

The Politics of Public Space

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CHAPTER 1 Introduction: The Imperative of Public Space

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This is a pivotal moment for examining the politics of public space. The broad decay of twentieth-century American liberalism provides the crucial context for the restructuring of what counts as public space today, and this in turn was sparked by a range of social shifts and transformations: reactions against the liberatory maelstrom of 1960s politics; the implosion of official communism after 1989; and the consequent neoliberal onslaught after the 1980s. Together these developments brought a trenchant reevaluation and redaction of public space. A creeping encroachment in previous years has in the last two decades become an epoch-making shift culminating in multiple closures, erasures, inundations, and transfigurations of public space at the behest of state and corporate strategies. In part, these are the result of supposedly antiterrorist policies initiated after the events of September 11, 2001, especially the far-reaching effects of the U.S. Patriot Act and related legislation, which produced a wholly unprecedented circumscription of popular uses of public space. From city parks to public streets, cable and network news shows to Internet blog sites, the clampdown on public space, in the name of enforcing public safety and homeland security, has been dramatic. Public behavior once seen simply

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as eccentric, or even protected by First Amendment rights, is now routinely treated as a potential terrorist threat.

The clampdown on public space, however, is not simply due to a heightened fear of terrorism after 2001, and it has many local- as well as national-scale inspirations. Many public uses of space are increasingly outlawed and policed in ways unimaginable a few years previously, but these rights were already under concerted attack well before 2001. The assertion of neoliberalism since the 1980s harkens back not to the somewhat progressive appeal of a twentieth-century American social liberalism but to the more conservative doctrines of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century liberalism. The latter were certainly progressive for their time. Adam Smith's modern political economy and John Locke's legal enlightenment (borne forth by revolutions from France to Haiti to the United States) dispatched the aristocratic elitism of the feudal era to the dustbin of history, opening up the market and the voting booth to anyone with the political standing (and socioeconomic collateral) to participate. While their doctrines liberated the emerging bourgeoisie from monarchical tutelage, they also enshrined universal private property (for those with the requisite military or economic wherewithal) at the expense of the long tradition of common land. The profitable use of space, Locke argued, justifies a certain kind of "natural rights"-based privatization of the commons against those who would occupy space merely for purposes of subsistence. The subsequent global land grab by the European bourgeoisie established private property immediately, undercutting land claims based on the logic of "special interests," such as dispossessed peasants, workers, and the poor. When property owners and participants in the market vote in their own interests, according to the new Enlightenment doctrine, the collective commonweal is ensured: property owners and consumers in the marketplace are the new citizens. As this principle is rediscovered at the beginning of the twenty-first century, we should understand that "neoliberalism" is a very precise definition of the conservatism overtaking us. Thomas Hobbes was also a child of the Enlightenment, and his deification of the state as the necessary prophylactic against social unrest has increasingly clear echoes today. Certainly by the 1990s, many urban citizens came to feel that daily life had become a *bellum omnium contra omnes*—a war of all against all, as Hobbes put it with such dour finality. With revanchist panache, this notion was implicitly mobilized by New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani, and public space was made the central target of that battle. The document that launched New York's zero-tolerance policy, a policy now globalized in cities around the world, was subtitled "Reclaiming the Public Spaces of New York" (Giuliani and Bratton, 1994; Smith, 2001).

The point of this volume is to highlight the historical and geographical specificity of politicized public space precisely in order to raise the possibility of a different politics of public space. It comes on the heels of several decades of critical social theory concerning space, much of it launched from within the discipline of geography but having a far broader influence. For many, the utterly quixotic notion of the "production of space," coined by Henri Lefebvre more than three decades ago, has become common sense. As well, it broadens and especially deepens our sense of public space inherited from twentieth-century American liberalism. In that latter tradition, a fairly straightforward opposition pertains between public and private space. However, in this book we attempt to wedge open a more multifaceted politics of public space that draws as much on the produced nature of space as on any necessary opposition either to private space or to the abstractness of space that was Lefebvre's principal target. This involves historical and political economic analyses of public space, but it also involves analyses that take the geography of the public sphere—public space—seriously. Equally and connected, it involves a spirited polemical engagement with the people and processes that are remaking the politics of public space.

