CHAPTER 1

(Not) your everyday public space

Jeffrey Hou

With a sixteen-foot statue of Vladimir Lenin standing in a street corner, a salvaged rocket sitting on top of a building, a car-eating troll crawling under a bridge, Fremont is undoubtedly one of the most eccentric neighborhoods in Seattle. One day in 2001, the neighborhood (a.k.a. the Center of the Universe) welcomed yet another addition to its treasured collection – an eight-foot-long metal pig that was anonymously planted on a sidewalk overnight.

The pig became an instant celebrity. Neighbors wondered who left it there. The local press followed the news for months – trying to identify the instigator(s), how the pig was erected without permission, and then why it mysteriously vanished two months later, just one day before it was to be moved to a new location following complaints by several business owners. It turned out that the pig was the work of two anonymous artists. The artwork was meant as an anti-consumerism statement, mocking the official "Pigs on Parade," an art and fundraising event that featured decorated pig sculptures in malls and streets of Seattle.

Planted on a public sidewalk, Fremont's pig was not only a social and artistic statement, but also an attack on the official public sphere in the contemporary city. Although the pig did not physically alter the space except for its footprints, its unauthorized presence challenged the norms of public space by defying the city's requirement for a deposit to put art on a sidewalk. Although its actual production did not involve the so-called public process, the work engaged the public through the media and everyday conversation. Through the space it occupied and the debates it engendered among neighbors, citizens, and the media, the pig renewed the discursive instrumentality of public space as a forum for open discussion. It gives meanings to the full notion of publicity in a public space.

In cities around the world, acts such as the pig installation in Fremont represent small yet persistent challenges against the increasingly regulated, privatized, and diminishing forms of public space. In Portland, Oregon, activists from the group City Repair painted street intersections in bright colors and patterns, and involved neighbors in converting them into neighborhood gathering places. In Taipei, citizens frustrated with rocketing housing costs staged a "sleep-in" in the streets of the most expensive district in the city to protest the government inaction. In London, Space Hijackers, a group of self-proclaimed "anarchitects," has performed numerous acts of "space hijacking," from "Guerrilla Benching" – installing benches in empty public space – to the "Circle Line Party" in London's Underground (till they were stopped by the police).

Rather than isolated instances, these acts of insurgency transcend geographic

boundaries and reflect the respective social settings and issues. In cities from Europe to Asia, residual urban sites and industrial lands have been occupied and converted into new uses by citizens and communities. From coast to coast in North America, urban and suburban landscapes have been adapted and transformed by new immigrant groups to support new functions and activities. In Japan, suburban private homes have been transformed into "third places" for community activities.[1] From Seattle to Shanghai, citizen actions ranging from gardening to dancing have permanently and temporarily taken over existing urban sites and injected them with new functions and meanings.

These instances of self-made urban spaces, reclaimed and appropriated sites, temporary events, and flash mobs, as well as informal gathering places created by predominantly marginalized communities, have provided new expressions of the collective realms in the contemporary city. No longer confined to the archetypal categories of neighborhood parks, public plaza, and civic architecture, these *insurgent public spaces* challenge the conventional, codified notion of public and the making of space.

What can we learn from these acts of everyday and not-so-everyday resistance? What do they reveal about the limitations and possibilities of public realm in our contemporary city? How do these instances of insurgency challenge the conventional understanding and making of public space? How are these spaces and activities redefining and expanding the roles, functions, and meanings of the public and the production of space? These are the questions we intend to address in this book.

Public space: democracy, exclusion, and political control

Public space has been an important facet of cities and urban culture. In cities around the world, urban spaces such as plazas, markets, streets, temples, and urban parks have long been the centers of civic life for urban dwellers. They provide opportunities for gathering, socializing, recreation, festivals, as well as protests and demonstrations. As parks and plazas, urban open spaces provide relief from dense urban districts and structured everyday life. As civic architecture, they become collective expressions of a city as well as depositories of personal memories. As places where important historical events tend to unfold, public spaces are imbued with important, collective meanings – both official and unofficial.

