INTERGENERATIONAL CONTACT ZONES

In *Intergenerational Contact Zones*, Kaplan, Thang, Sánchez, and Hoffinan introduce novel ways of thinking, planning, and designing intergenerationally enriched environments. Filled with vivid examples of how ICZs breathe new life into communities and social practices, this important volume focuses on practical descriptions of ways in which practitioners and researchers could translate and infuse the notion of ICZ into their work.

The ICZ concept embraces generation and regeneration of community life, parks, and recreational locations, educational environments, residential settings and family life, and national and international contexts for societal development. With its focus on creating effective and meaningful intergenerational settings, it offers a rich how-to toolkit to help professionals and user groups as they begin to consider ways to develop, activate, and nurture intergenerational spaces.

*Intergenerational Contact Zones* will be essential reading for academics and researchers interested in human development, aging, and society, as well as practitioners, educators, and policy makers interested in intergenerational gathering places from an international perspective.

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INTERGENERATIONAL CONTACT ZONES

Place-based Strategies for Promoting Social Inclusion and Belonging

Edited by Matthew Kaplan, Leng Leng Thang, Mariano Sánchez and Jaco Hoffman
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INTRODUCTION

Matthew Kaplan, Leng Leng Thang, Mariano Sánchez, and Jaco Hoffman

In recent decades, global population ageing and the awareness of age-segregated policies and practices with the undesirable consequences of widening intergenerational gaps between the older and the younger generations have led to a sense of urgency for ways to promote generational connections – towards a society of all generations. On a global scale, there has been an increase in interest, innovation, and dissemination of intergenerational programs and practices. These interventions aim to bring people together in purposeful, mutually beneficial activities which promote greater understanding and respect between generations and contribute to building more cohesive communities … [They are] inclusive, building on the positive resources that the young and old have to offer each other and those around them.

(Beth Johnson Foundation, 2011, p. 4)

The growing intergenerational studies literature has shown that intergenerational programs can have a substantial impact on participants’ knowledge and skills, level of civic involvement, health, arts and recreation pursuits, social relationships, sense of self-fulfillment, and sense of cultural pride and identity (Brabazon & Disch, 1997; Hatton-Yeo & Ohsako, 2000; Kaplan, Henkin, & Kusano, 2002; Kernan & Cortellesi, 2019; Kuehne, 1999; MacCallum et al., 2006; Martin, Springate, & Atkinson, 2010; Morrow-Howell, Hong, McCrary, & Blinne, 2009; Newman, Ward, Smith, Wilson, & McCrea, 1997). Progress has also been made in establishing standards and guidelines for effective practice in the intergenerational field (Larkin & Rosebrook, 2002; Newman & Olson, 1996; Sánchez, Díaz, Sáez, & Pinazo, 2014). Identified competencies needed for professionals working in intergenerational programs include the ability to:
• Work with individuals at many points along the age spectrum.
• Plan age-integrated activities that are developmentally and functionally appropriate for participants.
• Coordinate programs with other community agencies.
• Design effective, sustainable intergenerational programs.
• Be effective at promoting contacts, social relationships, interactions, and bonds between people from different generations.

However, what seems to be lagging is attention to the environment (built, natural, and virtual) and how it has a bearing on program planning, processes, and outcomes. This edited volume aims to draw attention, and contribute to understanding and innovation, to ways in which intergenerational settings that work are created. This goes beyond a focus on formal intergenerational programs. It builds on earlier work focused on the role of physical design and environment in intergenerational engagements. Some examples of recent publications in this domain include Manchester and Facer’s (2017) chapter on re-learning cities for intergenerational exchange, Terroir, Arki_lab, and Simpson’s (2016) report on intergenerational relations in urban space, Arki_lab (2017) guide to design intergenerational urban spaces, Vanderbeck and Worth’s (2015) edited volume on “intergenerational spaces,” an article from Buffel et al. (2014) on the “shared places and spaces” campaign in the northern England city of Manchester, a report from the Generations of Hope Development Corporation (GHDC, 2015) highlighting the role of physical design in their “intentional (intergenerational) neighboring” model, Labit and Dubost’s (2016) review of distinct intergenerational housing schemes in France and Germany, and Emi Kiyota’s Ibasho Café model for creating elder-led community resource and intergenerational connection hubs in areas struck by natural disasters (Kiyota, 2018).

