LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE
THE INDIAN PERSPECTIVE

EXPERTS DISCUSS

ROLE OF LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT

LANDSCAPE IN CITY PLANNING

INTEGRATED APPROACH

ROLE OF MULTIPLE AGENCIES
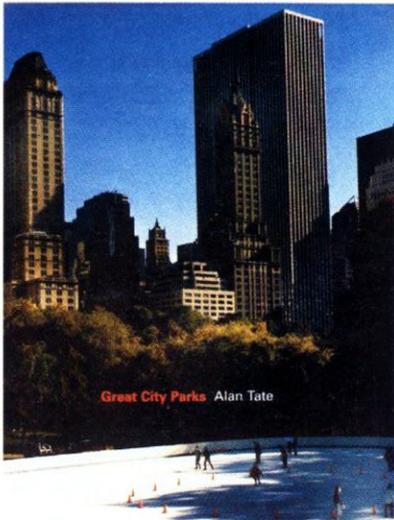
GREAT CITY PARKS

ALAN TATE
Spon Press, London, 2001
Price £49.50

The blurb on the jacket calls *Great City Parks* 'a celebration of some of the finest achievements of landscape architecture in the public realm'. Alan Tate is Head of the Department of Landscape Architecture at the University of Manitoba, Canada, and a former president of Landscape Institute of United Kingdom. He adds that 'the idea of writing a book about parks arose in the early 1980's when the firm I was running for Brian Clouston in Hong Kong was designing the town park for Sha Tin... At that time, there was little documentation of urban parks'. This study was initially intended to cover forty parks in fifteen countries. Unfortunately, the final list of twenty parks only includes European and American parks.

PALEY PARK, NEW YORK

MINNEAPOLIS PARK

Paris; *Parque de Maria Luisa*, Seville; *Birkenhead Park*, Merseyside; Regent's Park, London; *Grant Park*, Chicago; *Stadtapark*, Hamburg; *Landschaftspark* Duisburg-Nord; *Prospect Park*, Brooklyn, New York; *Tiergarten*, Berlin; *Central Park*, New York; *Stanley Park*, Vancouver; *Amsterdamse Bos*, Amsterdam; and the *Minneapolis Park System*.

Each park is examined in terms of the site conditions, reasons for its designation, and the key figures behind the decision to build it. Also examined are its planning and design, spatial structure, circulation system and intended character of the original design concept. Current status of parks is reviewed including its management, how the managing organizations were appointed, and how they canvass the views of the users, how the parks are funded and how they are used.

Alan Tate highlights the 'different approaches to the design, management and funding of parks in different countries and different cities. This is demonstrated by the three parks in Manhattan examined in this study. Paley Park is privately owned and privately managed; Bryant Park is publicly owned but privately managed and entirely privately funded, and Central Park is publicly owned, largely privately financed and managed by a trust.

Great City Parks is a comparative study of twenty significant public parks in fourteen major cities across Western Europe and North America. As a collection they give a clear picture of why parks have been created, how they have been designed, how they have been managed, and what plans are being made for them at the beginning of the twenty first century. Tate notes that 'a fundamental concern of this study has been the question whether there are discernable criteria for "successful" planning design and management of urban parks'.

The twenty parks are documented in ascending order of size. These range from Paley Park (a midget at 390sqm) to the immense Minneapolis Park System (2630 hectare). The parks covered in this book are: *Paley Park*, New York; *Village of Yorkville Park*, Toronto; *Freeway Park*, Seattle; *Bryant Park*, New York; *Parc de Bercy*, Paris; *Parc Andre-Citroen*, Paris; *Parc des Buttes-Chaumont*, Paris; *Parc de la Villette*,

The final section on each park looks at the current plans for them. The study concludes by considering whether there are clear planning, design and management criteria for successful city parks.

Tate quotes J.B. Jackson that 'the picturesque park, open to public...came to represent the impact of three distinct social forces: the urge to improve the living conditions of factory workers..., the urge to bring all classes in close contact with... "natural" environment, and the urge to improve the real estate value of the areas surrounding new parks'.
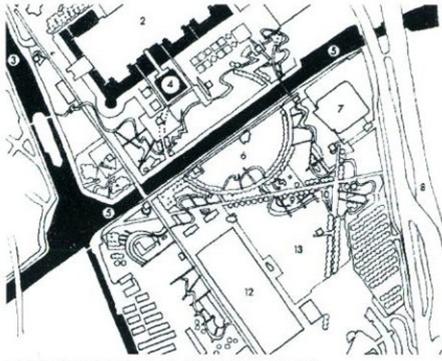
PLAN OF PARC DE LA VILLETTE, PARIS

'Urban Parks in Europe and North America have continued to serve as instruments of social engineering, urban landuse planning and real estate development.

Latterly, they have also started to be revered as 'cultural heritage' both in Europe and in North America. This has coincided with- and may even result from- an increase in numbers of higher income residents living in inner cities. 'There has been a synchronous increase in the use of urban parks. This leads to the challenging question of how to mediate between the demands for preservation of parks as cultural artifacts, demands for them to be managed in 'sustainable' ways, and demands for their use for active recreation- the recurrent triangle of art, ecology and society'.

Galen Cranz, writing in *The Politics of Park Design* (MIT Press, Cambridge Ma. 1982) has been quoted by Tate. She had chronicled parks on the basis of four eras of park design and management in America: the Pleasure Ground (1850-1900), the Reform Park (1900-30), the Recreation Facility (1930-65), and the Open-Space system (from 1965). He adds that 'she subsequently identified a fifth era, or set of intended moral messages - the 'Sustainability' era. This era is characterized by calls for ecological integrity in planting design and for low energy inputs to park construction and management'. 'It has been followed by calls to treat older parks as 'works of landscape art' and to seek to restore them to their 'original' form.

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Project for Public Spaces - PPS is a non-profit technical assistance, research and educational organization with a mission to create and sustain public places that build communities. This is achieved through programs in parks, plazas and central squares; transportation; public buildings and architecture and public markets. Since its foundation in 1975, the organization has worked in over 1000 communities all over the world helping people to grow their public space into vital community places. PPS

helps accomplish changes through a community/place-based approach to planning and decision-making. PPS's "place-making" mission is reinforced on a broader level through three major programs: **the Urban Parks Institute,** an initiative to educate and involve people and promote public/private cooperation in improving urban parks; **the Public Market Collaborative** to further the preservation and establishment of public markets and to assist communities in market development; and **Building Livable Communities** through transportation, an effort to advance the community building capacity of transportation.

The website **www.pps.org**/ is a clearly organized site with lots of useful information including images. Besides its three major programs, the home page further opens to Parks, Plazas & civic squares, Waterfronts, Streets, Transit, Public Markets, Public Buildings & Architecture, Public Arts & Humanities, Rebuilding Local Economies, Safety & Security, Community Health, Sprawl, Schools and Environment.

Of particular interest is the link to the **Urban Parks online** which has heads like Help for your Park, Great Public Spaces, Why people need parks, Understanding park use, Funding, Management, Public / Private partnerships, Programming and Design & Planning. Of these, **Great Public Spaces** has categories like Streets, Markets, Parks, Buildings and, very interestingly - Hall of Shame! Subheads like 'What makes a successful place?', 'Why public spaces fail?', 'Benefits of Places', '11 Principals for creating Great Places', 'Great Parks / Great Cities Awards' and 'Nominate a Place' make useful categories. An easy search with keywords can be used to find Community Places, Markets, Parks, Civic Squares, Waterfronts, Plazas, Trails and Greenways.