Serving as a vehicle of social relationships, public discourses, and political expressions, public space is not only a physical boundary and material setting. Henaff and Strong (2001: 35) note that public space "designates an ensemble of social connections, political institutions, and judicial practices." Brill (1989: 8) writes that public space comes to represent the public sphere and public life, "a forum, a group action, school for social learning, and common ground." In the Western tradition, public space has had a positive connotation that evokes the practice of democracy, openness, and publicity of debate since the time of the Greek agora. Henaff and Strong (2001) further argue that the very idea of democracy is inseparable from that of public space. "Public space means simultaneously: open to all, well known by all, and acknowledged by all. . . . It stands in opposition to private space of

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special interests" (Henaff and Strong 2001: 35). Landscape architecture scholar Mark Francis (1989: 149) writes, "Public space is the common ground where civility and our collective sense of what may be called 'publicness' are developed and expressed." Fraser (1990) argues that, as a public sphere, public space is an arena of citizen discourse and association. Furthermore, I. M. Young (2002) sees public space in a city as accessible to everyone and thus reflecting and embodying the diversity in the city.

However, contrary to the rhetoric of openness and inclusiveness, the actual making and practice of public space often reflect a different political reality and social biases. Agacinski (2001: 133) notes that, before the French Revolution, "the public" in the Western tradition referred to the "literate and educated" and "was never thought to be the same as the people." Even in recent Western history, some have argued that, "despite the rhetoric of publicity and accessibility," the official public sphere rests on a number of significant exclusions, based on gender, class, and race (Fraser 1990: 59). The gender division of public and private, in particular, has been a powerful instrument of exclusion as it relegates women to the private sphere and prevents them from fully participating in the public realm (Drucker and Gumpert 1997). By delineating what constitutes public and private and by designating membership to specific social groups, the official public space has long been exclusionary, contrary to Young's (2002) notion of a public space that embodies differences and diversity.

Aside from the practice of exclusion, public space has also been both an expression of power and a subject of political control. Under medieval monarchy in the West, public space was where political power was staged, displayed, and legitimized (Henaff and Strong 2001). In the totalitarian societies of recent times, large public spaces serve as military parade grounds – a raw display of power to impress citizens as well as enemies. In modern democracies, as the power has shifted to the people, public spaces have at last provided a legitimate space for protests and demonstrations – an expression of the freedom of speech. But such freedom has never come without considerable struggles and vigilance. In the post-9/11 world of hyper-security and surveillance, new forms of control in public space have curtailed freedom of movement and expression and greatly limited the activities and meanings of contemporary public space (see Low and Smith 2005).

Across the different cultural traditions, the functions and meanings of public space have varied significantly, illustrating the varying means and degrees of social and political control. In recent Western democracies, public space and the formation of public opinion have been important components of the democratic process. Through opportunities of assembly and public discourses, political expressions in the public space are important in holding the state accountable to its citizens. This distinction between the public and the state has been an important ingredient in democratic politics. By contrast, in countries influenced by Confucianism in the East, social and individual life is dictated predominantly by obligations to state and family, with little in between. The official public space is traditionally either non-existent or tightly controlled by the state.

A useful illustration is Edo-era Tokyo. Under the rule of the Tokugawa shogunate, the city was spatially divided between *Yamanote* (consisting of large private estates

occupied by ranking officials in the upland) and *Shitamachi* (the compact and tightly regulated quarters for the commoners in the flatland). In Shitamachi, gated streets and waterfront markets served as the only recognizable form of public gathering space. To escape from the gated quarters and regimented pattern of everyday life, one had to go to the pleasure grounds that lay outside the official quarters of the city (Figure 1.1).

