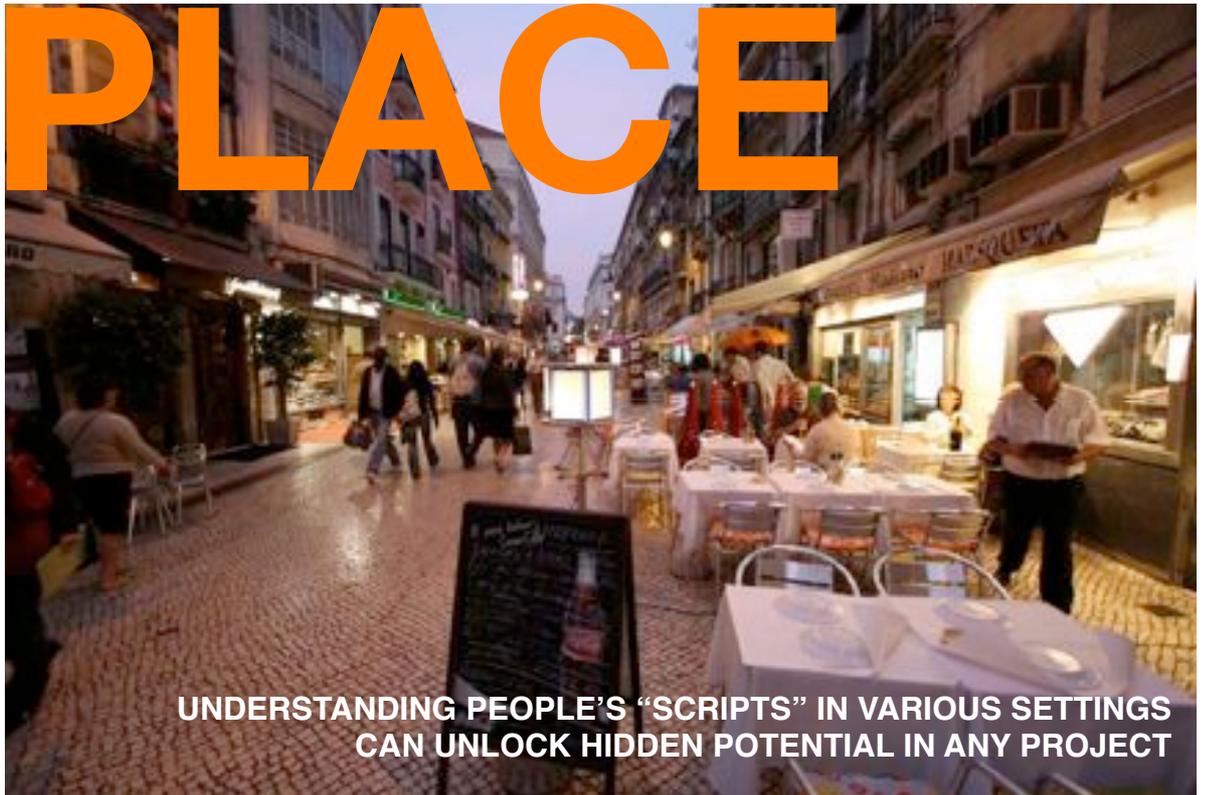


# INTO PLACE



UNDERSTANDING PEOPLE'S "SCRIPTS" IN VARIOUS SETTINGS CAN UNLOCK HIDDEN POTENTIAL IN ANY PROJECT

## THE POTENTIAL

Successful places—places that meet users' needs and create the right emotional tone—are those where physical design and users' psychology blend in harmonious ways. Places that "work" in this sense are more productive, more enjoyable and more appealing. They attract premium tenants, greater audiences, or are simply used more often.

The word "place" can be replaced by any of a long list of words such as plaza, office, house, museum, park, precinct or factory.

Many professions and trades come together to create and shape places. But, in most cases, the focus of their effort is on the physical nature of the place.

### DESIGNING PLACES

Architects, engineers and planners take user behaviour into account when designing places, but often in an aspirational way. They design in the hope that people will use and experience a place in the way that was envisaged during the planning process. There is often little informed input about the reality of users' behaviour and the ways they will respond to and use a place.

Increasingly, "places" are being designed with the goal of being sustainable. The designers try to find physical solutions that minimise some things and maximise others. Typically, energy consumption and materials are targets for minimisation, while productivity, social cohesiveness

and even happiness are targets for maximisation.

People who are specialists in the physical aspects of place creation naturally focus on physical aspects in their planning. In this way we get buildings that resist the rain and bridges that carry traffic without falling down. However, this focus on the "stage"—the physical setting for behaviour—gives too little attention to the "script", the kinds of things that people, the "actors," want to do and experience in a place.

### BEHAVIOUR SETTINGS

At Environmetrics we find it useful not to think about "places" in a purely physical sense but about places as "behaviour settings"—a term that focuses on the way the physical "stage" interacts with the users' aspirations, goals and abilities. This focus on behaviour settings takes account of the ways in which both physical infrastructure and social customs or rules interact



to facilitate or inhibit the things people want to achieve in a place.

Analysing a behaviour setting takes account of the fact that behaviour happens in context and that an important part of the context is the set of plans and expectations people have about what they can and will do in a place and what they will achieve. We call these plans “the script” that people bring to the place.

### INTERACTIONS

Understanding the scripts and psychology of the user (or buyer) is as important as understanding the physical structure of a place if it is to work well.

What happens in any new development, be it an office, house, hospital or theme park, is the outcome of a complex interaction between what has been built (or will be built) and how people will respond to it.

Behaviour settings operate over time. So, understanding how a place will work must take into account the “choreography of use”. This means focussing on the way people allocate time to the behaviours they carry out in a place. How well a

design supports these rhythms is an important factor in shaping the user’s response to the place.

### CREATING PLACES

Understanding whether a new office will increase employee engagement, or whether people can find their way through a new hospital or into



a new museum involves taking account of the physical conditions and the social and psychological factors at play in the situation.

- Planning for “wayfinding” needs to be informed by knowledge of how people look for and interpret cues in the built environment.

- Planning an office design needs to take account of the corporate culture of the business as well as the human factors at play in the workflows and activities of the business.

- Planning a museum needs to take account of the way a visit unfolds and the expectations and needs of the visitors.

- Locating facilities in the public domain needs to be informed by the way people use and often colonise public spaces.

- Planning residential and corporate spaces benefits from post-occupancy reviews of existing examples.

All of these issues draw on the discipline of environmental psychology and environmental psychology is a core skill set of Environmetrics. We have developed tools and research approaches for identifying and understanding the actors and their scripts.

We have brought this knowledge to bear on a diverse and extensive

range of infrastructure projects. Ask us about how we can assist with your project.

### Environmetrics Pty Limited

ABN 61 003 546 192

Post: Locked Bag 2116, North Sydney NSW 2059.

Phone: +612 9954 0455

Mobile +61421 921 861

Email: [rob@environmetrics.com.au](mailto:rob@environmetrics.com.au)  
[www.environmetrics.com.au](http://www.environmetrics.com.au)

