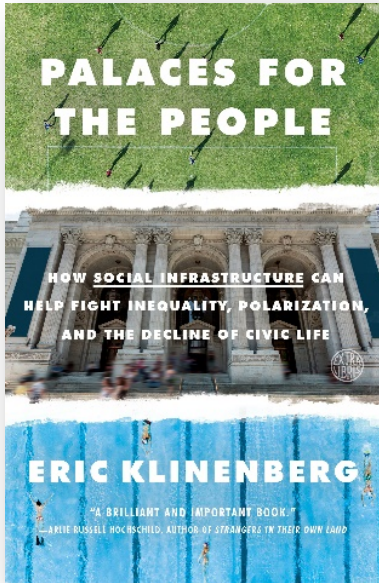


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PALACES FOR THE PEOPLE

By Eric Klinenberg

On Sale September 10, 2019



Select Praise for *Palaces for the People*

*** Named one of the Best Books of the Year by NPR ***

*** Longlisted for the Andrew Carnegie Medal for Excellence in Nonfiction ***

“A comprehensive, entertaining, and compelling argument for how rebuilding social infrastructure can help heal divisions in our society and move us forward.” —**Jon Stewart**

“Engaging.” —**Mayor Pete Buttigieg, *The New York Times Book Review* (Editors’ Choice)**

“Just brilliant!” —**Roman Mars, *99% Invisible***

“One of my favorite books of 2018... Klinenberg is echoing what librarians and library patrons have been saying for years: that libraries are equalizers and absolutely universal.” —**Carla Hayden, Librarian of Congress, in *The Wall Street Journal***

In the face of increasing political polarization, climate emergencies, and declining civic institutions, renowned sociologist and #1 *New York Times* bestselling author **Eric Klinenberg**’s vital, illuminating book ***PALACES FOR THE PEOPLE: How Social Infrastructure Can Help Fight Inequality, Polarization, and the Decline of Civic Life*** (Broadway Books; September 10, 2019) reveals how we can find common purpose through the places that form the foundation of our neighborhoods—now available in paperback.

This provocative book reframes our conception of civic life, arguing that the resilience of our communities rests not on shared values but on shared *spaces* capable of fostering crucial, sometimes even life-saving connections. In clear, accessible prose, **Klinenberg** explains that today’s most pressing issues—crime, education, the opioid crisis, and climate change—can all be addressed with place-based policies, and demonstrates how such policies have been put into effect with great success.

Klinenberg is a professor of sociology and the director of the Institute for Public Knowledge at New York University. He coined the term “social infrastructure” to describe the libraries, day-care centers, bookstores, coffee shops, and community gardens that shape our face-to-face interactions, and has been exploring it for decades—ever since his landmark study of Chicago during the 1995 heat wave. As the research director for the Obama administration’s Rebuild by Design project, he worked to integrate social infrastructure into post-Hurricane Sandy rebuilding plans. In ***PALACES FOR THE PEOPLE***, he applies this deep knowledge, stemming from years of both research and application, to diverse communities and challenges around the globe—from Singapore to Brazil and from East New York to Silicon Valley—to show how interactive physical spaces are combating some of the most profound problems of our time.

One of the clearest examples Klinenberg highlights is the public library. [In a viral op-ed for *The New York Times*](#), he argued that the library is much more than a repository for books and ideas. Instead, the library is essential to the flourishing of our communities: “Libraries are the kinds of

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places where people with different backgrounds, passions and interests can take part in a living democratic culture. They are the kinds of places where the public, private and philanthropic sectors can work together to reach for something higher than the bottom line.... Libraries stand for and exemplify something that needs defending: the public institutions that — even in an age of atomization, polarization and inequality — serve as the bedrock of civil society.”

PALACES FOR THE PEOPLE champions the ways in which social infrastructure is just as urgent as investing in conventional hard infrastructure like bridges, levees, and airports. Often, we can strengthen both simultaneously, establishing vital social arteries that are also “palaces for the people,” to borrow the phrase Andrew Carnegie used to describe the 2,500 grand libraries that he built around the world.

Select Highlights: How Social Infrastructure Creates Resilient Communities

- **Race:** Klinenberg delves into the shared social spaces that either entrench racial segregation or encourage mixed communities, looking at historical divisions in cities like Chicago, New York, and Baltimore—and the contemporary organizations and institutions like public libraries and pools that are bridging racial divides and fostering cohesion.
- **Addiction:** There is empirical evidence of a connection between the strength of a community’s social ties and its ability to withstand opioid abuse. Communities with strong social capital—as evidenced by the density of civic organizations and rates at which citizens vote—are more likely to be insulated from the crisis. Boston has experimented with “Methadone Mile,” which features little commercial activity but an open-air drug market, homeless shelters, addiction clinics, and the Boston Medical Center. This area has successfully attracted addicts and drug users who go on to seek treatment.
- **Climate change:** Because of climate change, we will continue to face increasingly devastating storms. Religious congregations play a vital role in helping their communities through extreme weather. When Hurricane Harvey hit Houston, thousands of people’s homes flooded, and they lost everything they had. Churches, such as Wilcrest Baptist Church in Southwest Houston, started recovery efforts before the rain had stopped. The church turned into a relief center, offering hot food, fresh clothes, cleaning supplies, and prayer to anyone, member or not. Congregants worked to repair homes or offered a place to stay to those whose homes were destroyed. With over 300,000 religious congregations in the US, these sites have broad reach to help in times of emergency.