In many Asian cities, public space has been synonymous with spaces that are representing and controlled by the state. In contrast, the everyday and more vibrant urban life tends to occur in the back streets and alleyways, away from the official public domain. Seoul's *Pimagol* ('Avoid-Horse-Street'), narrow alleys that parallel the city's historic main road Jong-ro, serve as an example (Figure 1.2). To avoid repeatedly bowing to the noble-class people riding on horses on Jong-ro, a requirement back in the days of feudal power, the commoners turned to the back alleys, away from the main road. Over time, restaurants and shops began to occupy the back alleys, which became a parallel universe and an important part of the vibrant everyday life in the city.

The development and design of public parks in America provides yet another illustration, showing how public space has long been an ideologically biased and regulated enterprise contrary to the rhetoric of openness. In the United States, Cranz (1982: 3, 5) argues that early parks were built from "an anti-urban ideal that dwelt on the traditional prescription for relief from the evils of the city—to the country." The emergence of reform parks in the United States further demonstrated this bias. Located in mostly dense, immigrant and working class neighborhoods, they were designed to move children and adults from the streets (Cranz 1982). With the goal of social and cultural integration, and provisions for organized play, the parks and

Figure 1.1 Popular with tourists today, the Asakusa temple district was once one of Edo-era Tokyo's pleasure grounds that lay outside the city quarters. Photograph by Jeffrey Hou.

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Figure 1.2 Seoul's disappearing Pimagol was once an important passage and gathering space for commoners and the city's unofficial public space. Photograph by Jeffrey Hou.

palgrounds were also designed to assimilate immigrants into the mainstream American culture (Cranz 1982). Today, although multiculturalism is more widely acknowledged, the historic bias continues, as Low, Taplin, and Scheld (2005: 4) found that "restrictive management of large parks has created an increasingly inhospitable environment for immigrants, local ethnic groups, and culturally diverse behaviors." Observing how different cultural groups use the neighborhood parks in Los Angeles, Loukaitou-Sideris (1995: 90) writes that, contrary to the notion of inclusiveness, the "contemporary American neighborhood park does not always meet the needs of all segments of the public."

Erosion of public space and public life

In the literature on public realm in recent decades, the erosion and decline of public space and public life have been a predominant theme. In *The Fall of Public Man*, Sennet (1992/1978) argues that public life has become a matter of formal obligation in modern times. More importantly, the private and personal have taken precedence over the public and impersonal, as society became less interested in public matters and more driven by private interests and personal desires. He further states, the "unbalanced personal life and empty public life" are manifested in the dead public space of modern architecture, with few opportunities for social interactions (Sennet 1992/1978: 16). More recently, Putnam (1995) uses the metaphor of "bowling alone" to characterize the decline of civic engagement in American society. Using evidences in decreased voter turnout, attendance in public meetings, and memberships in traditional civic organizations, including labor unions and church groups, he argues that such decline undermines the working of democracy (Putnam 1995).

In the last few decades, a number of practices have further challenged what is left of public space in both its physical and political dimensions. Most notably, the growing privatization of public space has become a common pattern and experience in many parts of the world where downtown districts as well as suburban lands are transformed into themed malls and so-called festival marketplaces. To emulate successful urban spaces of the past, neo-traditional streetscapes and town squares are reproduced but segregated from the rest of the city to create a supposed safe haven for shoppers and businesses. Whereas the physical form and appearance of the spaces may look familiar to the traditional public space in the past, their public functions and meanings have become highly limited.

Increasingly, to spur economic development, public funds are used to subsidize development of private venues, while developers are generously rewarded for providing spaces with limited public use. As streets, neighborhoods, and parks become malls, gated communities, and corporate venues, public space becomes subjected to new forms of ownership, commodification, and control. Davis (1992: 155) observes, "The 'public' space of the new megastructures and supermalls have supplanted traditional streets and disciplined their spontaneity." Loukaitou-Sideris and Banerjee (1998: 278) further write, "American downtown is a product of purposeful design actions that have effectively sought to mold space according to the needs of a corporatist economy and to subordinate urban form to the logic of profit."

