



Moving the Porch Table:
 (Left) Southward in summer,
 under the shade tree;
 (Right) Northward in winter
 to catch the sun.

Back and forth, once each spring and again each fall, we carry the table across a shadow line. The moment we know it is spring is not exact. We could remember the calendar, but more often than not, on a warm and sunny morning, somebody will say, “Let’s move the table.” And then it is spring; moving the table has made it so.

Somehow, the seasonal changes and the possibilities they evoke always seem fresh to us. Moving the table shifts all our connections to the house, the view, and each other. The texture of possibilities is rich and rewarding. After 40 years, we are still thinking up new ways of arranging things.

Architecture, by depending too much on machines, has worked against adaptive rituals as a mode of self-expression. This is the result of neither designed nor accidental chaos in the patterns of space and events. It is, rather, the product of rhythms that are too simple and continuous to capture our notice and challenge our imaginations.

The great advantage in machine-made places lies with those who are just passing through, who don’t have time or patience to establish a more complex set of connections. This may be helpful to a population constantly on the move. But for those who spend time in these places and try to plant roots, there is a quick decline of original possibilities for choice.

There are many forms of ritual behavior, but the emphasis here is on those connected with maintaining the built environment. In this regard, a time-rich environment offers a complex potential for ritual. Toward this objective, this book first looks to the past and then offers a model for the future. Chapters 2 through 4 analyze three traditional sheltering modes. Chapter 5, by looking mainly to the Gothic cathedral, considers the aesthetic potential of linking ecclesiastical rituals with the complex rhythms of sunlight. Chapter 6 traces a 200-year history of the way rhythms and

rituals have changed with the different settings of American life. Chapters 7 and 8 describe the growth of Los Angeles and introduce a zoning framework for solar access and design in cities of increasing density. Chapter 9 extends the idea of urban solar access by describing a dynamic system of zoning that recaptures the dynamism and potential for ritual of traditional means of sheltering. Finally, chapter 10 discusses the promise of a new architecture, one that responds to the rhythms of nature.