

1. **Presence, visibility & visual contact:** opportunities for meeting others
   - Layout: Space syntax - integration
2. **Content for conversation:** food for thought
   - 'The favourite places to sit or stop for a conversation were those that were close to a flux of passers-by' (Whyte). Most people enjoy sociability, both passively, seeing others and being seen, and actively, taking part in encounters.
3. **A sense of safety and security**
   - The majority of 'long duration activities' occur in the 'soft edges' of residential streets
   - The presence and quality of semiprivate space is related to neighbourhood attachment

# Six general principles explaining the sociality of spaces

4. **Personal information and ownership**
5. **Comfort and aesthetics:** places to linger
    - Places may further enhance socializing because they are interesting to look at, and attract people aesthetically
    - They can also influence length of stay when lingering is facilitated by comfortable climate (light, warmth, sounds), food and seating arrangements
6. **Control**
    - Freedom of choice and perceived control are key to processes of privacy and social interaction.

# Jan Gehl



# Personal space

- Sommer (1969): "an area with an invisible boundary surrounding the person's body into which intruders may not come"
- Personal space is a portable territory

- Goffman (1971): "the space surrounding an individual within which an entering other causes the individual to feel encroached upon, leading him to show displeasure and sometimes to withdraw"
- A violation of personal space results in increased arousal

# Interpersonal distance as a communication act
# Edward T. Hall

- **Proxemics:** The study of how humans use interpersonal distance as a means of communication
- By keeping a certain distance between yourself and an interaction partner, he or she, as well as other observers, are informed about the nature of your relationship

- Hall wrote several books on this topic including:
  - The silent language
  - The hidden dimension

# Privacy as process
# Irwin Altman's theory

- In environmental psychology the definition by Margulis (1977) is often used: "*Privacy, as a whole or in part, represents control over transactions between person(s) and other(s), the ultimate aim of which is to enhance autonomy and/or to minimize vulnerability*"
- Privacy seen as a dialectic and dynamic boundary regulation process: Withdrawing from social interactions & withholding information is part of the same **process of regulating interactions / information exchange**
- It incorporates and explains many of the ideas and empirical observations in personal space, territoriality, and crowding research

# Privacy Regulation Theory

- At a given moment in time, each person requires and aims to achieve an appropriate amount of social interaction and exchange (so-called desired privacy). Sometimes more than at other times.
- Achieving an optimal level of social interaction and exchange is not an end in itself, but is required for other tasks:
  - Recovery from stress
  - Contemplation
  - Self evaluation / social comparison
  - Having an intimate encounter
  - Getting one's work done
  - Having a private conversation
  - Engaging in illegal activities
- Ultimately it serves the formation and conservation of identity and the self

# Privacy Regulation Theory

- Altman distinguishes several behavioral mechanisms that are involved in privacy regulation (i.e., optimizing social exchange)
  - Verbal (e.g., asking people to be more quiet)
  - Personal space (e.g., to keep people outside the intimate distance)
  - Interpersonal distance (e.g., moving away from a person)
  - Territoriality (e.g., marking one's territory)
  - Cultural mechanisms (e.g., social norms)
- Often more than a single behavior is required: If closing the door and asking people to be more quiet does not help, then you might consider to go studying somewhere else.

# Overcrowding vs. Overstaffing

# Crowding

- In environmental psychology, the term crowding is used in a different manner than in everyday speech - crowding does not mean getting together in a crowd (i.e., a large number of people)
- The term density is used to denote the number of people on a certain area
- Crowding is defined as an experiential state which results from the negative effects of density becoming salient to a person.

# Crowding

- Crowding (and/or density) has several negative effects on humans:
  - Disliking of other people and the environment
  - Withdrawal from social participation
  - Decreased pro-social behavior (e.g., helping behavior)
  - Increased aggression
  - Decreased task performance
  - Stress and related (health)
  - Decreased cognitive development of children