The control of public space is now a worldwide phenomenon that shows how form follows capital. From Los Angeles's Bunker Hill to Sandton in Johannesburg, private interests have created fortified downtowns and urban sub-centers, protecting an increasing array of pseudo-public and private properties against the possible intrusion of the "undesirables" (Whyte 1980). In addition to the limited public functions, the privatization of public space has important implications for the political sphere of contemporary cities. Kohn (2004: 2) writes, "When private spaces replace public gathering space, the opportunities for political conversation are diminished." Mitchell (2003: 34) also argues that, "in a world defined by private

property, the formation of public sphere that is at all robust and inclusive of a variety of different publics is exceedingly difficult." Barber (2001: 203) notes that the privatization and commercialization of space have turned our "complex, multiuse public space into a one-dimensional venue for consumption." He further writes, the "malling of America has sometimes entailed the mauling of American civil society and its public" (Barber 2001: 201).

Insurgent public space: momentary ruptures and everyday struggles

Given all the historic limitations and contemporary setbacks, is it still possible to imagine a public space that is open and inclusive? Mitchell (2003) offers an important argument that the making of public space and its associated freedom and openness always requires vigilance and actions. He writes, "[The idea of public space] has never been guaranteed. It has only been won through concerted struggle" (Mitchell 2003: 5). Similarly, Watson (2006: 7) argues, "public space is always in some sense, in a state of emergence, never complete and always contested." Mitchell (2003: 5) further argues that struggle "is the only way that the right to public space can be maintained and only way that social justice can be advanced." To him, it is through the actions and purposeful occupation of a space that it becomes public.

Today, even as more and more public spaces have become heavily regulated and privatized, there are attempts by individuals and communities at greater freedom. These acts, despite their momentary nature, defy what Sorkin (1992) characterizes as the "end of public space." In San Francisco, throngs of cyclists form Critical Mass to reclaim public streets from cars. The movement now has a presence in over 300 cities around the world where cyclists engage in regular acts of civil disruption. In Beijing (where cyclists once inspired their counterparts in San Francisco), even after the crackdown on the pro-democracy movement in Tiananmen Square, the square remains a tense political stage, ruptured periodically by individual acts of dissent that recall the massacre of 1989 and the continued political oppression. In Taipei, students demonstrating against police brutality under the Kuomintang government during a recent protest camped out in the city's Liberty Square in 2008. To show their determination to stay and to demand a government response, the students began building a village on the square, complete with a kitchen, classrooms, a vegetable garden, a webcast station, and tents for sleeping (Figures 1.3 and 1.4). In Hong Kong, Filipina guest workers occupy the ground floor of Norman Foster's signature HSBC building (an icon of global capital) every Sunday, and transform it from an anonymous corporate entrance to a lively community gathering space where migrant workers picnic, chat, and reunite (Figure 1.5).

On a different front, while new technologies in telecommunication and media have undermined the importance of place-based public space, they have also enabled new types of actions and means of public dissent. Since 1994, the Zapatista Army of National Liberation has built strong international support for its struggle against the Mexican state, using the Internet as a means of communication. Starting with the anti-WTO protest in Seattle in 2000, anti-globalization activists have relied on globalized technology to communicate with each other around the world

Figure 1.3 Students of the Wild Strawberries Movement occupied the Liberty Square in Taipei to protest against police brutality and a law that restricts the freedom of assembly and demonstration. Photograph by Jeffrey Hou.

Figure 1.4 A temporary memorial built by the students to mourn the loss of democracy, mocking the memorial of the former Nationalist Chinese dictator Chiang Kai-Shek in the background. Photograph by Jeffrey Hou.