We also note the significance of Generations United’s recent publications on intergenerational shared sites: “All In Together: Creating Places Where Young and Old Thrive” (Generations United, 2018) and “The Best of Both Worlds: A Closer Look at Creating Spaces that Connect Young and Old” (Generations United, 2019). These publications, sponsored by The Eisner Foundation, present profiles of model intergenerational shared sites, highlight ways in which they reduce ageism and remove age-segregating barriers, and provide strategies for boosting the number of intergenerational shared sites.

In this volume, we look to build upon this literature by introducing new ways of thinking, planning, and practice regarding the design of intergenerationally enriched environments. Overall, we intend to help our readers to become more sensitized around the spatial dimension present in any intergenerational endeavor.

What is unique in this book is its specific focus on the new concept of Inter-generational Contact Zones (ICZ) and its potential for inspiring and guiding from inception through to implementation new ideas for creating and enabling settings for desired intergenerational encounters. More simply put, we explore ways in which the ICZ conceptual framework can serve as a tool to help figure
out better, more inclusive and socially smart ways for different generations to live and grow together in ageing societies.

**Background: Concept, Context and History**

Our working definition of ICZ is the following: *Intergenerational Contact Zones serve as spatial focal points for different generations to meet, interact, build relationships (e.g. trust and friendships), and, if desired, work together to address issues of local concern.* ICZ spaces can be found in all types of community settings, including schools, senior centers, retirement communities, parks, taverns, reading rooms, clubhouses, museums, community gardens, environmental education centers, and multi-service community centers.

With its focus on creating effective and meaningful intergenerational settings, the ICZ concept explored and developed throughout this book represents an endeavor to integrate what is often portrayed as separate spheres of transient intergenerational programs. The focus on ICZ is not intended to simply add another term to the rich and expanding literature on intergenerational practices, but rather to introduce a new multi-dimensional conceptual approach towards the sensitization and understanding, application, reframing, and situating of intergenerational connections in place.

The first use of the term “Intergenerational Contact Zones” can be found in a chapter written by Leng Leng Thang (2015) for a book on *Intergenerational Spaces,* edited by Vanderbeck and Worth. Thang’s chapter described her study of a co-(age)located playground in Singapore. Thang’s inspiration came from observing Japanese culture, looking particularly at the norm of “keeping in touch” (fureai) (Thang, 2001) – and therefore building upon similar work by Pratt (1991) who used the term “contact zones” in the context of sharing cultures, ideas, and values in classroom settings. Essentially, Pratt argued that when people come together from diverse cultural perspectives there is the potential for tension and even confrontation, but also for greater understanding if efforts are made to change the interaction dynamic. The concept of ICZ runs parallel to that of “cultural contact zones,” except that in the ICZ instance, the emphasis is placed on bridging diverse generational perspectives and experience.

At the root of how we define ICZ is a basic understanding that the physical environment is more than an amalgamation of physical properties. To explore how people use and perceive any particular space requires attention to the social, psychological, organizational, and cultural dimensions as well as physical properties of that particular space. In other words, “There is no physical setting that is not also a social and cultural setting” (Proshansky, 1976, p. 308). The ICZ framework is a way to look at the psycho-socio-techno-spatial environment and how it enters into intergenerational activity and experience and vice versa.

