

## The Invention of Public Space: Designing for Inclusion in Lindsay's New York

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Reviewed May 2021 Pamela Casey, Architecture Archivist, Drawings & Archives, Avery Architectural & Fine Arts Library, pfc2108@columbia.edu



**THE INVENTION OF PUBLIC SPACE**  
DESIGNING FOR INCLUSION IN LINDSAY'S NEW YORK  
MARIANA MOGILEVICH



In *The Invention of Public Space: Designing for Inclusion in Lindsay's New York*, urban historian and editor of *Urban Omnibus*, Mariana Mogilevich explores a series of experimental public space design projects undertaken during New York City Mayor John Lindsay's tenure (1966-1973). Mogilevich sets the scene prior to his election: a heaving metropolis, possibly ungovernable, plagued by high crime, an increasing gap between rich and poor, and new immigrant populations being segregated into racial ghettos. Lindsay campaigned on the idea of a "city in crisis," as well as a "crisis in meaning" when it came to city planning, with Robert Moses's bulldozer tactics for urban renewal being rejected as part of the problem. The team Lindsay assembled was driven by high ideals around citizen participation and new concepts in psychology that prioritized permissiveness and individual creative expression and acknowledged

the impact of the physical environment on one's self-development. New models of design that encouraged freedom, chance, and "happenings" were the result. The book provides an excellent historical overview of a specific period in the city's history through the lens of public space projects and considers the lasting ideological impact of some of the experimental approaches embraced by a new generation of designers, landscape architects, and urban planners.

Some of the names that emerge early in Lindsay's tenure become central figures as the book progresses. Parks commissioner Thomas Hoving made Central Park the epicenter of

programming and policies that focused on avant-garde inspired participatory activities. M. Paul Friedberg's designs feature prominently throughout the book, as does the work of Lawrence Halprin, Richard Meier, J. Max Bond, and the Urban Design Group, and the resonating ideological influences of Jane Jacobs, William H. Whyte, and Oscar Newman. Public spaces designed around affordable housing projects are explored across two chapters, from Jacob Riis Plaza in the Lower East Side to Twin Parks in the Bronx. Later chapters consider the development of vest-pocket parks built and various efforts to pedestrianize Midtown Manhattan. The final chapter considers public space projects on the city's waterfronts, from Harlem to Breezy Point and the Gateway National Recreation Area.

Mogilevich successfully explores how design projects driven by high-minded ideals of spatial politics impacted or even contributed to ongoing racial injustice in the city, and often overlooked the experiences of communities whose lives designers and urbanists were seeking to improve. Extensively researched, this book is rich in primary source research, with notes and an index. The book features many photographs of projects and events, largely in black and white with some color plates, as well as plans, architectural drawings, and advertisements of the time. Appropriate for readers interested in this particular slice of New York City history, as well as urban planning and design, landscape architecture, and historic preservation.