Through these and many other case studies, using quantitative research as well as on-the-ground reporting, ***PALACES FOR THE PEOPLE*** demonstrates the critical role social infrastructure plays in civic life, and offers an inspiring vision of how it can help bridge our seemingly unbridgeable divides. “There’s no easy way to restore the sense of common purpose and shared humanity that makes civic life possible,” Klinenberg writes. “But the hard work that lies before us will be impossible if we don’t build better social infrastructure. The future of our democracy is at stake.”



About the Author

ERIC KLINENBERG is a professor of sociology and the director of the Institute for Public Knowledge at New York University. He’s the coauthor of the #1 *New York Times* bestseller *Modern Romance*. Klinenberg’s previous books include *Going Solo: The Extraordinary Rise and Surprising Appeal of Living Alone*, *Heat Wave: A Social Autopsy of Disaster in Chicago*, and *Fighting for Air: The Battle to Control America’s Media*. In addition to his books and scholarly articles, Klinenberg has contributed to *The New Yorker*, *The New York Times Magazine*, *Rolling Stone*, *Wired*, and *This American Life*.

PALACES FOR THE PEOPLE:

How Social Infrastructure Can Help Fight Inequality, Polarization, and the Decline of Civic Life

By Eric Klinenberg

Broadway Books • September 10, 2019 • \$18.00 Paperback • Pages: 304

ISBN: 9781524761172 • Ebook ISBN: 9781524761189

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Additional Praise for *Palaces for the People*

“The aim of this sweeping work is to popularize the notion of ‘social infrastructure’—the ‘physical places and organizations that shape the way people interact’. . . Here, drawing on research in urban planning, behavioral economics, and environmental psychology, as well as on his own fieldwork from around the world, [Eric Klinenberg] posits that a community’s resilience correlates strongly with the robustness of its social infrastructure. The numerous case studies add up to a plea for more investment in the spaces and institutions (parks, libraries, childcare centers) that foster mutual support in civic life.”

—*The New Yorker*

“*Palaces for the People*—the title is taken from the Scottish-American industrialist and philanthropist Andrew Carnegie’s description of the hundreds of libraries he funded—is essentially a calm, lucid exposition of a centuries-old idea, which is really a furious call to action.”—*New Statesman*

“Clear-eyed . . . fascinating.”—*Psychology Today*

“An illuminating examination . . . Klinenberg’s observations are effortlessly discursive and always cogent, whether covering the ways playgrounds instill youth with civic values or a Chicago architect’s plans to transform a police station into a community center. He persuasively illustrates the vital role these spaces play in repairing civic life.”

—*Publishers Weekly* (starred)

“If America appears fractured at the national level, the author suggests, it can be mended at the local one. This is an engrossing, timely, hopeful read, nothing less than a new lens through which to view the world and its current conflicts.”

—*Booklist* (starred)

“Fine reading for community activists seeking to expand the social infrastructure of their own home places.”

—*Kirkus Reviews*

“This fantastic book reminds us that democracy is fortified and enlivened by people coexisting together in public, and that good design and support of a wide variety of public spaces can produce those mysterious things we call community, membership, a sense of belonging, a place, maybe a polity. In an age where the push for disembodiment and never leaving the house and fearing and avoiding strangers and doing everything as fast as possible is so powerful, this book makes the case for why we want to head in the opposite direction. It’s both idealistic and, in its myriad examples, pragmatic, and delightfully readable.”

—*Rebecca Solnit, author of Men Explain Things to Me and A Field Guide to Getting Lost*

“Eric Klinenberg believes that social life can be designed well, just as good buildings are. His book is full of hope, which is all the more striking because Klinenberg is a realist. He is a major social thinker, and this is a beautifully written, major book.”

—*Richard Sennett, professor of sociology, London School of Economics*

“Reading *Palaces for the People* is an amazing experience. As an architect, I know very well the importance of building civic places: concert halls, libraries, museums, universities, public parks, all places open and accessible, where people can get together and share experiences. To create good places for people is essential, and this is what I share with Klinenberg: We both believe that beauty, this kind of beauty, can save the world.”

—*Renzo Piano*

“Eric Klinenberg combines a Jane Jacobs-eye on city life with knowledge of the latest research and practical ideas to address the crucial issues of the day—class division, crime, and climate change. This is a brilliant and important book.”

—*Arlie Hochschild, author of Strangers in Their Own Land*

“At a time when polarization is weakening our democracy, Eric Klinenberg takes us on a tour of the physical spaces that bind us together and form the basis of civic life. We care about each other because we bump up against one another in a community garden or on the playground or at the library. These are not virtual experiences; they’re real ones, and they’re essential to our future. This wonderful book shows us how democracies thrive.”

—*Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt, authors of How Democracies Die*