Table I.1 outlines the parameters (eight dimensions, actually) of our conceptual framework for considering how ICZ spaces develop over time, how
TABLE I.1 The Many Dimensions of Intergenerational Contact Zones

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<th>ICZ (Intergenerational Contact Zone) DIMENSIONS</th>
<th>Features and Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Physical</strong></td>
<td>Spatial configuration: Includes the creation of intentional focus points or nodes for IG (intergenerational) interaction (as well as pathways for comfortable exit from such interaction).</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Spatial features (e.g. artwork, photos, and other artifacts) that serve as catalysts for IG understanding and engagement.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Questions to consider:</td>
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<td></td>
<td>○ Functionality of space: Accessibility (incorporation of universal design principles)? Safety? Comfort? Convenience?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>○ Flexibility of design: Can the design accommodate changes over time in user needs, abilities, interests, concerns, etc.?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>○ Is space designed to foster/accommodate unstructured as well as structured IG encounters?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Temporal</strong></td>
<td>Temporal patterns in how space is used (daily, weekly, yearly patterns of use).</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Issues to consider:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>○ Generational differences in daily schedules and usage can pose as potential IG distancing factors. (For example, students are in school during the day, while many older adults tend to engage in senior centers and other activities in the morning, lunchtime, and early afternoon.)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>○ Older and younger users may also have different weekly and yearly schedules as dictated by school, work, or vacation calendars.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>○ Transformation of a space over time (consider relevant socio-historical factors).</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Psychological Perceptual</strong></td>
<td>Space comes to be perceived as place – experienced, remembered, and conceived place.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dimensions of place:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>○ Place identity – where personal meaning and memory comes to be associated with places.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>○ Intergenerational place – perceptual shift from my space/place to our space/place.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Shared places</strong> can be negotiated and designed to encompass multiple layers of shared meaning and experience.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cognitive</strong></td>
<td>• Cognitive understanding of age diversity and place-based possibilities for IG engagement.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| **Psychosocial** | • Emotional appreciation of age diversity and place-based possibilities for IG engagement.  
  • Patterns of social inclusion/exclusion with regard to generational position. |
| **Sociocultural** | • Ability to use the environment to pursue desired social contact, relationships, and affiliation within and between generations.  
  • Ability to use the environment to practice and maintain activities consistent with cultural traditions and local heritage.  
  • Sources of potential intergenerational tension might include exclusionary pressures and when places become contested (e.g. changing socio-economic make-up of a neighborhood might pit new, younger residents against long-time, older residents). |
| **Political** | • Who is “in charge”? – Social and institutional power structures for making decisions about how a space is developed and sustained/modified over time.  
  • Pathways for participation – Do participants have choice regarding activities? |
| **Institutional** | • Policies, regulations, legal issues, etc.  
  • Institutional norms around ages and access (e.g. age requirements for entrance or for seeing certain films/shows). |
| **Virtual** | • Online meeting places that provide opportunities for sharing information and experiences.  
  • Cyber ICZ that link to physical ICZ can:  
    ◦ Increase the popularity of physical ICZ.  
    ◦ Enable and facilitate the use of physical ICZ. |
| **Ethical** | • An empowerment orientation:  
    ◦ Provide people with opportunities for contributing meaningful input into the design, development, and evaluation of ICZ. |

*(Continued)*
they function, and how they are perceived by the inhabitants of these spaces. We developed this “dimensions of ICZ” chart following participation in a meeting convened by the Oxford Institute of Population Ageing, University of Oxford, in 2015. At this unique gathering, a multidisciplinary group of 13 scholars and practitioners engaged in groundwork discussions and collaborative inquiry aimed at exploring existing approaches and charting new strategies for creating and/or enhancing intergenerational spaces (Kaplan & Hoffman, 2015). The Oxford University meeting marked the beginning of our efforts to crystallize our understanding of the overall ICZ concept and its potential value for understanding, creating, and sparking intergenerational engagement in a wide range of settings, including those that exist in the virtual as well as physical environments.

As noted in Table I.1, the conceptual framework involves denoting eight interconnected dimensions of ICZ spaces: the physical, temporal, psychological (perceptual, cognitive, and psychosocial), sociocultural, political, institutional, virtual, and ethical. All eight dimensions are highlighted to varying degrees throughout this book.

Part of the complexity linked to the ICZ conceptual framework furthermore stems from its ability to serve several functions, including as: conceptual tool (for studying complex, multi-generational community settings), programming tool (for broadening the range of intergenerational activity possibilities), and design tool (for generating innovative ideas for developing intergenerational meeting spaces).

