Prologue: Ordinary Places, Extraordinary Events

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Prologue

Ordinary Places, Extraordinary Events in Latin America

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Scholars have argued that public space is a prerequisite for the expression, representation, preservation, and/or enhancement of democracy (Sassen, 1996; Holston, 1989, 1999; Caldeira, 2000; Low, 2000; Low and Smith, 2006). However, this optimistic outlook is betrayed in reality by the many examples in recent history when public spaces have been used for the deployment and reproduction of totalitarian regimes. In the Americas, we can recount the experiences of Pinochet’s Santiago, Videla’s Buenos Aires, Strossner’s Asuncion, and Pérez Jiménez’s Caracas, among others. Yet, even in those cases, political demonstrations in public spaces conversely played a critical role in the eventual revocation of those regimes, and/or in the subsequent re-establishment of democracy. In both the past and the present, public spaces have been privileged sites for the enactment and contestation of various stances on democracy and citizenship in the public sphere. Indeed, the public sphere, as the intangible realm for the expression, reproduction, and/or recreation of a society’s culture and polity, usually encompasses divergent political visions and nurtures acute social confrontations which are played out in the more tangible public space.

This book provides a multidisciplinary approach to the study of citizenship and democracy encompassing both the notion of the public sphere and its spatiality – i.e., its re-presentation in space. Our aim is to redress an imbalance in the literature which has tended to focus on a socio-political approach at the expense of a literally more ‘grounded’ perspective. Thus, the case studies here help to expand and literally to ground the notion of the public sphere in the realm of physical public spaces. The uses and meanings given to and derived from
public spaces in the processes of making life and making history (Flacks, 1988) have traditionally been centrepieces of both conceptual and empirical analyses of democracy and citizenship. Public space dynamics also provide ways in which to gauge, analyse, and document the value structures that lie at the core of particular societies and cultures. The selection of case studies from Latin America provides an unprecedented opportunity to look at cities with comparable cultural and political trajectories to investigate the use and meaning of particular urban spaces by ordinary people in extraordinary, history-making events. The collection encompasses multidisciplinary studies of nine Latin American major cities: Mexico City, Havana, Santo Domingo, Caracas, Bogotá, São Paulo, Lima, Santiago, and Buenos Aires.

There has been a long tradition of study of contemporary uses and meanings of urban spaces, particularly since the 1960s. Yet most have focused on North American and European cases, emphasizing the analysis of everyday experiences in those places. This book makes novel contributions in two significant ways: first, by focusing on Latin American cases, which are understudied in the literature in English; and second, by emphasizing the extraordinary uses and meanings of those spaces, rather than the everyday experiences of space users. By so doing, these studies contribute to the exploration of Jürgen Habermas’s two-tiered concept of society as ‘lifeworld’ and as ‘system’ (1991), shedding light on the difference, yet complementarity of the processes of ‘making life’ and ‘making history’ (Flacks, 1988), considering the latter as those enacted by ordinary people in ordinary spaces at extraordinary events.

Similarly, there are few books in English that deal explicitly with urban design and planning in Latin America. This book proposes to weave multidisciplinary perspectives in exploring the dynamics of urban space in several Latin American cities in recent history. A few more studies explore the transitional dynamics of democracy and citizenship in Latin America from sociological and political sciences perspectives. None, however, explicitly scrutinizes the development of democracy and citizenship in physical urban space, which empirically grounds these critical debates. By adopting the latter route, this book reawakens awareness of the role of space in the politics of culture and the culture of politics of cities and countries, specifically in Latin America. Lastly, this book builds upon previous theoretical works that delve into issues of the public sphere, democracy, and citizenship, and contributes to these theoretical endeavours by probing the largely unexplored Latin American cities to test these ideas and further advance theory.

Conditions in the world evidence that any naïve hope in a benign globalization must be discarded. Some scholars are already theorizing what they conceive as a post-globalization era: post global is not an end to globalization but the emergence of a different kind of
engagement that is sharply at odds with the visions of liberal, multicultural globalization. Here, both religious fundamentalism and imperial hegemony begin to emerge as the new forms of global engagement. (IASTE, 2004)

We argue in this book that there is a third form of global engagement – that which (often desperately) holds on to the visions of a liberal, multicultural globalization in the politics of identity formation and/or nation building, particularly enacted in urban spaces. Invested in this third-way vision, we interrogate the role of both traditional and post-traditional Latin American urban places in this (post)glocal era, whereby the post-traditional is understood as a spatio-political repositioning that unsettles the historically developed relationships between places and meanings. The chapters help interrogate the fate of the link between public spaces and the construction of citizenship and democracy in this era, scrutinizing the various reworkings of identity, ethnicity, and other traditions of belonging. A key component addressed is the reworking of the construction of the histories of peoples and places, and their connection to and relevance in the post-traditional moment.

This interrogation makes a distinction between ‘making life’ and ‘making history’ events and processes (Flacks, 1988). Life-making processes are equivalent to everyday-life practices, the reproduction of quotidian life. When there are ruptures in ongoing life-making processes, events may become transcendental and attain a level of history-making. Habermas’s notions of ‘lifeworld’ and ‘system’ are also valuable in explaining how and when disruptions of the lifeworld transform the system. He explains the colonization of the lifeworld by the system. Although acknowledging this condition and making it part of our case study analyses, we emphasize the exploration of the inverse dynamics, i.e., the colonizations of the system by the lifeworld. The lifeworld exists within the system, but when lifeworld’s most fundamental rhythms are subverted, the system may experience transformation of a reformist or revolutionary nature. In a reformist transformation, the system survives, but it is (re)adjusted. In a revolutionary transformation, however, the system is replaced by a different order. A revolutionary event or process may produce a transitional systemic phase in which it may be inaccurate to talk about another system being in place. But revolutions head towards replacements of one system by another of a different nature. Historically, transitional phases from one system to another have shown varying degrees of success and have had diverse degrees of order/chaos and time lengths. System and lifeworld interact in complex and fluid ways, and paying attention to the under-explored inverse dynamic – the colonizations of the system by the lifeworld – sheds novel light on the understanding of processes of democracy and citizenship, reforms and revolutions.

Therefore, we focus particularly on the moments in which ‘cracks’ in the
lifeworld have given way to transitions from making life processes to making history episodes—in extraordinary events in otherwise ordinary public places. Often the significance of these extraordinary events in cities which are political, economic, and/or cultural capitals have transcended their urban territories and impacted the entire country, reforming or revolutionizing its history, and in some cases, its system.

The intent in this book is thus to flip around the emphasis of most studies of urban places, which focus on the everyday life of great places. This is not to say that the latter aspect of the use of place is not discussed. Rather, it is included in an expanded scope that recognizes the wider range of opportunities of exploring conditions of citizenship and democracy in public space through the array of events that can take place there, ranging from life-making to history-making, and all the shades in-between. Thus, as subtly suggested in the cover of the book, the leading line ‘Ordinary places, extraordinary events’ is also meant to be read in its different permutations of words, as follows: ‘Ordinary events, extraordinary places’, and ‘Ordinary-extraordinary, places-events’. The former alternative refers to the practices of everyday, life-making occurrences that take place in the most prominent public places. The latter suggests two conditions. It suggests the ambiguous quality of the events and places that we are qualifying, which could range from the ordinary to the extraordinary and any place in-between, both because of some of their objective characteristics, but also most importantly, because of the different interpretations that people belonging to different groups and positionalities can invest in them. The duplet ‘places-events’ also suggests that there are no neat boundaries between places and events (between space and time), particularly under extraordinary circumstances; that places are fluidly yet definitely marked by the (extraordinary) events that occur in them; and that events are largely shaped and sustained—i.e., embodied and made memorable—by the physical qualities of the sites in which they take place.