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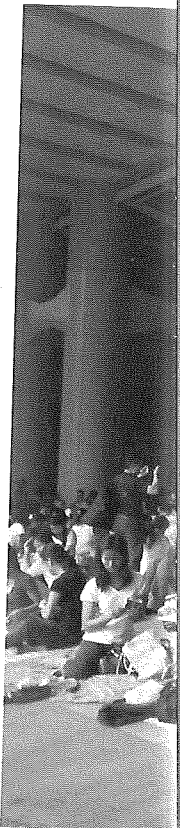
and stage protests at the gatherings of world leaders and international financial institutions. More recently, in the coastal Chinese city of Xiamen, text messaging enabled thousands of citizens to gather instantaneously in a street protest against the building of a chemical complex. The large turnout forced the local government to reject the development. Lately, social networking tools such as Twitter have been linked to mass mobilization and communication in protest events in Iran and Moldova (Cohen 2009). Together, these examples testify to Mitchell's argument that the end of public space argument is "overly simplistic in that it does not necessarily appreciate how new kinds of spaces have developed" (Mitchell 2003: 8).

On a more everyday level, citizen initiatives and informal activities have created other new uses and forms of public space. They include spontaneous events, unintended uses, and a variety of activities that defy or escape existing rules and regulations. These everyday practices transform urban spaces into what Watson (2006: 19) calls, "a site of potentiality, difference, and delightful encounters." A case in point is the community garden movement in North America and elsewhere in which hundreds and thousands of vacant or abandoned sites (including both public and private properties) have been transformed into productive plots and as places for cultivation, recreation, gathering, and education by communities (Lawson 2005, Francis *et al.* 1984; Figure 1.6). These and other forms of community open spaces have emerged as an alternative park system in cities and towns (Francis

Figure 1.5 Every Sunday, Filipina workers transform the ground floor of the HSBC building in Hong Kong into a community gathering place. Photograph by Jeffrey Hou.

et al. 1984). Through personal and collective uses that provide both private and public benefits, these community gardens function as "hybrid public spaces" that are distinct from their conventional and official counterpart (Hou *et al.* 2009).

Although these everyday expressions of public space activism might not have the appearance of radical insurgency, it should be noted that many of the outcomes would not have been possible without extensive grassroots struggle. For instance, in the Mount Baker neighborhood of Seattle, gardeners and community activists joined to defend a well-used community garden from being sold by the city for private real estate development. Teaming up with supporters and open space advocates around the city, they petitioned the City Council to pass an ordinance that requires the city to compensate sale of park property with an equivalent amount of open space in

Figure 1.6 Community gardens such as the Danny Woo Garden in Seattle's International District were created by residents and community organizers and are distinct formally and socially from the typical public open space. Photograph by Jeffrey Hou.

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the same neighborhood. The ordinance effectively saved not only their garden plots but also all other similar park properties in the city (Hou *et al.* 2009). Across the Pacific, in the Shilin Night Market in Taipei, one of the largest and most popular evening markets in the city, illegal vendors find ways every night to escape police enforcement. The vendors develop their own monitoring protocols, make-shift apparatus, and temporary storage sites so that, when the policemen approach the market from a distance, they can easily detect them, signal each other, disappear in a matter of seconds, and then converge again once the cops go away (Figure 1.7). The informal mechanism and the drama that unfolds several times in a night enable the vendors to create one of the liveliest and most dynamic marketplaces in the city, bypassing regulations and enforcement.

Figure 1.7 Vendors in Taipei's Shilin Night Market can disappear with their merchandise in a matter of seconds to escape law enforcement, adding drama to the already colorful night market. Photograph by Jeffrey Hou.

This book

This book is an attempt to better understand such everyday and not-so-everyday making of public space that defies the conventional rules, regulations, and wisdom. It focuses on alternative spaces, activities, expressions, and relationships that have emerged in response to opportunities, constraints, and transformation in contemporary society. The rubric of "insurgent public space" provides a way for us to define and articulate these expressions of alternative social and spatial relationships. Rather than bemoaning the erosion of public realm, this collective body of work focuses on the new possibilities of public space and public realm in support of a more diverse, just, and democratic society.