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<tr>
<td>○ Provide people with choice with regard to how they utilize ICZ spaces and engage others in these settings. (In a park, for example, some people may prefer their interaction to be “passive,” like sitting and watching children play.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>○ Interaction should not be “forced.” Communication should be a fluid process, where the dynamics evolve as participants negotiate their respective needs, interests, and perceptions of the setting and of one another.</td>
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<tr>
<td>○ An intergenerational justice orientation – Access and usage should be attentive to issues of generational equity and fairness.</td>
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In the context of designing ICZ spaces, we believe it is appropriate to frame this pursuit as an aspirational “social good,” with a targeted emphasis on outcomes such as the promotion of joint learning, invention, civic engagement, social support, and cultural continuity.

We anticipate that professionals from different fields of practice will have different ways of “using” the ICZ concept. It might be helpful to frame some of these ways.

- For the environmental design professional, for example, entertainment of the ICZ concept might stimulate innovative thinking about designing spaces that are conducive to the type of intergenerational encounters appropriate to the overall setting in question, whether the emphasis is on joint learning, discovery, invention, caregiving, or some other mode of engagement.
- For the intergenerational studies professional, focusing in on ICZ spaces might be a way to reflect on approaches to modify the physical environment to better align with program objectives, activities, and organizational policies.
- The community development oriented professional might tune into the potential of viable intergenerational meeting spaces/places for reducing social isolation and creating new modes of community activity. This is consistent with the research conducted by Partners for Livable Communities on public perceptions of “community livability,” where emphasis is placed on the importance of civic gathering places, where people can meet comfortably, and where there is a welcoming environment for newcomers (McNulty & Koff, 2014).

On Space and Place

Before we introduce the structure of this edited volume and the content covered in the following 25 chapters, we provide some context and theoretical underpinnings with regard to how we, the editors of this book, understand space and place.

First, when we talk about ICZ spaces, we are simultaneously alluding to space and place. However, while space in environmental terms has specific physical dimensions, we are primarily concerned with the conversion of a space into a place. In contrast with space, place constitutes a psychological component; a space may remain a space, but it may also become a place as defined by one’s emotional feeling and a sense of belonging there. In other words, a “space” becomes a “place” once it has meaning for someone (Thang & Kaplan, 2013). Similarly, Semken and Freeman (2008) describe place as a space “imbued with meaning by human experience” (p. 1042). Hence, places are meaningful spaces, more than just a backdrop or a container for the action.
To further clarify the distinction between space and place, we draw on Harrison and Dourish’s (1996) assertion that “place” is largely a subset of “space”: “A place is generally a space with something added – social meaning, convention, cultural understandings about role, function and nature and so on. The sense of place transforms the space” (p. 3).

In framing how space is manifested in social contexts, Amedeo, Golledge, and Stimson (2009, p. 7) draw upon Peponis and Wineman’s (2002) description of “built space” and its strong ties to social meaning:

Built space is to be understood as a relational pattern, a pattern of distinctions, separations, interfaces, and connections, a pattern that integrates, segregates, or differentiates its parts in relation to each other. To ask whether space has a “social logic” is to ask how such pattern becomes entailed in everyday behavior, in the structuring of social relationships, and in the way in which society and culture become intelligible through their spatial form.

(p. 271)

When considering notions of space and place in the context of intergenerational settings, “meaning making” is a social time-bound phenomenon; concepts of place perception and place identity move from “my meaning” to “shared meaning.” There are numerous intersections between the individually and generationally held meanings that inhabitants of a space possess; norms and expectations for the intergenerational engagement in a specific setting are negotiated and in large part socially defined.

Although there is some variation in how chapter contributors use the words “space” and “place,” what is consistent is their keen interest and spirited and elucidating investigations into ways in which environments could be designed to accommodate intended intergenerational encounters, whether related to learning, recreation, responsive community planning, social inclusion, caregiving, family bonding, or some other set of objectives.

Overview

This volume explores the foundations and applications of ICZ from an international, interdisciplinary perspective.