Similarly, we do not mean ‘ordinary’ places in the sense of pedestrian spatial quality. Rather, we mean ordinary to convey the notion that these spaces’ quotidian uses support everyday, life-making practices. They are usually spaces of considerable physical dimensions and of high symbolic value and they are public—major plazas, boulevards, and streets. Conversely, by ‘extraordinary’ events we mean unique episodes in the life of a society in which reformists or revolutionary changes to the system occur. The extraordinary events we refer to are mainly political events, enabled by masses of people getting together in public spaces for unique purposes. In addition, some contributors offer other approaches to the understanding of extraordinary events, including historical, artistic, or economic. Even though the cases may emphasize one of such aspects, they are all multidimensional because they operate in, and help define and transform,
their socio-cultural local and national contexts. Extraordinary events of all these sorts can unsettle the historically developed relationship between place and meaning, prompting collective reimagining of communities and nations and thus transforming the notions of citizenship and democracy.

Structure of the Book

Chapter 1, Citizenship, Democracy, and Public Space in Latin America, serves as the introduction to the topics of the book. The book is then divided into two interrelated parts. Part I, Cities, Democracies and Powers, discusses how central public spaces in a group of large South American cities have played significant roles in the struggles of power and redefinitions of democracy in those nations, allowing the formation, transformation, and representation of collective identities through the differential social appropriations of space.

In Political Appropriation of Public Space, Sergio Tamayo and Xóchitl Cruz-Guzmán analyse the political culture of participants in public demonstrations, their collective identities, and the cultural, political and social impacts of certain forms of protests and actions on Mexico City and the nation at large, through a comparative analysis of political demonstrations in Mexico City's main square, the Zócalo. The study is based on an ethnographic approach in connection to two socio-historical contexts of demonstrations held at this space. The first was carried out by the Zapatista Army of National Liberation, flanked by thousands of sympathizers in March 2001. This case is contrasted with a final electoral meeting of the winning political party during the national electoral campaign of 2000. Tamayo and Cruz-Guzmán's study underlines the processes by which urban spaces are transformed into contesting fields for, and by, different practices of citizenship, questioning the liberal and dialogical Habermasian conception of the public sphere.

Vera Pallamin and Zeuler Lima discuss transformations of São Paulo's iconic Museum of Art (MASP) and Avenida Paulista in Reinventing the Void. The covered space under the MASP is a hiatus in the dense Avenida Paulista – one of the most prized streets in São Paulo. Due to its location, shape, and cultural significance, the space has long been the site for events shaping both everyday life and extraordinary events. In a city of high density and few open spaces, it has provided a privileged venue for staging cultural, political, and social events. The authors explore how this void has been continuously reconstituted by both organized and spontaneous forms of public appropriation, and has thus responded to different conceptions of collective urban life. Paradoxically, the effervescence of all these events has not resulted in greater openness in public space. Today, the space in front of the MASP is still used for protests, while the space under it is restricted
to private events. Pallamin and Lima point out that this disjuncture opens new meanings and new forms of contestation and appropriation of urban open spaces in the city, a process with no foreseeable closure, since different forms of strategic exclusion continuously face tactical events of resistance.

Some urban spaces do not lose strong collective memories associated with them even when they undergo significant transformation. Rodrigo Vidal and Hans Fox, in *A Memorable Public Space*, reflect on the historical meanings and uses of the square of Grand Central Station and the campus of the University of Santiago, in Santiago de Chile. By the early 1980s, the site had become one of the essential places of protest against Chile’s military regime, and a bastion of opposition against the police. With the establishment of democracy, different forms of strategic exclusion continuously face tactical events of resistance. Today, new commercial activities are bringing vitality to the area, even though most of the buildings manifest symptoms of decay. Vidal and Fox unveil the elements of the urban memory related to this place and the conditions that have been crucial in constructing its social meaning.

In *Lima’s Historic Centre*, Miriam Chion and Wiley Ludeña analyse the Historic Centre of Lima, with its central role in both local and national histories throughout the city’s life. This space creates a sense of place and social belonging for Lima’s population, which contrasts with the increasing homogenization of the city by shopping malls and standardized office buildings. In the re-emerging role of Lima’s Historic Centre as a place for the reformulations of social identity, multiple urban actors compete for the use of the space. The Centre as a place for the reworking of social identity has a particular connotation in an era of globalization, when many financial and informational transactions are placeless, i.e., occur in the space of flows. Also, many places of consumption are increasingly similar across regions and have little local identity. Places of identity, therefore, can define the makeup of a city and the imagination of a nation. Chion and Ludeña explore these processes through the novel concept of spatial capital.

Alberto Saldarriaga focuses on a place that has held many history-making, extraordinary events – *The Plaza de Bolívar of Bogotá*. The plaza started out as a typical space at the centre of Spanish urban settlements in the Americas. As an open void in a quadrangular grid of streets, it was a place for many events – religious celebrations, political demonstrations, markets, bullfights, and public feasts. This plaza has played a prominent role in Colombia’s political life. Saldarriaga analyses the relationship between the physical design of the plaza and some major political events of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. For him, the new century seems to intensify the use of the plaza for extraordinary events. These events highlight the tensions that Colombia experiences, and consequently, the socio-political and spatial renegotiations in relation to different notions of nation, democracy and citizenship that are constructed and debated among different groups in the plaza.
Part II, Place, Citizenship and Nationhood discusses the formation and representation of competing ideas of citizenships and nationhood through the appropriations and representations of public space by distinct groups engaged in social, cultural, and political struggles and projects. Through the lens of Caracas in Space, Revolution and Resistance, Clara Irazábal and John Foley examine the role of architecture and urban space since the beginning of the political transformations before and during the April 2002 coup d'état that forced President Chávez out of office, the subsequent contra-coup d'état that re-established him in power, and the aftereffects of those events. During those events, the public buildings which are the seat of political power and the military, and the private buildings which are the headquarters of the media and other protagonists, coupled with other key urban spaces, became privileged sites for the public enactment of discontent as well as staging grounds for claims of various reformulations of citizenship. According to Irazábal and Foley, the analysis is evidence that, in many ways, urban spaces and architecture were and continue to be key ingredients in these unprecedented national political disputes in Venezuela, enabling social inequalities and polarization in the country to find their expression and contestation in the capital’s urban space.

In The Struggle for Urban Territories, Susana Kaiser discusses the key role that the creative, forceful, and disruptive public presence of activists played in shaping policies regarding memory, accountability, social justice and democratization in Buenos Aires. She starts with an overview of the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo’s communication strategies to denounce state terrorism and demand accountability. By transforming motherhood into a public activity, the Mothers pioneered the redefinition of what is public in Argentina, which is at the core of the country’s human rights’ struggles. By conquering physical and metaphorical territories, they shaped the style and the scope for human rights activism. Kaiser then follows with an analysis of the escraches organized by HIJOS – the children of disappeared people – and then focuses on recent street demonstrations and the new escraches, demonstrating how these strategies have been co-opted and adapted for a variety of causes. Kaiser conceives the streets of Buenos Aires as arenas of power struggles for the rewriting of memory and history.

Emphasizing the linkages between ideology and urban space is Roberto Segre’s message in Iconic Voids and Social Identity in a Polycentric City. In Havana, extraordinary events have taken place in different spaces at different times, because the city has been continually transmuting throughout its almost five centuries of history. Segre charts the evolution of Havana’s public spaces through a historical account of the eras of neoclassicism, modernity, and revolution in the city and country. He discusses some milestone events that occurred in Havana’s formal and informal spaces, unveiling its urban history as impregnated with ideological
conditioning that has defined people’s symbolic and physical appropriations of space. Finally in 1959, the monumental Civic Plaza transformed into the pulsating Plaza of the Revolution, becoming a stage to masses of Cubans over almost half a century of subsequent communist regime. Thus, through its urban spaces, Segre evidences that Havana has vividly embodied the historic ups and downs of the conflicting ideologies that have defined the destiny of the nation.