This edited volume represents the voices of individuals who have been active in realizing such possibilities through their practice, research, teaching, and civic involvement. They are anthropologists, communication scholars, and geographers, as well as architects, artists, community organizers, landscape architects, and planners. All of the essays focus on actual struggles and examples. They offer lessons and explore further possibilities based on experiences and encounters on the ground. To provide a comparison of the parallel and widespread occurrences around the world, this book takes on a deliberately cross-cultural approach and includes diverse cases from the different geographic regions and social contexts.

Some recent publications have addressed or informed aspects of our investigation. The phenomenon of unintended uses of urban public space in particular is a subject of growing academic interest represented by the publication of *Loose Space* (Franck and Stevens 2006) and *Everyday Urbanism* (Chase *et al.* 1999). Franck and Stevens (2006: 4) argue that unintended uses "have the ability to loosen up the dominant meanings of specific sites that give rise to new perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors." They define loose space as "a space apart from the aesthetically and behaviorally controlled and homogenous 'theme' environment of leisure and consumption where nothing unpredictable must occur" (Franck and Stevens 2006: 3). In *Everyday Urbanism*, Crawford (1999) presents a similar concept. She writes, "everyday space stands in contrast to the carefully planned, officially designated and often underused public space that can be found in most American cities" (Crawford 1999: 9). It represents "a zone of social transition and possibility in the potential for new social arrangement and forms of imagination" (Crawford 1999: 9).

In *The Ludic City*, Stevens (2007: 196) explores the playful uses of urban spaces that are often "non-instrumental, active, unexpected, and risky." Yet they provide new experiences and produce new social relations (Stevens 2007: 196). Similarly, in *City Publics*, Watson (2006: 7) focuses on "marginal, unpretentious, hidden and symbolic spaces" and "often forgotten subjects." In *The Informal City*, Laguerre (1994: 2) explores urban informality "as site of power in relation to external discipline and control power." In contrast to the formalized spaces and practices, "urban informality is the expression of the freedom of the subject" (Laguerre 1994: 24). In the field of design and planning, a number of recent publications reflect the resurging practice of design activism (see Architecture for Humanity 2006, Bell 2003, Bell and Wakeford 2008, Bloom and Bromberg 2004, Palleroni 2004). The work often involves professionals working with citizens and communities in transforming

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This volume seeks to build upon these investigations and interpretations of alternative urban practices and forms of activism to imagine a different mode of production in the making of public space, a public and a space that are heterogeneous, fluid, and dynamic.

The stories

The book is organized around a typology of actions and practices that shape the different stories of resistance. This typology is not meant to be exhaustive or categorical but rather is a way to highlight the specific characters and purposefulness of the actions.

Appropriating represents actions and manners through which the meaning, ownership, and structure of official public space can be temporarily or permanently suspended. Here, three case studies examine ways through which citizens transform the public realm by repurposing the existing urban landscapes. From Beijing, Caroline Chen examines how local residents cope with rapid urbanization and make use of existing urban infrastructure and residual spaces for their everyday recreation and socialization. From Los Angeles, James Rojas examines how Latino immigrants improvise and reinvent the notion and practice of public space in the city through new use of streets, sidewalks, vacant lots, and other spaces. From San Francisco, Blaine Merker describes how the artist and designer group Rebar has identified "niche spaces" within the framework of public and quasi-public spaces and claimed them as sites for social and artistic discourses.

Reclaiming describes the adaptation and reuse of abandoned or underutilized urban spaces for new and collective functions and instrumentality. From Berlin, Michael LaFond describes the work of eXperimentcity, which turns vacant lots in the city into venues for cooperative, ecological housing, and youth projects. From Tokyo, Shin Aiba and Osamu Nishida present work from their Re-city project, which reutilizes the existing building stocks in the Kanda district and transforms them into new neighborhood public spaces. From Vancouver, Erick Villagomez examines strategies to incrementally enhance and diversify the existing urban fabric through the exploitation of residual and neglected spaces.