- International appeal: The authors represent different regions encompassing the Global North and South. In its totality, this is a collection of globally sourced ideas and examples, innovative concepts and original actual applications for creating and enhancing intergenerational spaces in indoor and outdoor community as well as virtual settings. Across national borders, there is increasing emphasis on the promotion of intergenerational
solidarity through programming. For one example, a new Substantive Committee on Intergenerational Solidarity has been constituted, with full standing, at the UN.

- Interdisciplinary context: The authors have roots in a wide range of disciplines within and between the social sciences and design fields, including gerontology, geography, architecture, urban and regional planning, development studies, human development and life-course studies, sociology, social work, education, psychology, and anthropology. Many of the authors are prolific contributors to the literature in specialty areas such as: global ageing, environmental gerontology, cross-cultural gerontology, environmental psychology, childhood and life-course studies, intergenerational studies, participatory community development, and the design of age-friendly and childhood-friendly communities, and several are thought leaders in the realm of “intergenerational design” (i.e. planning/creating physical environments that are conducive to intergenerational exchange).

The book’s contributors represent a range of scholars, practitioners, educators, and policy makers, proving that the ICZ framework can actually be a useful instrument for a diversity of agents in the intergenerational field.

Most distinctively, chapters in this volume are filled with poignant examples of how ICZ spaces may breathe new life into communities and social practices. There are ICZ spaces within which and through which: new modes of recreation, new family bonding experiences, new horizons for appreciating the natural environment, new ways to explore local culture and history, new opportunities to teach, learn, and work, and new social groupings and networks are generated.

The chapters further illustrate ways in which the ICZ conceptual framework can inspire new ideas for programming and designing spaces that are conducive to meaningful intergenerational encounters, and have the potential for reducing social isolation, generating new modes of community activity, and enhancing perceptions of belonging, “community livability,” and societal sustainability.

Whether through design or serendipity, planned or spontaneous modes of interaction, the chapter authors confirm that ICZ spaces can function as hubs for a wide variety of pursuits that have an overt or latent intergenerational dimension – from play to caregiving and from learning to working – and help people form and sustain social networks and relationships that buffer against the specter of ageism, social fragmentation, exclusion, isolation, and loneliness.

All chapters include at least some information or reference to: site/environmental design considerations, underlying motivation for each project, engaged stakeholders, lessons learned, practical tips, and, to help set the scene, geographical and cultural context. The volume also provides examples of ad hoc boxes likely to suit different types of chapters (e.g. “practical design tips,” “dealing with unanticipated challenges,” and “policy issues in creating ICZ spaces”).
A number of authors in this volume describe distinct conceptual frameworks and operational approaches for creating or modifying existing intergenerational settings. At the same time, many of these chapters are breaking new ground in translating and finding new ways in which the ICZ conceptual framework can inform their intergenerational study and practice pursuits.

Overall, throughout the publication the emphasis will be not as much on presenting theory and concepts as on practical descriptions and developments around ICZ. It has been our purpose to nurture practitioners’ and researchers’ capacity to translate and infuse the sensitizing notion of ICZ into their work. Hence, the many and diverse examples provided.

Here are some of the socio-spatial focal points highlighted in the chapters:

- Museums, libraries and other arts and cultural institutions that host and animate intergenerational gatherings (McNulty – Chapter 1).
- Communal cooking sites in rural areas of South Africa as intergenerational transmitters of indigenous knowledge about traditional foods (Chigeza, Claasen, & Roos – Chapter 2).
- Toronto libraries that house generation-connecting, community-building dance programs (Ng – Chapter 3).
- A repurposed barn in Central Pennsylvania uses as a site for bringing together a diverse group of community leaders in support of intergenerational action and programming (Kaplan, Windon, & Zavada – Chapter 4).
- City spaces in the UK designed to accommodate family cycling excursions (Spencer & Jones – Chapter 5).
- Bus stops that could be enlivened intergenerationally through the imagination and creativity of children (Danely – Chapter 6).
- Urban parks in China with alluring intergenerational spaces (O’Neill – Chapter 7).
- Urban parks in Portugal with intergenerational engagement-oriented policies and environmental design features (Azevedo – Chapter 8).
- Urban rooftops and early environmental education programming in Hong Kong designed to engage grandparents and grandchildren as “companions in wonder” (Sobko & Chawla – Chapter 9).
- Forest education and hands-on experience through historical interpretation programs (Smith & Kaplan – Chapter 10).
- A hospital-based community garden that pairs adolescent and young adult cancer survivors with older, experienced gardeners to improve diet and physical activity (Winkels, Artrip, Tupinio, & George – Chapter 11).
- A 20-year-old, award-winning intergenerational school model in Cleveland, Ohio; lessons learned for animating intergenerational learning and bonding (C. Whitehouse, P. Whitehouse, & Sánchez – Chapter 12).
- College classrooms transformed into vibrant intergenerational teaching and learning zones (Montepare & Sciegaj – Chapter 13).
• English language centers in Hong Kong schools with older adult volunteers at the root of efforts to reprogram and redesign these centers as distinctive intergenerational language learning settings (Lai – Chapter 14).