In Unresolved Public Expressions of Anti-Trujilloism in Santo Domingo, Robert González interprets monuments as extraordinary events and thus expands the exploration of socio-political constructions of conflicting notions of memory and nationhood. González focuses on several anti- and pro-Trujillo monuments typically left out of tourist maps, and the national debates surrounding them. The city offers a prominent example of a public space that was used to celebrate, at one time, the aggrandizement of a tyrannical figure, and later, the reclamation of human rights: the main plaza of the 1955 Feria de la Paz y Confraternidad del Mundo Libre. Built by Trujillo as a world’s fair, it was symbolically transformed after his assassination into El Centro de Los Héroes, honouring executed Dominicans who tried to overthrow his regime. In addition to this contested space, following Trujillo’s assassination, innumerable spatial references to his supposed heroism and generosity were removed from the city. While all the monuments both represent and constitute extraordinary events, González claims that the monuments’ invisibility from the tourist imaginary reflects a country that is still grappling to come to consensual terms with its national history.

With its array of case studies and theoretical perspectives, we believe this book will appeal not only to those interested in Latin American studies, but to anyone with an interest in cities, their peoples, politics, architecture, design and planning. Finally, we hope that the book’s stories will provide inspiration to community leaders and city residents to think of their cities as laboratories for emergent citizenships.

Notes

2. Fortunately, the interest in this area is rapidly expanding. Recently, from the perspective of environmental psychology and anthropology, Low (2000) approximates the intent of this book’s chapters by accounting for the history, use, and meaning of two plazas in San José, Costa Rica. Almandoz (2002) and del Rio and Siembieda’s (forthcoming), respectively deal with a period of the past, and a focused study of a country – Brazil. Irazábal (2005) compares the praised city of Curbita to the similarly appreciated model
in the United States city of Portland, OR. Scarpaci (2005) ambitiously evaluates the impact of heritage and globalization politics in nine historic centres in the region, revealing an ambivalent picture regarding the cities' responses to global pressures. Lastly, Herzog (2006) explores central public spaces in Spanish, Mexican, and Mexican-American border cities, discussing their design and politics as well as broader global implications.

3. Among them, Agüero and Stark (1998); Garretón and Newman (2001); Lievesley (1999); Mainwaring and Valenzuela (1998).

4. I refer to books such as Hénaff and Strong's (eds.) (2001); Habermas (1991); Holub (1991); McGuigan (1996); Mullard (2003); Trend (1996); and Vandenbergs (2000). Similarly, exploring issues of citizenship in specific urban contexts around the world, recent books include Boudreau (2000); Holston (1999); Isin (2000); and Isin and Wood (1999).

References


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Chapter I

Citizenship, Democracy, and Public Space in Latin America

Clara Irazábal

It may even be, after all, that there is something irreducible and nontransferable, necessary but not quite sufficient, about the city's public street and square for the realization of a meaningfully democratic citizenship. If we support the latter, we may have to do much more to defend the former.

Holston and Appadurai (1999, p. 16)

Cautionary Tales from the Urban South: Latin American ‘Grand Refusal’

How is Latin America’s politics changing, and what is the role of public space in these transformations? How are people in Latin American countries expressing both their discontent with unrepresentative national regimes and also with the neoliberal agenda, which often is imposed ‘from above’ by multinational institutions and encouraged by the United States? Within this context, how do urban street politics transform local and national politics and relations with the USA and the rest of the world? Taking to the streets in Latin America today is a response to international issues (for example, protests against World Bank or Monetary Fund policies, or the presence of US dignitaries) and domestic ones (such as the escraches against torturers in Buenos Aires, or demonstrations in support or opposition to Chávez in Caracas). To analyse these processes, I employ Alain Touraine’s concept of ‘grand refusal’, in which he refers to the reaction of the masses in social movements to the oppressive economic conditions caused by global neoliberalism. A ‘grand refusal’, however, can be more than a reaction, and can catalyse a vision for alternative socio-political projects.
Politicians critical of US foreign policy and the ensuing reign of neoliberalism are once more to the fore. In Venezuela, gubernatorial and mayoral elections favoured Chavistas – supporters of president Hugo Chavez in 2005, and re-elected Chavez as President on 3 December 2006. In October 2004, the left won the presidency in Uruguay – with Tabaré Vázquez – for the first time. The left had further success in the mayoral elections of May 2005. For the first time ever, eight leftist mayors took office in July 2005. In Brazil, President Luiz Inácio (Lula) Da Silva was re-elected in October 2006 and the Labour Party also gained ground in regional and local elections. In Chile, the leftist Michele Bachelet won the presidency in January 2006, Daniel Ortega in Nicaragua and Rafael Correa in Ecuador in November 2006, while in Peru the indigenous leftist leader Ollanta Humala was a serious run-off election contender in June 2006. Nine out of twelve countries in South America are now ruled by leftists, with the addition of Cuba, Nicaragua, Panama, the Dominican Republic, and Costa Rica, which have left-of-centre presidents.

In most cases, taking to the street was a crucial political strategy. Recent events in Bolivia’s capital, La Paz, also deserve attention. Since 2003 sustained street demonstrations have been significant in ousting two presidents from power. As Gamarra concedes, ‘[t]he notion of governing from the streets is very, very prevalent in Bolivia’ (cited in McDonnell, 2005, p. A3). Through street protests, road closures and strikes, indigenous and poor people demanded attention to their plight and opposed the privatization of the country’s natural resources. Street politics have affected ballot box politics, as demonstrated in the elections of 18 December 2005, which resulted in a landslide triumph for the indigenous leader Evo Morales. He joined the ranks of leftist leaders Hugo Chávez in Venezuela, Luiz Inácio (Lula) Da Silva in Brazil, and Néstor Kirchner in Argentina in opposing neoliberal dictates from Washington and multinational interests.

In Latin America, the International Monetary Fund and other global organizations have exerted great pressure for the adoption of a neoliberal agenda. While arguably some reforms were necessary and benefited some sectors of the population, others have had dramatically negative consequences. In Latin America, social inequalities are among the most extreme in the world. The richest tenth of the estimated 559 million people in the continent in 2005 earned 48 per cent of the total income, while the poorest tenth earned only 1.6 per cent. These inequalities are racially and ethnically biased, with indigenous and Afro-descended peoples at a considerable disadvantage. The disparities are also clearly evident in the polarization of urban space and the existence of slums (UN-Habitat, 2005, p. 111). The rate of population growth and pace of urbanization have both increased rapidly. Latin America’s population tripled in the 50 years to 2000, reaching 519 million. During the same period, the urban population grew fivefold. In 2001, 32
per cent were living in slums, more in South America (35.5 per cent), and several major cities with a much higher percentage. The structural transformation in the region’s economies was instrumental in accentuating the social and spatial polarization in Latin American cities.

But those conditions are being challenged in unprecedented ways, with social groups reconstituting citizenship by reterritorializing public space. New geographies of race, class, political consciousness, and political affiliation are transforming power, knowledge, subjectivities, and ultimately, space. Significantly, the process goes both ways – transformations of space cause transformations of power, knowledge, and subjectivities. These social mobilizations continue to be propelled to a great extent by reactions to neoliberalism as disenfranchised masses demand alternative models of development. The organization, focus, and political repertoire of social movements in Latin America have changed as the eras of military and oligarchic rule ended (Foweraker, 2005). The expanding repertoire of political action includes, but is not limited to, meetings, rallies, demonstrations, concerts and performances, strikes, barricades, sit-ins, cacerolazos, escraches, and media events of all sorts. Many actions are motivated by material demands, but are often transformed or expanded into claims of civil, political, human, and cultural rights.