A multiplicity of divergent meanings attaches to "public," "public space," and the "public sphere." By "public space" we mean the range of social locations offered by the street, the park, the media, the Internet, the shopping mall, the United Nations, national governments, and local neighborhoods. "Public space" envelops the palpable tension between place, experienced at all scales in daily life, and the seeming spacelessness of the Internet, popular opinion, and global institutions and economy. It is also not a homogenous arena: The dimensions and extent of its publicness are highly differentiated from instance to instance. Legally as well as culturally, the suburban mall is a very different place from the national park or the interior of a transcontinental airliner. Clearly then, the term has a broad definition. 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. Far more rare are analyses that take rural space or global space, for example, as public, and while we retain here a focus on the urban we also broaden our purview. Public space includes very recognizable geographies of daily movement, which may be local, regional, or global, but they also include electronic and institutional "spaces" that are every bit as palpable, if experienced quite differently, in daily life.

Public space is traditionally differentiated from private space in terms of the rules of access, the source and nature of control over entry to a

something that we can call the public, publics or public opinion, and this work is generally nested both in a larger historical framework concerning the state and the transformation of bourgeois social relations and in a normative search for political and moral effectiveness. Laments about the end of the public sphere or at least its political circumscription are met by reassertions of an ideal public sphere at the heart of liberal democracy and by an insistence on the multiplicity of public spheres. So viewed, the public sphere is rarely if ever spatialized. In Habermas's account, for example, the ideal public sphere is deemed universal and thereby, in any meaningful sense, spatially undifferentiated. If Fraser's critique opens some room for spatializing public sphere theory, and her more recent call that we consider the transnationality of the public sphere reiterates the invitation, the opportunity has not been taken up.

At the same time, architects, geographers, planners, anthropologists, urbanists, and others have delved into discussions of public space. This work is explicitly spatial, seeking to comprehend the ways in which social and political, and economic and cultural processes and relations make specific public places and landscapes, and the ways in which, in turn, these geographies reaffirm, contradict, or alter their constituent social and political relations. This volume pulls together interdisciplinary contributions from some of the central scholars working in this area.

These public space and public sphere literatures can certainly overlap but more often than not they occupy quite separate domains. The public sphere remains essentially ungrounded while public space discussions insufficiently connect to meditations on the public sphere (but see Mitchell, 2003). Yet the experience of public space belies such an abrupt distinction between public and private spheres and spaces. It is important to recognize that many constituents of public space are privately owned, managed, and regulated elements of the public sphere: the preponderance of media outlets, access to the Internet, many rights of way in the city and countryside alike, travel on railways, planes and buses, public houses, and so forth. Access to the global, even more than the local, requires private payment for Internet, television, or physical access. By the same token, there is considerable public (as in state) regulation over many aspects and uses of private space, from zoning laws to laws governing sexuality and social reproduction, the policing of national borders, state surveillance of personal activities, the right to congregate in public space, and so forth. The state is not by any means coterminous with the public sphere, but rather the product of specific power relations in any society—power relations that can exclude as many parts of the public as they include—yet many of the state's actions do indeed mold and frame what specific societies take to be the public.

space, individual and collective behavior sanctioned in specific spaces, and rules of use. Whereas private space is demarcated and protected by state-regulated rules of private property use, public space, while far from free of regulation, is generally conceived as open to greater or lesser public participation. "Public space" has very different meanings in different societies, places, and times, and as all of this suggests, its meaning today is very much bound up with the contrast between public and private space. It is impossible to conceive of public space today outside the social generalization of private space and its full development as a product of modern capitalist society.

In this respect, the ancient Greek polis and agora, often and reasonably heralded as significant prototypes of the public sphere and public space, respectively, are rather different from today's public space. The agora was not defined against the ubiquity of private, capitalized space but *vis-à-vis* far more collective uses of space. Rights in the polis were highly restricted to a very narrow and privileged social class recognized as free citizens, and many others were excluded—women, slaves, and the throng of common people. Likewise, the publicness of the agora was also circumscribed (albeit in different fashion) and stratified as an expression of prevailing social relations and inequalities. The narrow definition of public space that pertained in ancient Greece may therefore be an unintentionally appropriate inspiration for the present, yet the most cursory scrutiny suggests that it also represents the converse of what we take to be the ideal public space. In practice, in both the Greece of old and the Western world today, truly public space is the exception not the rule.

Public space, in fact, only comes into its own with the differentiation of a nominally representative state on the one side and civil society and the market on the other. Implicated in this transition is the simultaneous pupation of the household as a privatized sphere of social reproduction. Prior to the emergence of the representative bourgeois state, any public sphere was far more partial, fragmented, and local; and with such a partial public sphere the publicness of space in the broad geographical sense can be considered formal, at best, rather than real. Public space comes about as a specific expression of civil society but does not remain contained within it; rather it emerges, according to Habermas's (2001: xi) account of the public sphere, "between civil society and the state."