• Cohousing communities that inspire, support, and sustain intergenerational living patterns and practices (Zheng – Chapter 15).

• Care homes in the UK enlivened by cocktail parties (Grudzinskas & Langford – Chapter 16).

• Senior housing facilities that foster intergenerational connectivity in American communities (Henkin & Patterson – Chapter 17).

• The Japanese teapot, a symbol of the resurgence of Japanese traditional tea culture, as provider of an intergenerational interaction focal point in many Japanese living rooms and schools (Yamamoto & Thang – Chapter 18).

• Intergenerational digital game platforms that leverage and bridge generational capabilities and provide family bonding time (Zang – Chapter 19).

• A multilayered cyclical support system piloted in Tokyo communities; a strategy to promote healthy living practices, provide long-term care, and address other quality of life issues from an intergenerational perspective (Kuraoka – Chapter 20).

• Beaches, swimming pools, and other recreational water settings in Australia designed to accommodate intergenerational gatherings (Tham, Jones, & Quinlan – Chapter 21).

• The olive tree in the contested Palestinian landscape – as socio-economic and political entity and symbol around which communities and generations engage and resist (Hammad – Chapter 22).

• Participatory tools and techniques for visualizing, producing, and assessing new and transformed intergenerational spaces (Sánchez & Stafford – Chapter 23).

• Quality domains, guidelines, and indicators of ICZ for creating effective intergenerational programs (Sánchez, Díaz, Rodríguez, & Bonachela – Chapter 24).

• Participatory mapping strategies for elevating the voices of youth and older adults in public discourse around the design of public spaces (Stafford – Chapter 25).

In sum, the book consists of a series of short chapters showcasing the various possibilities with ICZ. It also includes a how-to toolkit – or methods section – to help various professionals and user groups as they begin to consider ways to develop, activate, and nurture engaging intergenerational spaces. Therefore, the book is framed as a “toolkit” and as a scholarly, creative piece aimed at establishing a stronger conceptual basis for creating and transforming compelling intergenerational spaces and places.
References


PART I

Generation/Regeneration of Community Life
CULTURE AS ANIMATOR OF INTERGENERATIONAL GATHERING PLACES

Robert H. McNulty

The value of arts and cultural institutions for intergenerational gathering places depends not only on their specific design, but also on how they “animate” diverse gatherings of young and old to associate and mingle. Through this programming, they become “civic glue” and reward any location.

Engaging Older Adults

Americans are enjoying longer and healthier lives. By 2030, all baby boomers will be over the age of 65 and make up 21 percent of the U.S. population, compared with 15 percent in 2018. In 2035, America will meet another milestone when the population aged 65 and over is projected to be 78 million, and for the first time in U.S. history older adults will outnumber children under age 18 (U.S. Department of Commerce Economics and Statistics Administration, 2018).

The vast majority of Americans want to remain in their communities as they age. Contrary to popular belief, only a small minority actually move to warmer climates upon retirement. In 2010, only 3.1 percent (1.3 million) of those age 65 and over lived in skilled-nursing facilities (U.S. Department of Commerce Economics and Statistics Administration, 2011). Instead, most Americans choose to age in place, within the same communities where they have long lived. Every community, from fast-growing suburbs to more stable rural areas, will have to adapt to a maturing population.