Opinions are mixed regarding the impact of such movements and actions in a context where every human, social, and political right has had to be won through social and political struggle against democratic regimes of ‘low-intensity citizenship’ (O’Donnell, 1999; cited in Foweraker, 2005, p. 123). At the height of the neoliberal era of the 1990s in which the emphasis was on economic rather than political or social development, some Latin Americanists assessed that it was ‘impossible to mobilize and press for effective rights of citizenship, or strive to hold newly democratic governments to account’ (Ibid., p. 130). However, ‘a historical perspective shows that social mobilization, whether in Latin America or elsewhere, always occurs in waves’ (Ibid., p. 133). Accordingly, today several Latin American countries are arguably entering the era of leftist post-neoliberal regimes with a consequent heightened use of public space for both everyday and extraordinary events, all of which grounds my claim about a new wave of social mobilization à la Alain Touraine’s ‘grand refusal’.

This charged use of public space for political protests, however, is not restricted to Latin America. Around the world, the World Trade Organization (WTO), International Monetary Fund, World Bank, the Group of 8, and the European Union have had to deal with protest during summits. Taking to the streets during the WTO meeting in Hong Kong in December 2005 had been preceded by similar demonstrations in Seattle, USA, Cancun, Mexico, and elsewhere. With unprecedented world-wide coordination, on 15 February 2003, more than 30
million people in 600 cities and around the world marched for peace and against
the war in Iraq. '[T]he world witnessed the largest coordinated protests in history... [O]rdinary people the world over took to the streets to assure that their voices were
heard and their sheer numbers seen' (Mitchell and Staeheli, 2005, p. 796).

There has also been a steady shift from reactive to proactive demonstrations,
mainly represented by the World Social Forum (WSF). The forum meetings have
become an important venue for trade unions, women's groups, and peasants' and
environmental movements from around the world to learn and share organizing
strategies, canvas support, coordinate world campaigns, and build alliances
around a platform of justice. In this 'movement of movements' the different
organizations attempt to work through the conflicts between reality and utopia,
'between real achievement and contestation of the official notion of the real'

Ordinary Places, Extraordinary Events

In Latin America, cities are crucial to the negotiation of citizenship and
governance. From celebrations and affirmations, to protests and violent acts, the
case studies in this book illustrate the expanded terrain of citizenship practices
challenging the 'post-justice city' (Mitchell, 2001) and exploring alternative
models of development and urban solidarity. In times of crisis, and also during
extraordinary collective celebrations, it is common for the population to mobilize
in public spaces. Social groups and ad hoc collectives have taken to the streets
in response to the privatization of energy resources and primary sources of
employment, the globalization of commerce and communication, the politics
of austerity and inflation, the degradation of urban and regional infrastructure,
unsatisfactory urban services and investment in education, and paucity of jobs.
Identity politics – issues of legal status, gender, sexuality, race and ethnicity – are
also increasingly played out in public space. In this sense, many authors concur
that '[t]he most sensible and dramatic scenario for the struggle between the
neoliberal globalization and the defense of the local is the city... The city is the
spatial articulation of this dispute in a world of generalized urbanization' (Cantú
Chapa, 2005, p. 28).

The need to respond collectively to contemporary urban problems and to defend
the right to express identity have transformed Latin American capitals from
'revanchist cities' (Smith, 1996) to 'contesting cities' (ciudades contestatarias) (Ibid.,
p. 100) or to paraphrase Holston and Appadurai, 'insurgent cities'. The Zócalo and
the streets of the historical centre of Mexico City are a good example. Since the
neoliberal transformation of the economy in Mexico in the early 1980s demonstra-
tions have been an almost daily occurrence. In 1995, there were on average seven
demonstrations daily, and 10.4 in 1996, 70 per cent of which were organized by groups arriving in the capital from the interior (Cantú Chapa, 2005, p. 101).

Across Latin America, the transformation of the physical landscape is evident in new gated communities, new global architecture, the privatization and gentrification of older districts, and the creation of new ghettos and edge cities (Borja, 2003a; Borja and Muxí, 2002; Irazábal, 2005). In her treatise on contemporary Buenos Aires, Zaida Muxí describes it as a ‘gapped city’ (Muxí, 2004, p. 163), designed with ‘the strategy of fragmentation’, which ‘observes reality with a zoom – cutting, isolating, and resolving in a piece-meal fashion – not looking for connections’ (Ibid., p. 165). This concept is akin to that of ‘splintered urbanism’, discussed by Graham and Marvin (2001). Take the example of historic preservation in Mexico City, where Capron and Monnet (2003) expose how seemingly progressive gestures paradoxically exacerbate political, social, and economic inequalities. These findings are further elaborated on by Scarpaci (2005), who found that public-private partnerships, centralized planning, and globalization conditioned historic centre revitalization, including in Havana, favouring private commercial and tourist development and gentrification over affordable housing (the sole exception in this study is Trinidad, Cuba). The cases of Lima and Havana in this book provide evidence of some of these realities.

The spatial barriers resulting from these processes – the lack of public space, or its reduction, privatization or over-regulation (through restrictions on activities and access); the lack of access due to land use regulations, the shape of the urban grid, or availability of transport – can significantly hamper the practice of citizenship and democracy. However the processes leading to these spatial conditions do not go uncontested. Many authors, who agree that public space is essential to the maintenance of democracy in making it possible to publicize dissent, also recognize that its privatization has potentially negative political ramifications (Zukin, 1991; Sorkin, 1992; Kohn, 2004). Or as McBride (2005, p. 1002) says, ‘When we lose public space, we lose democracy’. Contributing to the privatization of the urban landscape in both North and South America is the reorganization of common space in the service of consumption, the creation of new layers of undemocratic governance – for example, through Development Districts and Home Owners Associations – and jurisprudence leaning in favour of private interests (Kohn, 2004).

Rosenthal (2000) claims that the process of decline of public space in Latin America has not been as pronounced as in the United States since World War II as cars, skyscrapers, suburbanization, television, and consumerism are less prevalent, while widely used public transport systems, the interest of elites in preserving downtowns, café-oriented societies, and nationalist memory processes that valorize public places are mitigating factors. Notwithstanding these assurances,
the stakes are high, and having access to public places in which people can exercise freedom of speech and relate to other social groups with shared interests is considered a prerequisite condition for democracy (Low, 2000; Low and Smith, 2006). However, taking to the streets cannot be romanticized as a panacea for all grievances or as resulting in the enactment of just laws and policies. On the contrary, street politics is often the last recourse after all formal claims against injustice have failed. However, we do not want to overplay the role of street politics. Although they often have measurable impact, public demonstrations are sometimes the last resort in an ongoing struggle against inequality. Their effectiveness in ameliorating injustice varies with the power of demonstrating groups vis à vis power holders, the commitment the latter have to issues of social justice and democracy, and the material and non-material resources available to respond to people’s claims. Paradoxically, sometimes achieving a positive result, however partial, can void a social movement of its power and may result in the abandonment of the public space as a fruitful and dynamic arena of the political public sphere.

The alternative to the ‘invited spaces’ of citizenship is the ‘invented spaces’ of citizenship, informally created by the people, which can vary in character (Miraftab, 2004; Miraftab and Wills, 2005). Here, we advance the notion that extraordinary events in public spaces have the potential, under certain circumstances, to expand dramatically invented spaces of citizenship. Evidently, ‘peaceful negotiations and clever, persuasive tactics are not always effective at expanding the spaces of citizenship practice’ (Miraftab and Wills, 2005, p. 208). In effect, most of these demonstrations in public spaces do not cause radical transformation, and many go almost unnoticed. But there are a few that result in radical transformation, and sometimes it is the cumulative effect of several or even many that bring about significant change. This book bears testimony to all these different possible scenarios. The effectiveness of street action is also limited if ‘street fatigue’ ensues when sustained mobilization is without proportional gain in the political arena. Such was the case of the opposition to Chávez in Venezuela. After taking their politics to the streets of Caracas for years against Chávez’s regime to no avail, maintaining the level of mass mobilizations sustained earlier became impossible.