This raises a crucial issue, namely the relationship between public space and the public sphere. In recent years, philosophers and political theorists, and literary and legal scholars have developed a considerable literature concerning the public sphere (see, for example, Fraser, 1990; Cheah and Robbins, 1998; Habermas, 2001). This literature emphasizes the ideas, media, institutions, and practices that all contribute to the generation of

It would be regrettable and self-defeating if the distinction between these literatures was summarily reduced to one of materialist versus idealist approaches; both literatures are far too internally diverse to be characterized usefully in this way. Yet they have not really come together, however complementary they appear: Where the weakness of the public space literature perhaps lies in the practical means of translation from the ories of political and cultural economy to the materiality of public space, the public sphere literature offers an historically embedded discussion of the continual making and remaking of the public vis-à-vis the state and related institutions, and ideologies and modes of communication and power. By corollary, the weakness of the public sphere literature may lie in the distance that it maintains from the places and spaces of publicness, whereas it is precisely the insight of the public space literature that produced public spaces naturalize the very assumptions interrogated by public sphere theorists and provide an extraordinary palimpsest for detailed scrutiny. If the public sphere can be described as “the sphere of private people coming together as a public” (Habermas, 2001: 27), its emergence clearly has a history, as we have seen, but it has an equally clear geography. 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.

It may be no accident that public sphere and public space literatures have coalesced somewhat in isolation over the last few decades. The twentieth century witnessed what we might call a “lost geography” (Smith, 2003: 1–28). In the nineteenth century and certainly up until World War I, spatiality and geography were well understood as a crucial language of political power, but for various reasons having to do both with new modes of economic expansion and a new politics of global power, the public sense of the connection between geography and power eroded quickly—mid-century geopolitics, the revival of the linkage in World War II, and the banal geographical binaries of the Cold War notwithstanding. By the 1960s, the language of space was moribund and even as a curious Michel Foucault (1980: 77) famously mused about the causes of this (finding improbable answers in the influence of philosophy) a broad-based theoretical reintroduction of a spatial grammar was already afoot in social and cultural theory. Yet such compensation for a lost geography—the new spatial vocabulary of social theory—has had a very limited effect on discussions of the public sphere, and this is especially surprising given the centrality of Kant for recent retheorizations of the public sphere, especially in the literature considering a new cosmopolitanism which in turn tempts the possibility that universal liberal (or postliberal) norms may be assumed to undergird the public sphere. It was Kant after all who argued

that time and space provided the two *a priori*s of conceptual knowledge, and that history and geography therefore rightly shared the expanse of descriptive and classificatory knowledge (Adickes, 1924–1925). However contestable that conclusion, its importance to Kant remains strangely unexamined in latter-day philosophy—Kant’s forty years of lectures on physical geography at Königsberg have never been published in English and are rarely acknowledged in the original—and this translates into a public sphere literature with little interest in or seeming rationale for investigating the spatiality of the public sphere.

In other words, the lost geography of the public sphere comes with a concurrent loss of politics, however partial. Abstracting from the location of real events and social relations removes an entire dimension of political relationality. It is an underlying conviction of this volume that the re-spatialization of our sense of the public brings the opportunity of a more complete re-politicization of the public than would otherwise be available. Investigating the means of making and remaking public space provides a unique window on the politics of the public sphere, suggesting an even more powerful imperative to the focus on public space.

Before laying out the specific contributions to this volume, it is important to raise one other analytical issue. The following essays span a range of spatial scales from the highly localized scale of the play space to the neighborhood and the urban to the national and indeed global. Two decades of research rooted initially in the geographical literature has emphasized that spatial scales are neither simply a conceptual convenience nor simply given, but rather are socially generated in response to and often as solutions to specific social problems and contradictions. This notion is perhaps best explained by reference to the national scale. Although a few national states preexisted the seventeenth century, it was only after this period that national states began to fulfill their role as the pivotal players in the global political and cultural economy. City states, provinces, kingdoms and a host of other subnational units had previously fulfilled this role, but the expansion of capital accumulation associated with the advent of capitalism rendered these earlier scales of territorial organization incapable of managing the contradictory relations of cooperation and competition that undergirded the emerging socioeconomic order. The national state replaced an older order of provincialisms at lower scales, and the scale of the national was thereby produced in its modern form. A parallel if not identical argument might be made about the scale of the urban and the shift from the relatively small, walled cities of an earlier era to that of the modern metropolis, but the larger point is that the scale of public space and of the public sphere is socially produced, is a matter of intense political struggle, and an object of historical change (Smith, 1993; Marston, 2000).

