

The Experience of Place: A New Way of Looking at and Dealing with our Radically Changing Cities and Countryside By Anthony Hiss

Why do some places--the concourse of Grand Central Terminal or a small farm or even the corner of a skyscraper--affect us so mysteriously and yet so forcefully? What tiny changes in our everyday environments can radically alter the quality of our daily lives? The Experience of Place offers an innovative and delightfully readable proposal for new ways of planning building and managing our most immediate and overlooked surroundings. Much of the idea revolves around creating public value and organizing development patterns in ways that create healthy natural social economic and political places that feed our underlying biological inclinations. While planners and developers have much to gain (if they take the time to concern themselves with a scale beyond the myopic profit driven motive) Hiss offers the individual reader an equally refreshing experience. I have often tried to explain the experience of place and while Hiss doesn't do it entirely the book reaffirms for me that these feelings are not simply of my own creation but may have deeper physiological explanations. Paperback Hiss's unique contribution in The Experience of Place is his emphasis on individuals' firsthand encounters with their everyday built environments and how taking this specific view of such environments can alter how communities perceive their relationships to the natural world to other communities and to members of their own communities. He proposes that thoughtfully-planned built-environments fundamentally expand their users' consideration from one or two pragmatic functions to a range of possible uses (social emotional and imaginative). Hiss argues that spaces designed to intrigue and attract users (through a range of techniques that vary according to the larger social and geographical context) yield qualitatively different responses than do spaces designed from strictly commercial or utilitarian perspectives. The book is about discovering which types of built-environments produce optimal outcomes both concrete and intangible for the people who live and work in and around them and explaining how planners are creating such spaces. Hiss describes efforts to collect and interpret data on human attitudes toward their surroundings explains historical trends in American sprawl and development and cites many insightful passages from older works on creating communal spaces that promote the wellbeing of the people who use them. As a Pennsylvania resident I found it especially fascinating to learn about the Market Street Marshalls (a business-group-led street-cleaning group) and a protest of a thousand Amish for a new 'superhighway' proposal that would have sliced through the Amish countryside. Paperback As a Brit who does not understand very much about the American planning system there was some very interesting albeit fairly outdated parts to this book which provided some interesting insight. Even though the book is now somewhat dated and some of its hopes have not fully come to fruition I valued it as a reminder to maintain and enhance my own sense of connection to place. the only section that was sort of adorable was a part about the importance of designing multiple map views so an understanding of the vision of development on a space can be seen. Paperback I'm baffled that it took me forever to finish reading this as it's really quite a wonderful and enjoyable book dealing with our sense of place and looks at ways architects urban planners ecologists and so forth can create sustainable appealing community--it considers urban spaces suburban and village rural; parks office buildings you-name-it. The Experience of Place: A New Way of Looking at and Dealing with our Radically Changing Cities and Countryside



The physical experience of place is an inescapable phenomenon: Yes the cognition of such experiences is often ignored suppressed or mis-attributed, Hiss's book is an attempt to call our attention back to these sensational experiences both for our individuals' sake and for the benefit of the public at large. Examining the differential experiences of the city and countryside the book culminates in advocating for a 'regional approach' to planning: An idea that is much more comprehensive than I am willing to digest in one sitting but enticing enough to warrant further exploration: Exploring what he labels simultaneous perception the author calls readers' attention to the everyday phenomena that are all too often taken for granted, Posing and answering questions such as why some places seem inviting and bustling while others are uncomfortable and go unused. Throughout the book in the examples Hiss uses to support his argument he insists on the primacy of the experience of individuals who routinely pass through familiar built environments, He has a special gift for evoking places in such a way that his personal attachments are absent leaving just the perceptions prompted by their material features and layout, He lets spaces affect him as he traverses them not pausing to focus on any one thing long yet registering his responses as they occur. Paperback This book is a collection of lesser-repeated anecdotes about the state of our cities our countryside and where those places meet: Hiss frequently cited examples of urban planning in the late 1980s. Phrases like 'urban sprawl' or 'global warming' seemed just out of reach but you can see these ideas beginning to take on newfound importance: I dug into the NY Times archives and found neither the Marshalls nor the superhighway exists today. Paperback Interesting passages about Olmsted partnership landscapes and development that preserves the character of the places where we live, A few sections did drag on a little but I thought the parts about German migrants hanging out in train stations and the last farm in New York were extremely insightful: Paperback This was a pleasant and informative read about some topics in geography that I enjoy- urban and landscape planning sense of place thoughtful and responsible development, I particularly enjoyed the reflections on the charm of urban landscapes that tap into a sense of awe and channel inner human instincts about perception and movement. I also appreciated encountering examples from areas in New England with which I am familiar about how to balance development with preservation of beautiful working landscapes, Paperback Using New York City locales as examples the author discusses how our working environment (buildings parks streets offices) affect us physically and psychologically, I was especially taken with the ideas about how much space people need around themselves while conversing: The book is a bit dated now but his conclusions are still valid: Paperback Picked this up somewhere for 50 cents and wasn't sure about it (would it be out-moded?) and was pleasantly surprised. Learned new things found other things I wanted to learn more about (Mary Cassatt's brother was a PA railroad president and designed some great innovations for the rails). Paperback Urban/rural planning that supports growth and quality of life, At times it seemed a bit dated yet many of the concepts in this book are still ignored by suburban sprawls and disappearing farmland: I plan to include reading(s) from it in my Modern Architecture course next fall. Well thank goodness for GIS and computers. Recommended either way. Oh the strip malls never should have come into existence. We still haven't smartened up. We really can do better. Paperback.