

# DISABILITY AND THE CITY

International Perspectives

**ROB IMRIE**

People with disabilities are generally one of the poorest groups in Western societies. The daily reality for many disabled people is dependence on a carer, while trying to survive on state welfare payments. The stereotype of disability as a 'pitiful' state reinforces the view that people with disabilities are somehow 'less than human'. In taking exception to these and related concepts of disability, this book explores one of the crucial contexts within which the marginal status of disabled people is experienced: the interrelationships between disability, physical access, and the built environment.

The author explores some of the critical processes underpinning the social construction of disability as a state of marginalization in the built environment. These concerns are interwoven with a discussion of the state's changing role in defining, categorising, and reproducing 'states of disablement' for people with disabilities.

The author considers the role of the 'design professionals' - architects, planners, and building control officers - in the construction of specific spaces which lock people with disabilities 'out'. From shattered paving stones in the high street, to the absence of induction loops in a civic building, people with disabilities daily negotiate hostile environments. Using a range of empirical material from the UK and the USA, the book documents how the environmental planning system in Britain attempts to address the inaccessibility of the built environment, and discusses how disabled people contest the constraints placed on their mobility.

The book draws on a range of ideas from geography, sociology, and environmental planning and reflects the emergent interest in schools of planning with equal opportunity issues and planning for minority groups.

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