Pluralizing refers to how specific ethnic groups transform the meaning and functions of public space, which results in a more heterogeneous public sphere. Michael Rios considers the prospects for a distinctive Latino Urbanism in the United States and the different ways Latinos make claims to public spaces in the city. Jeffrey Hou examines how the making of a Night Market in Seattle's Chinatown-International District has engendered a physical, social, and cultural reconstruction

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This volume seeks to build upon these investigations and interpretations of alternative urban practices and forms of activism to imagine a different mode of production in the making of public space, a public and a space that are heterogeneous, fluid, and dynamic.

The stories

The book is organized around a typology of actions and practices that shape the different stories of resistance. This typology is not meant to be exhaustive or categorical but rather is a way to highlight the specific characters and purposefulness of the actions.

Appropriating represents actions and manners through which the meaning, ownership, and structure of official public space can be temporarily or permanently suspended. Here, three case studies examine ways through which citizens transform the public realm by repurposing the existing urban landscapes. From Beijing, Caroline Chen examines how local residents cope with rapid urbanization and make use of existing urban infrastructure and residual spaces for their everyday recreation and socialization. From Los Angeles, James Rojas examines how Latino immigrants improvise and reinvent the notion and practice of public space in the city through new use of streets, sidewalks, vacant lots, and other spaces. From San Francisco, Blaine Merker describes how the artist and designer group Rebar has identified "niche spaces" within the framework of public and quasi-public spaces and claimed them as sites for social and artistic discourses.

Reclaiming describes the adaptation and reuse of abandoned or underutilized urban spaces for new and collective functions and instrumentality. From Berlin, Michael LaFond describes the work of eXperimentcity, which turns vacant lots in the city into venues for cooperative, ecological housing, and youth projects. From Tokyo, Shin Aiba and Osamu Nishida present work from their Re-city project, which reutilizes the existing building stocks in the Kanda district and transforms them into new neighborhood public spaces. From Vancouver, Erick Villagomez examines strategies to incrementally enhance and diversify the existing urban fabric through the exploitation of residual and neglected spaces.

Pluralizing refers to how specific ethnic groups transform the meaning and functions of public space, which results in a more heterogeneous public sphere. Michael Rios considers the prospects for a distinctive Latino Urbanism in the United States and the different ways Latinos make claims to public spaces in the city. Jeffrey Hou examines how the making of a Night Market in Seattle's Chinatown-International District has engendered a physical, social, and cultural reconstruction

of the public realm in the neighborhood. From Taiwan, Hung-Ying Chen and Jia-He Lin examine how Southeast Asian immigrants negotiate their identities and place through the making of their own collective space. Using ChungShan as a case study, Pina Wu examines how Filipino guest workers in Taipei find refuge in the streets, alleys, shops, restaurants, and offices of an alienating city.

Transgressing represents the infringement or crossing of official boundaries between the private and public domains through temporary occupation as well as production of new meanings and relationships. Here, three case studies from Japan explore the potentiality of a new public space that straddles the public and private realms. Using cases in the Setagaya Ward of Tokyo, Yasuyoshi Hayashi considers the network of community-based non-profit organizations as the basis of a "new public" in Japan. Isami Kinoshita examines how the concept of *niwa-roju* (Garden Street Trees) transforms the boundaries between private properties and the public streets and the social relationships inside the community. Sawako Ono, Ryoko Sato, and Mima Nishiyama describe the conversion of private farmhouses both for new quasi-public uses and as an intermediary between city and country.

Uncovering refers to the making and rediscovery of public space through active reinterpretation of hidden or latent meanings and memories in the urban landscapes. From Seattle, Irina Gendelman, Tom Dobrowolsky, and Giorgia Aiello of Urban Archives present how their project uses the city as a laboratory to research diverse and often unconventional forms of urban expression that address the complex relationships of power. Jeannene Przyblyski presents three projects by the San Francisco Bureau of Urban Secrets that engage citizens to experience cities as "sites of recovered memory and a repository of competing histories." From Taipei, Annie Chiu examines how a movement to preserve a brothel as a city historic landmark challenges the mainstream historic preservation discourse and conservative social values, as well as the boundaries between private sites/bodies and public memories. Also from Taipei, Min Jay Kang investigates the potentiality of fallow or underused spaces for a different imagination in the making of an urban landscape.