This recent work—theoretical and empirical—on the production and politics of scale has not yet had a significant and direct effect in the literature on the public sphere, but insofar as global processes now threaten to circumscribe the power of the national and the urban scale enjoys a limited but undeniable reempowerment, the question of scale runs through many of the following essays even if it is not explicitly addressed. It would be facile to assume the withering away of the national state, and presumably with it the predominantly national definition of the public sphere. Yet in some arenas, the national definition of identities and power, sociality, and economy, has been widely challenged (if always unevenly and in different ways). Much as the preoccupation of public sphere writing needs to expand its scalar parameters beyond the national while resolutely not relinquishing that scale as obsolete, the public space literature needs to nest its traditional concern with the urban scale in a wider field of transformations spanning from the body to the global and even now supraplanetary. Even at the microscale of the urban plaza in Latin America, or the city square in North America, these political struggles can be traced historically as the venue for local, colonial, and global competition on behalf of capital with consequences for democratic practice and symbolic representation (Low, 2000).

David Harvey picks up the theme of the relationship between public space and the public sphere, touching on contemporary events such as the rebuilding of New York's Times Square and the design trend known as "the new urbanism," but he focuses especially on Second Empire Paris. The dramatic remaking of Paris in the 1850s and 1860s, at the behest of Napoleon III and at the hand of city builder Baron Haussmann, combined a spatial restructuring of the physical city with a revamping of the public sphere. Haussmann's new wide boulevards not only provided for military control over strategic streets but opened up areas of new commercial activity symbolized by the invention of department stores aimed explicitly at women. This was linked to a wider social restructuring, the emergence of a voluble middle class, the increasing segregation of the city by class, and a symbolic shift in the representation of urban space as spectacle. The Paris Commune of 1871 represented in part a popular resistance to this imbricated remaking of public space and the public sphere.

The chapter by Dolores Hayden implicitly combines the question of the production and politics of scale with that of public space. Suburbanization is traditionally treated as the means by which cities decentralized, but if we shift the scale of our gaze at suburbanization, in other words zoom out from the central core and see the metropolis at a wider metropolitan or regional scale, then suburbanization seems instead to be a powerful means by which in the twentieth century the scale of the urban has expanded dramatically compared with preexisting forms of urbanization. While the

suburbs are still widely seen as a haven of private space in contradistinction to the chaotic publicness of the old city center, Hayden documents the ways in which, between the 1920s and 1950s, a plethora of public institutions vigorously subsidized the privatization of the new suburban spaces in the United States. If suburbanization represented a consumerist solution to the fear of economic depression, no inexorable logic was working here. Rather, the form taken by suburban privatization resulted from a series of political choices and struggles that cut through each other in discernable class, race/ethnic, and gender contours.

Perhaps inevitably, the new highly privatized metropolis has provoked a nostalgic reaction, an ant suburbanism, if it can be put this way, represented by everything from gated communities to the so-called "new urbanism" as a design fashion. Elizabeth Blackmar examines one aspect of this reaction, the appropriation of the discourse of the commons, which found visceral expression in urban centers but especially at the metropolitan edge throughout the 1990s. Noting the classical correspondence between property rights and spatial relations, Blackmar provides a history of changing property rights as the basis for interrogating the new ideologies of the commons. If the reassertion of a concern with this category of property rights can be traced to Garrett Hardin's 1968 pastoral lament about "the tragedy of the commons," its conservative origins have blossomed not in opposition to but in consort with private property rights. Again, the public political sector—the state at all scales—colludes in this result, subsidizing ostentatious developments from Arizona and Texas to Maryland and New England. Such developments, advertised as a new "commons" and as a third-way alternative to the sterile opposition of private versus public space, are anything but "common" in the sense of allowing public access. Rather they reaffirm the rights of private property. Blackmar is explicit about the reification of politics that takes place when such property rights discourse is extracted from its spatial expression; respatialization, as Blackmar vividly demonstrates in her analysis of the meaning of the new "commons," raises the opportunity for politicization.

Setha Low picks up some of these same urban themes, directly tackling the question of the privatization of public space in the contemporary metropolis. Gated communities are her target. While there are certainly precursors, gated communities burgeoned in the U.S. urban landscape of the 1980s, especially in the south and west of the country where they now account for perhaps a third of new housing. Other regions are now following suit. Expressions of a broad malaise in the social order reflecting the insecurity brought on by the decay of the postwar economy, gated communities represent new privatized "enclosures" of public space aimed at enhanced, community homeowner control. Via