Citizenship, Democracy and Public Space in Latin America

Citizenship and Democracy

Theories of citizenship

Thomas H. Marshal (1964) defines citizenship as ‘a status bestowed on those
who are full members of a community. All who possess the status are equal with respect to the rights and duties with which the status is endowed’ (Marshal quoted in Friedmann, 2002, p. 168). The story of the progression from civil rights in the eighteenth century, to political rights in the nineteenth century, and finally social rights in the twentieth century typifies the omission of the domain of culture from citizenship. In the contemporary view of citizenship, cultural rights ‘are important in expanding the legal framework of governance into the cultural sphere, but the main issues are less normative than symbolic and cognitive, since it is about the construction of cultural discourses’ (Delanty, 2002).

Here, we employ citizenship as an analytical tool to scrutinize the relationships between different social groups, and between the state and civil society. Citizenship also allows the scrutiny of the struggles for the expansions of social, cultural and political rights, the dynamics of identity politics, and the disputes over meanings and practices of participation. It is a framework to understand the existence and distribution of resources, the interactions between the public and the private, the social and the individual, and the modern and the traditional (Tamayo, 2004). With all the demographic, social, political, economic, and cultural restructuring in the world today, it is no longer adequate to restrict membership in society within the frame of the nation-state. Traditional, nation-derived notions of citizenship have suppressed difference. But the scales, institutions, and spaces of citizenship are morphing, and new understandings invite us to think in ‘thick’, multi-layered concepts (Yuval-Davis, 1999). Citizenship has been expanded to encompass cultural claims, human and local rights, and significantly, the rights to the city. Theories of radical democracy and planning, cultural and sustainable citizenship, and social justice do inform rights claims as groups enact class, gender, ethnic and racial, immigrant, religious, and sexual orientation identity politics in public spaces (Boudreau, 2000).

Cultural citizenship, inclusive citizenship (Gaventa, 2002), active citizenship (Kearns, 1995), and insurgent citizenship (Holston, 1995) all redefine the practices, values, and rules of society today. Lee’s ‘performative paradox’ (Lee, 1998) of the gulf between citizenship as defined by law and as enacted subversively in practice is also captured by Boudreau in her ‘performative citizenship’ whereby ‘[t]he right to inhabit the city, to be there, to be politically active regardless of one’s legal status, and the right to claim rights, are written nowhere in constitutional definitions of citizenship’ (Boudreau, 2000, p. 132). However new Latin American constitutions, such as in Brazil and Venezuela, are radically changing this reality. Winocur’s four perspectives on the transformation of citizenship help us make sense of the change (Winocur, 2003). First, the notion of citizenship is redefined to include the right to be different from the dominant national community, and citizenship is understood as fluid and dynamic with rights and values constructed through practices and
discourses. Cultural citizenship thus can be seen as an extension of Marshall’s progression from civic and political to social citizenship. And in the context of globalization, it is evidently a form of citizenship that extends beyond nationality (Delanty, 2002). The gender-based events in São Paulo and the artistic events in Bogotá discussed in this book are examples of extraordinary events mobilized to claim the ‘right to be different’.

Secondly, citizenship is transformed as people’s interests shift from the political to the social. Put in another way, experience, more so than formal institutional politics, organizes people’s identities. This ‘recuperation of politics as an inherent capacity of citizens’ (Lechner, 2000, p. 31) is evidenced in the Madres and Hijos movements in Buenos Aires. Thirdly, the notion of citizenship is directly linked to rights of minorities and marginalized groups to quality public space. In this view, people become citizens through their participation in the conception, construction, and management of the city, and particularly, through the negotiations of the use of public space. These dynamics are evidenced for instance in the reterritorializations of public spaces in Lima and Caracas. Lastly, the forth perspective on citizenship explores the impact of communication media on participation in the public sphere, the formation of public opinion and values, the sense of societal belonging, and ultimately, the appreciation and use of public spaces. Its impact has been felt throughout, most dramatically in the case of Venezuela. In Buenos Aires, a combination of media – graffiti, flyers, and Internet – have helped Hijos uncover the identity of former torturers. In Rio de Janeiro, TV serves both to unite Cariocas during certain festivities and to terrorize them when drug gangs seize the city, while in Mexico City, reports in the media can make or break political candidates and campaigns.

When the effects of the media and public space are factored in, citizenship becomes less an abstract notion of political rights and duties in a nation-state and more a flexible notion that is ‘popular, polysemiotic, and instrumental’ (Winocur, 2003, p. 248). The media play a very critical role in the construction of citizen identities, and can significantly legitimize or delegitimize citizen practices in public space, as claims can be presented as ‘rightful’ or criminalized as ‘inauthentic’ (Miraftab and Wills, 2005). In particular cases, the manipulated portrayal in the media of public demonstrations, marches, strikes, riots, coups and contra-coups, and exit polls has effectively constructed ‘virtual geographies’ (Crang et al., 1999; Wark, 1994), leading to ‘imagined communities’ (Anderson, 1983) and ‘imagined geographies’ (Gregory, 1994).

The city as the site of insurgent citizenship

Cities are increasingly functioning as a privileged locus for the formation of new
claims to citizenship (Sassen, 1996). The concepts of insurgent urbanism and insurgent citizenship, introduced by Holston (1995) and further articulated by Sandercock (1998a), Friedmann (2002), Miraftab (2004), and Miraftab and Wills (2005), provide the means with which to analyse these phenomena. Holston and Appadurai (1996, p. 50), largely referring to squatter settlements and labour or homeless camps, define spaces of insurgent citizenship as ‘situations which engage, in practice, the problematic nature of belonging to society’. In furthering the notion of insurgent citizenship, this book argues that extraordinary, short-lived events in urban public places can nevertheless have a lasting impact and a transformational effect on cities and nations, and thus constitute spaces of insurgent citizenship.

Insurgent citizenship challenges and problematizes the normative basis of citizenship in capitalist societies. According to Miraftab and Wills (2005, p. 202), it ‘challenges the hypocrisy of neoliberalism: an ideology that claims to equalize through the promotion of formal political and civil rights yet, through its privatization of life spaces, criminalizes citizens based on their consumption abilities’. This ‘consumerist citizenship’, promoted through the privatization of open space, the creation of gated communities and privatized edge cities, the criminalizing of homeless and immigrants, and the disciplining of insurgent groups (MacLeod, nd), defines what Mitchell has labelled the era of the ‘post-justice city’ (Mitchell, 2001), in which citizenship rights are taken away from the ones who cannot participate in the neoliberal economy. To counteract this trend, we adopt Miraftab’s (2004) call for the recognition of the improvised, invented spaces of citizenship:

‘Invited’ spaces are defined as the ones occupied by those grassroots and their allied non-governmental organizations that are legitimizied by donors and government interventions. ‘Invented’ spaces are those, also occupied by the grassroots and claimed by their collective action, but directly confronting the authorities and the status quo. While the former grassroots actions are geared mostly toward providing the poor with coping mechanisms and propositions to support survival of their informal membership, the grassroots activity of the latter challenges the status quo in the hope of larger societal change and resistance to the dominant power relations. (Miraftab, 2004, p. 1).

Here we emphasize the ‘invented’ spaces of citizenship created, used, and appropriated by people where recourse to ‘invited’ spaces is ineffective. In developing countries, the negative externalities of globalization and neoliberalism have been felt more poignantly (Kabeer, 2002). Thus, it is particularly the poor who are at the centre of the drama of evolving forms of citizenship, mobilizing to attain rights to the city (Lefebvre, 1996). Frequently these contesting dramas are performed in the streets, expanding the ‘invited’ public sphere and creating new spaces and practices (Isin, 1999; Rose, 2000). We also second the feminist
critique of liberal notions of citizenship that assume the identities, rights, and duties of citizens as fixed and universal (Fraser and Gordon, 1994; Roy, 2001, 2003; Sandercock, 1998b; Wekerle, 2000; Young, 1990; Yuval-Davis, 1999; Miraftab 2004; Miraftab and Wills, 2005).

