



5.8 A delicate arrangement of human distances. The distance between the receptionist and seats for waiting must be large enough to allow the receptionist to continue to work without rudely ignoring the waiting visitors. However, it should not be so great that the occasional conversational interchange is not possible in order to ‘keep in touch’

passes the well-trained receptionist lets you know that you are not forgotten by exchanging a few inconsequential words about the weather or the difficulty of parking or some such trivia. More time passes, and she lets you know that she can see your host is now on the telephone and she will buzz him as soon as he finishes. Minutes later your host appears from the interior of the office beyond and to the side of the reception desk. You stand, greet each other and exchange pleasantries as he apologizes for keeping you waiting. You dismiss this as of no consequence and, acknowledging the receptionist with a nod and a smile, you both move off to your meeting.

This all worked quite smoothly, and normally you would not notice any of this behaviour or the significance of the setting. However, now you might ask yourself exactly how far the reception desk, waiting chairs, entrance and office doors were apart. You might also ask how close together or far apart they might be before the relationships no longer work easily and naturally. You will almost certainly be able to tell this, and yet it is amazing how this ordinary implicit human knowl-