Finally, with *Contesting*, the book returns to the theme of struggle over rights, meanings, and identities in the public realm. From Canada, Andrew Pask looks at how growth of public space activism has unfolded in Vancouver and Toronto to challenge the privatization and surveillance of public space. Teresa Mares and Devon Peña examine two cases of urban farms in the United States, as illustrations of the insurgent uses of public space for food production and community organizing. In East St. Louis, Laura Lawson and Janni Sorensen describe the long-term struggles that the community has to endure to reutilize abandoned vacant land to address flooding, expand community services, and spur economic development.

Guerrilla urbanism: towards smaller yet grander urban public space

The stories in this book represent struggles by communities and individuals to find their place and expressions in the contemporary city and in doing so redefine the boundaries, meanings, and instrumentality of public sphere. The individuals and groups include activists, architects and landscape architects, community organizers,

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graffiti artists, homeowners, immigrants, parents, planners, sex workers, squatters, students, teachers, and urban farmers. The list goes on. As the variety of cases in this collection suggests, there are diverse means through which individuals and groups can engage actively in the contestation and remaking of public space, and the city by extension. From conversion of private homes into community third places to the occupation of streets for alternative uses, each of these acts may seem small and insignificant. But, precisely because these acts do not require overburdening investment or infrastructure, they enable individuals and often small groups to effect changes in the otherwise hegemonic urban landscapes. Although the actions may be informal and erratic, they have helped destabilize the structure and relationships in the official public space and release possibilities for new interactions, functions, and meanings.

Because of the scale and mode of production, the making of this alternative public space is more participatory and spontaneous, and therefore more open and inclusive. The insurgent public space that they have created is therefore both a smaller and a grander public space. These smaller yet grander public spaces reflect the subjectivity of its multiple actors and the broader instrumentality of space as a vehicle for a wider variety of individual and collective actions. Although these individuals and groups do not all fit the likely descriptions of what Fraser (1990: 67) calls the "subaltern counterpublics," by resisting against the hegemonic regulations of the contemporary public space and the notion of an undifferentiated public they become active participants in "a widening of discursive contestation" in the public space and public sphere of the contemporary society.

The making of insurgent public space suggests a mode of city making that is different from the institutionalized notion of urbanism and its association with master planning and policy making. Unlike the conventional practice of urban planning, which tends to be dominated by professionals and experts, the instances of insurgent public space as presented in this book suggest the ability of citizen groups and individuals to play a distinct role in shaping the contemporary urban environment in defiance of the official rules and regulations. Rather than being subjected to planning regulations or the often limited participatory opportunities, citizens and citizen groups can undertake initiatives on their own to effect changes. The instances of self-help and defiance are best characterized as a practice of guerrilla urbanism that recognizes both the ability of citizens and opportunities in the existing urban conditions for radical and everyday changes against the dominant forces in the society.

As cities and their social, economic and political dimensions have continued to change, the functions, meanings, and production of public space have also evolved over time. As urban populations and cultures become more heterogeneous, a growing presence and recognition of cultural and social differences have made the production and use of public space a highly contested process. Reflecting the current cultural, economic, and spatial changes of cities, insurgent public space represents a growing variety of actions and practices that enable and empower such contestation. If public space is where identities, meanings, and social relationships in cities are produced, codified, and maintained, it is through insurgent public space that alternative identities, meanings, and relationships can be nurtured, articulated,

and enacted. Through the variety of actions and practices, insurgent public space enables the participation and actions of individuals and groups in renewing the city as an arena of civic exchanges and debates. Through continued expressions and contestation, the presence and making of insurgent public space serves as barometer of the democratic well-being and inclusiveness of our present society.

Note

1 The concept of "third place" was introduced by Ray Oldenburg (1989) to describe the places that anchor community life between home and work place.

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