Space and the dynamic spatio-temporal scales of citizenship

Historically, citizenship marked the state of belonging and commitment to a specific place (a city-state or borough), with rights and duties performed in this context (Isin, 2002b). This place-rootedness of citizenship was somewhat diluted by the geographic expansion to national citizenship from the late eighteenth century onwards, but recent transformations in government and the saliency of cities as economic and cultural engines have arguably strengthened the previous connection: active citizens act for and within place-based communities. In the context of governance, decentralization – the growing mode of ‘governing through communities’ – shifts the emphasis from ‘national citizens’ to the practice of responsibilities by ‘active citizens’ in sub-national communities (Rose, 2000).

As Bullen and Whitehead (2005, p. 500) argue, it is the inclusion of space in the analysis of citizenship – particularly through the excavation of ‘heterotopias, post-modern places, and closet spaces of citizenship’ – that has helped reveal ‘a whole range of citizens and modes of radical/alternative citizenship forged around issues of gender, sexuality, ethnicity, age, class and religion, which had previously been excluded from analyses of citizenship’. Massey (2004), Amin (2004), and Desforges et al. (2005), among others, advocate ‘a new “politics [and citizenship] of propinquity” with a focus on diversity within places (Amin, 2004, p. 38). Similarly, Massey (2004) describes a form of spatially bounded citizenship that is based on continual, and sometimes conflict-ridden negotiation. With increased mobility and the rise of trans-nationalist identification, new global forms of citizenship are emerging. Echoing Yuval-Davis’s (1999) ‘multi-layered’ citizenship, Ong’s (1999) ‘flexible’ citizenship has been forwarded as a notion of flexible loyalties that transcend any particular nation-state. Joseph’s (1999) ‘nomadic’ citizenship expands on Arjun Appadurai’s (1990) topography of scapes (ethnoscape, technoscape, mediascape, etc.) to include that of ‘citizenscape’ as a means of theorizing identity for dislocated communities, refugees, and immigrant populations. Joseph’s (1999) use of citizenscape enables the analysis of overlapping and multi-faceted narratives of identities. She reiterates the performative nature of citizenship as ‘a ceaseless activity in which the fragments of various nations are scraped together into a makeshift home’ (Ibid.). Bullen and Whitehead (2005, pp. 513–514) also argue for a ‘sustainable’, fin de siècle post-cosmopolitan citizenship that recognizes the importance of time and the world beyond the purely human.
In the global context, communities 'should be understood as relational spaces, composed of myriad networks of socio-ecological flows, stretching across various global and local scales' (Ibid., p. 507). It is this politics of connectivity to other times and most particularly to other places, which, in the words of Desforges et al. (2005, p. 444) gives shape to 'some of the most important, and potentially liberating, new geographies of citizenship in the contemporary world... In this way, both local and extralocal interested and affected actors should be able to contribute to particular political programmes and visions of citizenship'. In this context, the relevance of physical public spaces increases as important platforms of citizenship that articulate the local, the national, and the global. Spaces of media and the Internet can alternatively compete with these public spaces, complement them, or reinforce their dominance. These concepts – multi-layered, flexible, nomadic, performative, sustainable citizenship, etc. – shed light on the multifaceted ideals with which city residents may identify. Individuals may find a way of reconciling their different loyalties with each other, but for many, this constitutes an ongoing challenge.

**Democracy**

Democracy is defined as a political system with majority rule and a separation of executive, judicial and legislative powers. The popular definition of a system ‘by the people, for the people’ has gradually prompted the expansion of democracy to mean decentralization, citizen participation, social justice, and respect of minorities (Tomas, 2004, p. 162). In Latin America, an important factor in the saliency of democratic and citizenship concerns has been the maturing of urbanization throughout the continent. As Roberts (2005, p.144) reports, 'by 2000, 75 percent of the Latin American population was urban, and most of the urban population lived in cities of over 100,000 people’. In addition, the pronounced urban primacy whereby one city, usually the capital, houses a large proportion of the national population compounds the importance of extraordinary events in public spaces. In this book, we take the stance advanced by Foweraker (2005) that the social mobilization for rights in public space holds the key to the improvement of democratic governance in Latin America.

This perspective differs from the view of democracy as the historical result of ‘good lobalisa’ in the form of the civic community (Putnam, 1993). This latter view takes ‘civciness’ as a functional prerequisite for democracy rather than exploring the popular agency that may achieve or improve it... An emphasis on social mobilization, in contrast, suggests that it is ‘bad lobalisa’ in the form of the fight for rights that can do most to improve the quality of democracy and deliver its substance to the citizenry at large... In the near future it is not likely to be a democracy made in the image of a perfectly civic society. But social mobilization may achieve the political conditions for piecemeal social development and greater efficacy in the rule of law. (Foweraker, 2005, p. 135)
‘Bad behaviour’, in Foweraker’s ironic terms, is akin to the notions of insurgent citizenship and invented spaces of citizenship described above. These new expansive and performative types of citizenship beg a radical redefinition of democracy. In principle, deliberative democracy could offer a resolution to the performative paradox – the gaps between legal rights and actual practices of citizenship. In this approach, ethical principles emerge out of collective and fair deliberative processes in the public sphere in which arguments are constructed, discussed, and evaluated until the best prevail (Habermas, 1996). However, deliberative democracy has been criticized for not accounting for power imbalances and issues of exclusion and inequality (Young, 1996). ‘Radical democracy’, which redefines the liberal democratic principles of equality and liberty, may redress these shortcomings without diluting the differences and interests of diverse groups in the name of consensus. As Cohen and Fung explain,

In particular, radical-democratic ideas join two strands of democratic thought. First, with Rousseau, radical democrats are committed to broader participation in public decision-making... Second, radical democrats emphasize deliberation. Instead of a politics of power and interest, radical democrats lobal a more deliberative democracy in which citizens address public problems by reasoning together about how best to solve them. (Cohen and Fung, 2004, pp. 23–24).

In their poststructuralist critique of ‘liberal essentialism’, Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe (1985) criticized Rawls and other liberal theorists for essentializing identities and norms under the guise of rationality and neutrality (Mouffe, 1995). For Mouffe, no one should control the fundamental principles of society because that would define and silence the excluded. What democracy should provide instead, she claims, is a ‘grammar of conduct’ for people to abide by.

But more than the attainment of an ideal of radical democracy, what interests us here is in the radicalization of democracy. This entails different trajectories for each city and country in a context-specific search for a just city or nation. The collective imagining and mapping of such tailored trajectories in public space and all other venues in the public sphere, and the actual traversing of those paths, are what can ultimately help achieve the best conditions possible for full participation and deliberation.

What might those paths for the radicalization of democracy look like in each case studied in this book? This is an ongoing question that should be addressed through public participation and deliberation in each of those places. Tentatively, however, we may assume that a radicalization of democracy in Havana, for example, would expand the freedom of expression and the right to dissent while protecting the rights of Cubans to select and maintain their politico-economic system. In Caracas, it would entail respect for supporters and dissenters of the political regime, while facilitating progress in the transformation
of a representative to a participatory democracy. In Rio de Janeiro, it would make all people accountable to the rule of law, while expanding human development opportunities for the disenfranchised. The same in Buenos Aires would clarify the crimes of the past, reconcile people with their present and with each other, and work for an inclusive and just future. In São Paulo, the process needs to respect the existing physical spaces of invited citizenship while trying to expand and appreciate opportunities for invented spaces of citizenship through design and policy-making. A radicalization of democracy in Santo Domingo would affirm respect for human rights and the rule of law through appropriations of space as Dominicans collectively move forward in overcoming the excesses and abuses of the past. In Santiago de Chile, it would facilitate the articulation of collective subjectivities to spaces that help Chileans engage in proactive agency to secure a future free of social and political repression.

