

Directions in Person-Environment Research and Practice

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Preface

The genesis of this book goes back to the 26th annual conference of the Environmental Design Research Association (EDRA), in Boston, March, 1995. Over the years, graduates of the Man-Environment Relations (MER) from the Pennsylvania State University would meet informally at the EDRA conferences. The 1995 conference returned to Boston, the site of the Design Methods Group First International Conference, which was held at MIT in June, 1968 (Moore, 1970), and which prompted a split between the rationalists and the behavioralists in the field and led to the founding of EDRA and its first conference at North Carolina State University (Sanoff & Cohn, 1969). EDRA26 was the fifth EDRA conference organized by an MER graduate. Other organizers and MER graduates include John Archea (EDRA2, 1970), Wolfgang Preiser (EDRA4, 1973), Carole Tiernan (EDRA12, 1981), James J. Potter (EDRA14, 1983), and Jack L. Nasar (EDRA26, 1995, and EDRA27, 1996). MER graduates have also chaired EDRA. John Archea and Ray Studer were founding members of EDRA (June 1968). Archea also served on the EDRA Steering Committee (1969-72), and the Board of Directors as Secretary-Treasurer (1977-78), Chair (1978-80), and member (1980-81). Preiser served on the Board as Vice Chair (1973-74) and Secretary (1975-76). Potter joined the board in 1990 and served as chair (1991-92). Nasar joined the Board in 1995, and served as chair from 1996-1998.

As part of the 1995 conference, Nasar scheduled a formal MER session inviting all MER graduates to attend. It was close to the 25th anniversary of the founding of the MER program. Approximately 25 graduates attended. We recalled our time at MER, early EDRA conferences, and we discussed what we had done over the years and exchanged information on our current research and professional interests and developments. Following the session, we had a less formal gathering over dinner, and it was at this second gathering that the idea of this book was born. From the afternoon discussion, it became apparent that the MER graduates, who had come into the program with varied backgrounds, had also followed very different directions in research and careers upon graduating. Nevertheless, we shared a systematic and holistic philosophy of environmental design research and problem-solving. Though these and similar terms which describe the MER program approach and structure may appear to be overused "buzz word" they truly represent what has become of

the MER graduates since the program started in 1969. We also realized that many of the graduates had become recognized leaders in their subfield in environmental design research. Why not assemble in one book the most significant work and publications which represent the diverse accomplishments of the MER graduates?

A number of the dinner participants became contributors to the book. In addition to the editors Jack L. Nasar (Ph.D., 1979), and Wolfgang F. E. Preiser (Ph. D., 1973), they include Al DeLong (Ph.D., 1972), Romedi Passini (Ph.D., 1977), Richard Titus (Ph.D., 1975), Harry Heft (Ph.D., 1976), Glenn Harris (Ph.D., 1977), Fahriye Sancar (Ph.D., 1977), Dave DeJoy (Ph.D., 1978), William Rohe (Ph.D., 1978), Theodore Newsom (Ph. D., 1980), James J. Potter (Ph.D., 1982), and Janet Mackey Brown (Ph.D., 1983).

We subsequently added a chapter by the late John Archea (Ph.D., 1984), who was among the first seven guinea pigs. Others included Alton DeLong, Asher Derman, Imre Kohn, John Liu, Len Olson, and Wolf Preiser.

Not present at the dinner was the creator and mastermind of the MER program, Ray Studer. Ray was strongly and consistently praised by the graduates for his vision and support. We invited him to write the introduction to this book in the form of a retrospective. Also invited into the project was the author of the epilogue, Robert B. Bechtel, who, in his function as editor of the journal *Environment and Behavior*, has been able to follow the field of environmental design research over the past 28 years. Both the journal and the MER Program started in the same year, and their evolution in the formative years was very much intertwined.

Now, a second generation of environmental design researchers is emerging which will build upon and further develop the directions in environmental design research which the first generation had charted. To that end we dedicate this book to all of those who seek to enhance the quality of the environment with humanistic principles in mind.

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