

studios, can detach themselves from this knowledge and quite innocently create the most unsuitable spaces. I hope this book helps readers to reconnect their everyday implicit knowledge with their more professional conceptual knowledge, and that as a result we get more spaces which help people and fewer that obstruct them!

Behavioural settings

Whilst in this book we shall certainly consider the purely physical characteristics of spaces, the objects they contain and the envelopes that define them, there is something far more important to us than that. Of course we are all different, but in general ultimately it is our relationship not directly with spaces or buildings that matters most to us, but our relationships with other people. What others think and expect of us is one of the most central of the influences that govern the way we lead our lives. It is our reputation and our association with others that we feel most strongly about. So it is the way space facilitates and inhibits these relationships with which we will be mostly concerned. Barker discussed psychology from what he called an ecological perspective (Barker 1968). He argued that places have synomorphy when there is congruence between people's actions and the physical and social setting. There are several great forces at work here, and perhaps the most important are those of privacy and community. It is how space enables these two appropriately that forms many of the basic components of the language we shall explore. These two appear in almost every building and space we inhabit in some form or other. Other great forces are those of ritual, display and surveillance. Some spaces exist almost solely to allow us to act out social rituals, as in a church. Others serve to display, not just objects as in an art gallery, but also ourselves in our society. Some spaces need to permit the supervision of some of us by others. This is most obviously so in a prison, but also more subtly in a hospital or a library. Space that facilitates display may not be good at providing for privacy. Space that is public domain may need to be recognizably different to space that is private domain. We rely upon space to create places appropriate to certain kinds of behaviour and to tell us what they are.

Look at the illustration of a simple house that belongs to a German artist and is on one of the smaller islands of the Spanish Atlantic archipelago (Fig. 1.3). The owner, who has a small studio and gallery next door, can somehow capture the spirit of this place with the very minimum of brushstrokes. We are standing in a narrow street of a small town looking over a low wall in which there is a small wrought-iron gate, which we cannot see in this picture. We could easily open the gate, and indeed it is so low it would take no more than a large stride to step over it! However, we are in the totally public domain of the street. The path beyond, which we can see, is clearly semi-public.