If history is any indication, the people in Latin America will have to keep struggling for change to move in the direction of realizing these visions. In this venture, public space can be both a springboard for these mobilizations and an indicator of the sincere commitment to democracy on the part of those that create, maintain, regulate, and use these spaces. Meanwhile, we share Kohn's hope that 'a careful analysis of sites of resistance ... might strengthen a conception of democracy that is useful today' (Kohn, 2003, p. 2).

Public Space

We recognize that the public has come to encompass the a-spatial world of the media, the Internet, and other trans-local conduits, but we aim to recover a focus on the physical space of plazas, streets, boulevards, parks, beaches, etc. We also continue a tradition of equating public and urban in our analyses of space. "Stretching back to Greek antiquity onward, public space is almost by definition urban space, and in many current treatments of public space the urban remains the privileged scale of analysis and cities the privileged site" (Low and Smith, 2006, p. 3). There are several criteria in the making of 'publicness'. First, the public refers to that which is general, collective, and common. Second, public is that which is visible and ostensible. Lastly, public is that which is open and accessible to all (Rabotnikof, 2003). Public spaces facilitate encounters, and thus social learning.

Public spaces embody the tension between cultural diversity and social integration, and are crucial to the expression and resolution of complex socio-spatial transformations in cities around the globe. Discussions about public space try to address the need to strengthen both the sense of citizenship amidst the fragmentation of identities and the acknowledgment and celebration of plurality (Ramírez Kuri, 2003). The ideal of public spaces — open, accessible, inclusive,
and capable of supporting respectful encounters of differences – makes them privileged sites in this quest (Makowski, 2003). As common ground for sociability and conflict, public spaces are terrain for the dialogical and dialectical practices of citizenship. The symbolic aspects of public spaces, a collective imaginary of memories, histories, and meanings, complements the physical characteristics of places (Ibid.). The places analysed in this book play a definite role in the construction of ‘imagined communities’ in the nations they belong to (Anderson, 1983). As an example, Alejandro Encinas, former Secretary of the Environment in Mexico City, asked those living in the vicinity of the Zócalo if they wanted the plaza landscaped. Though approved by voters, he faced protests from those claiming that this was not a decision for neighbours or even the city to make, because the space belonged to the whole nation (Tomas, 2004, p. 169). Citizenship and public space are tightly intertwined and to a great extent define each other, as ‘both are the result of the interactions and struggles to generate and expand citizenship spaces’ (Tamayo, 2004, p. 154). Not only a mise-en-scène for diversity and difference, public spaces are sites for the negotiation of values, rights, duties, and rules of sociability in a community.

Ideally, public space has to be multifunctional and capable of stimulating symbolic identification and cultural expression and integration (Borja, 2003b, p. 67). Regrettably, the recent growth of most Latin American cities has occurred without much expansion of public spaces. On the contrary, the prevalent trend has been to focus on transport infrastructure, shopping centres, and exclusive communities. The loss in quantity and quality of public space has affected the quality of life of city residents. Spaces abandoned by the middle- and high-income classes were colonized by the poor while others were renovated to serve the tourist and elite classes, as semi-private spaces were created within gated residential and business enclaves (Caldeira, 2000; Duhau, 2003). The resulting socio-spatial reorganization often results in ‘the coexistence, without co-presence, of the poor with the middle- and high-income classes’ (Duhau, 2003, p. 163). Most literature on public space with a focus on the United States and Europe also decries its privatization and commodification often linked with the expansion of the capitalist society. According to Low and Smith (2006, p. 4) in ‘the Western world today, truly public space is the exception not the rule’. Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge significant efforts that are being made in many Latin American cities to recover or create effective public space, signalling a ‘renaissance of interest in public space in the current Latin American urbanism’ (Borja, 2003a, p. 94).

How do extraordinary events transform public space?

The literature on the symbolic and spatial impacts of extraordinary events in public
spaces is sparse. However, Foucault's notion of heterotopic space can provide a means to conceptualize public spaces as the evolving sites of extraordinary events. He contrasted the notion of utopias - idealized conceptions of society, inexistent in reality - with his inverse idea of heterotopias, or socially constructed counter-sites. Foucault (1997, p. 351) asserts 'There also exist ... real and effective spaces ... in which all the real arrangements ... are at one and the same time represented, challenged and overturned'. Heterotopias give rise to new discourses about knowledge, power, subjectivity, and space. These alternate worlds fracture and entangle time and space and simultaneously reconstitute social relationships. Elspeth Probyn, building on Foucault, argues that '[h]eterotopia juxtaposes in one real place several different spaces, "several sites that are in themselves incompatible" or foreign to one another ... these are ... "places where many spaces converge and become entangled"' (cited in Guertin, nd, pp. 10, 11).

It is important to acknowledge, as Harvey (2000) points out, that alterity, or radical difference from the dominant society, by itself does not produce resistance or even critique of the status quo. We then refer here to the notion of heterotopia of resistance: 'a real counter-site that inverts and counters existing economic or social hierarchies. Its function is social transformation rather than escapism, containment, or denial' (Kohn, 2003, p. 91). It is in extraordinary events that many of the places studied here become heterotopias of resistance, or socially constructed counter-sites. In everyday life, but even more intensely and unexpectedly during extraordinary events, spaces are actively produced and reproduced to sustain or alter socio-economic and cultural givens. Cupers (2005, p. 734) asserts that it is particularly during extraordinary events when 'spatiality in the city is profoundly impure and hybrid, that this process unfolds. Space can thus be envisaged as a palimpsest of historical layers, some of which have disappeared while others remain active in constituting identities'. Cupers, who extends Careri's (2002) notion of the 'nomadic city', also proposes that

Understanding space and identity in terms of their continual change, may lead to the concept of a nomadic geography... The nomadic character of identity and space gives rise to an architecture of events, an urbanism of the situation... As such, the city's nomadic geography guarantees the presence of a strangeness that is possibly the most essential characteristic of the city (Cupers, 2005, p. 737, his emphasis).

Careri and Cupers see the nomadic city as a space open to progressive politics. 'Here new forms of lobalisa appear, new ways of dwelling, and new spaces of freedom' (Careri, 2002, p. 188). Cupers refers to London's East End as an example of a space in which the strange is allowed within the interstices of the familiarity of settlement. Yet we can think of the Latin American public spaces explored in this volume as such places. Cupers also critiques urban planning as a technology of domination, a position echoed by many scholars (see Flyvbjerg and Richardson,
The call for the recognition of the fundamental linkages between citizenship, democracy, and public space made in this book is a call for more democratic and liberating planning practice.

The politics of and in public space

Around the world today, people are using public spaces to express their frustration, their dissent, and their hopes for alternative socio-political projects. Evidently, there are historical precedents of this phenomenon, especially in times of crises. As Low and Smith (2006, p. 16) argue, ‘political movements are always about place and asserting the right, against the state, to mass in public space’. The cases analysed in this book detail significant evidence that ‘[t]he neoliberalism of public space is neither indomitable nor inevitable’, and that ‘whatever the deadening weight of heightened repression and control over public space, spontaneous and organized political response always carries within it the capability of remaking and retaking public space and the public sphere’ (Ibid., p. 16). Since dissent, a cornerstone of Western liberal democracies, always threatens to exceed its bounds and become a threat, a challenge facing liberal states has not only been how to incorporate dissent, but also how to shape and control it: ‘The politics of public space is thus a politics of location: where voices are silenced makes a huge difference as to which voices are heard. The politics of public space, therefore, can shape the nature of politics in public space’ (Mitchell and Staeheli, 2005, p. 798). The over-policing of dissent, however, has in some cases led to the neutralizing of the promise of protest. But it also seems that the forms of ‘soft’ restraint, such as is embodied in the US protest permit system, overlaid on zoning, and other spatial tactics, are no longer as useful because dissenting publics are defying them (Ibid.). The chapters in this book reassert the vitality and vibrancy of public space politics in Latin America in a world that is experiencing a significant decrease in opportunities for expression in public space. Latin America is thus a promising site for a ‘grand refusal’ arresting the march of global neoliberalism and asserting locally concerted ways of living.

