



Rethinking Urban Parks: Public Space and Cultural Diversity

Setha Low, Dana Taplin, Suzanne Scheld

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Urban parks such as New York City's Central Park provide vital public spaces where city dwellers of all races and classes can mingle safely while enjoying a variety of recreations. By coming together in these relaxed settings, different groups become comfortable with each other, thereby strengthening their communities and the democratic fabric of society. But just the opposite happens when, by design or in ignorance, parks are made inhospitable to certain groups of people.

This pathfinding book argues that cultural diversity should be a key goal in designing and maintaining urban parks. Using case studies of New York City's Prospect Park, Orchard Beach in Pelham Bay Park, and Jacob Riis Park in the Gateway National Recreation Area, as well as New York's Ellis Island Bridge Proposal and Philadelphia's Independence National Historical Park, the authors identify specific ways to promote, maintain, and manage cultural diversity in urban parks. They also uncover the factors that can limit park use, including historical interpretive materials that ignore the contributions of different ethnic groups, high entrance or access fees, park usage rules that restrict ethnic activities, and park "restorations" that focus only on historical or aesthetic values. With the wealth of data in this book, urban planners, park professionals, and all concerned citizens will have the tools to create and maintain public parks that serve the needs and interests of all the public.

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