Linkages between public space and public sphere

The chapters in this book also present an opportunity to explore further the linkages between the public sphere and public space. Despite the rising interest in exploring their relations (Fraser, 1990; Mitchell, 2003), the literature that links public space and public sphere rarely takes a spatial angle. Low and Smith make a strong argument for the respatialization of the public:
Where the weakness of the public space literature perhaps lies in the practical means of translation from theories of political and cultural economy to the materiality of public space ... the weakness of the public sphere literature may lie in the distance that it maintains from the places and spaces of publicness ... Once recognized, that spatiality of the public sphere potentially transforms our understanding of the politics of the public. An understanding of public space is an imperative for understanding the public sphere. (Low and Smith, 2006, p. 6)

The original understanding of the concept of the public sphere has to be revamped if it is to be a useful notion for understanding the current transformations of the contemporary city. The concept originally referred to the emerging class of bourgeois capitalists in the eighteenth century, who formed a sphere of private people coming together as a public, claiming the public sphere from the public authorities which made possible, for the first time, rational political debate between private people in which everyone in principle was able to participate (Habermas, 1989). Although this early concept of the public sphere continues to influence present-day theory, it has received many criticisms (Fraser, 1999; Garnham, 1999; Young, 1996), including in Latin America (Avritzer, 2002). I highlight the particular criticism of the relations of identity and space (Gould, 1996). Cupers explains,

In its blinding myth of abstract space and rational identity, the concept of the liberal public sphere ultimately fails to understand the complexities of space and identity formation in the contemporary city. As such, it projects a fixed geography that falls short in perceiving how ideologies determine the spaces of public discussion and negotiation, and how identity is formed beyond rationality. (Cupers, 2005, p. 731)

In the liberal concept of the public sphere, with its focus on rational communication, differences such as class, gender, and race become irrelevant, while in reality ‘difference becomes a fundamental aspect of the ways in which people interact and express identities in urban space’ (Ibid., p. 731). Cupers and others contest the abstract universality and political rationality of the original understanding of the public sphere, and suggest that in our times the public sphere can instead be understood ‘as a play of uncertain identities in contested spaces’. Several chapters in this book explicitly engage the notion of the public sphere to debunk the assumptions of political rationality and abstract universality. See, in particular, Lima and Pallamin, Tamayo and Cruz-Guzmán, and Irazábal and Foley.

The Right to the City

Henri Lefebvre’s seminal work on ‘the right to the city’ (1968, 1996) refers to the rights to inhabit and make use of the city and the right to have rights regardless of
one's legal status. Among planners, activists, academics, and NGOs the phrase has become increasingly popular spurring the emergence of many new ideas (some of which come from Latin American, e.g., Buroni 1998; and Daniel 2001; but also Isin, 2000 and Soja, 2000; among others). In Purcell’s words:

Lefebvre (1991) maintains that space is implicated in all elements of social life, the right to control the decisions that produce urban space implies the right to determine the full scope of everyday life in the city. Lefebvre’s right to the city thus envisions a thoroughgoing democratization of urban politics. He insists that decision-making about urban space should be guided by the principle that use value should always trump exchange value — that above all other considerations urban space should be produced to meet the everyday needs of those who inhabit it. (Purcell, 2005, p. 200)

... Lefebvre interrogates and rethinks the decision-making structures that produce the city, and so introduces a much more radical democratization of the city ... not just the right to speak in public space, but to decide the geography of public space; not just the right to be housed, but to decide the geography of affordable housing. (Ibid., p. 201)

For Harvey (2003, p. 940), the right to the city should not be ‘merely a right of access to what the property speculators and state planners define, but an active right to make the city different, to shape it more in accord with our heart’s desire, and to re-make ourselves thereby in a different image’. But despite these possibilities, Purcell argues that the ‘right to the city’ has not been sufficiently operationalized. There is still much work to be done in order to develop fully ‘how visionary radical theory might articulate with everyday struggles against oppression’ (Ibid., p. 201). But in invited and invented spaces of citizenship in Latin America, residents are pushing for the expansion of their rights to the city.

Implications for Planning and Policy Education, Research and Practice

We hope to contribute to a greater engagement with space within interdisciplinary work on citizenship, democracy, and the public sphere. We also aim to promote a reconstitution of urban planning and design thought and practice so as to aspire to ‘just cities’ that facilitate the unencumbered development of full citizenship for all residents. As Miraftab (2004, p. 212) suggests, these stories of ordinary and extraordinary events in urban public spaces underline ‘the significance of both invited and invented spaces of citizen participation in the formation of inclusive cities and citizenship’. The ideas discussed in this chapter – among them, nomadic geography, insurgent urbanism, and invented spaces of citizenship – can help us envision a progressive politics that translates into planning theory, education, and practice grounded in a sophisticated understanding of citizenship and a challenge to neoliberal urbanism (Miraftab, 2004, p. 202). This should lead planners and policy-makers to reassess their roles and to acknowledge and encourage the
kind of citizenship practices that Holston and Appadurai (1999, p. 20) describe being able to create 'new kinds of citizenship, new sources of laws, and new participation in decisions that bind'.

In effect, the recent reinterpretations of the notion of citizenship covered in this chapter move planning theory beyond participatory planning to insurgent planning (Miraftab, 2004; Holston, 1995, 1998; Sandercock, 1998a, 1998b; Friedmann, 2002). This is a significant restructuring of the realm of planners' inquiry and commitment: 'If modernist planning relies on and builds up the state, then its necessary counter agent is a mode of planning that addresses the formations of insurgent citizenship' (Holston, 1998, p. 47). Also in Miraftab's (2004, p. 211) words: 'for an emerging wave of planners who take into account an expanded realm of citizenship construction, the sources of information and guidance for planning practices are the everyday spaces of citizenship', and we would also add, the extraordinary spaces of citizenship. Scholars advocate an epistemological shift within planning theory and education as a move to 'engage, in practice, the problematic nature of belonging to society' (Holston, 1999a, p. 173), or as Miraftab (2004, p. 211) claims, '[a] planning practice that relies not merely on the high commands of the state but on situated practices of citizens'. Urban designers, planners, and politicians have yet to confront these shifting socio-spatialities. For Sandercock (1998b), such 'radical planning' does not necessarily begin with grand acts, but instead with smaller actions that she calls 'a thousand tiny empowerments'. Significantly, some of the events discussed in this book simultaneously constitute grand acts and tiny empowerments. A next step in researching extraordinary events in public spaces would be to assess the conditions under which they result in an insurgent citizenship culminating in a better quality of life and an urbanism more responsive to the needs of city.

The explorations in this book are timely as we are witnessing a rebirth of interest in public space, and the reformulation of citizenship and democracy in Latin America as these countries resist neoliberal dictates, leaning left at a time when the United States is leaning right. In this world of interconnectedness, these polarizations are not isolated events, but their ultimate implications remain to be seen. The 'grand refusal' against neoliberalism in Latin America may prove to be short lived, but if it lasts, and while it lasts, it may bring critical restructuring not only to cities in the South but also to the system of global order. The seeds of a new world, or at least an alternative world order, may very well be in the making.

References


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