Ashley Dawson also approaches many of these and parallel issues through a global lens, emphasizing the increasing scalar dominance of urban governments in the global South. He focuses in particular on crime and security fears in postapartheid South Africa. Crime was of course a central mobilizing issue in Giuliani's remake of New York as revanchist city where reactionary revenge against those who had "stolen the city" was a central motif, and the general politics of revanchism in South Africa are parallel insofar as the state has asserted its right over that of the public in a thoroughly asymmetrical way. Much as in Harlem, racial containment and exclusion framed the urban experience of apartheid Johannesburg, and it continues today, albeit in altered form, in less direct but equally trenchant ways through the expression of class divisions in the postapartheid city. The spatial legacy of apartheid still dominates South African urbanism to a considerable extent, and this both exposes and exacerbates the high levels of violence in South African cities today (measured for instance by rates of murder and rape). Always historically high as an interstitial product of state-governed apartheid violence but rarely seen through the protective armor of apartheid policing and information control, interpersonal violence is now far more publicly visible while the stalled transition out of apartheid has severely exacerbated problems of employment, housing, education, and health services. Increased violence is one of the results, and the state struggles both to police and ameliorate its effects.

It is an obvious question to ask, then, and a central one in the public space discourse: what happens to those people excluded from the public spaces of the new private suburbs or the increasingly gentrified urban centers where the remaking of the public sphere displaces many from the resulting landscapes? This is the focus of the paper by Don Mitchell and Lynn Staeheli, who consider the geography of homelessness and the politics of homeless exclusionary practices in San Diego. Seen from this vantage point, that is the daily experience of homeless people in urban space, the privatization of the public sphere can telescope into the threat of the "end of public space," and for Mitchell and Staeheli this raises the question, first framed by French social theorist Henri Lefebvre: "Who has the right to the city?" The question of homelessness is inherently and simultaneously the question of property, and they explore these interconnections in ways that develop ideas from earlier chapters in the context of contemporary gentrification, homelessness, and the revanchist city. It is a cruel paradox that while redevelopment and gentrification cause homelessness, apologists for retaking the urban core often cite the need to rid the city of homelessness as a rationale for that same gentrification. Based on a series of interviews, Mitchell and Staeheli argue that the redefinition of property rights, combined with a changing regime of the public, has become highly

ethnographic research in three urban areas, Low concludes that such developments sharpen the sociospatial segregation of the city, and shows how struggles emerge between communities and municipalities over tax payments for public services that have been privatized behind the gates and walls of such communities. Such struggles are played out at multiple scales up to that of national state policy. Indeed, gated communities are now a thoroughly internationalized phenomenon. Insofar as the failure and decay of liberal urban policy in much of the West has left the finances of municipalities tightly circumscribed, local administrations are not necessarily adverse to such privatized developments, especially if they can minimize the tax breaks provided to such developments while enhancing the local tax base and minimizing services provided to communities. There are signs, however, that many who have bought into gated communities are not especially content, feeling no significant increase in security and resenting the strict regulations that generally pertain. Privatization may not be the best alternative to the failure of public liberalism.

The question of security is central to the politics of public space and its privatization. Cindi Katz places this issue in a broad global context, arguing that the emergence of what she calls "terror talk" concerning children is intimately connected to shifts in the global positioning of the United States and consequent challenges to personal identities forged through identification with the national state. Further, as the focus on children suggests, the crisis of public space impinges on established norms of social reproduction. Since the late 1970s, she argues, in the wake of failure in Vietnam, the hostage takeover of the U.S. embassy in Tehran, and the so-called energy crisis in which President Carter compared the fight for cheap energy as "the moral equivalent of war," children and youth have been cast as especially vulnerable to forms of social terror—kidnapping, sexual assault, physical abuse, and so on—while also being cast as the source of certain kinds of terror, such as "wilding." Terror talk provides the broad ideological rationale for dramatically enhanced control over children's access to public space and their activities in privatized space. Children's public sphere is appreciably curtailed. At an intermediate scale, that of the urban park, Katz also documents ways in which the privatization of previously public functions further jettisons support for social reproduction, if in a highly uneven way. An essentially privatized Central Park in Manhattan thrives on the largesse of the elite (and subsidies from federal workforce funds), while adjacent Harlem and smaller neighborhood parks throughout the city are starved. The privatization of public space can only be understood as occurring at the nexus of global, national, urban, and neighborhood scales.

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visible in the exclusionary landscapes of the recolonized city. The rights of some are pitted against the rights of others, and as Marx once put it, against equal rights force decides. In this case again it is the force of the state—real and threatened—that secures the rights of private property against use, and again Mitchell and Staeheli demonstrate the way in which a spatialization of these issues highlights the political conflicts involved and provides political openings.

Public space and the public sphere represent conjoined arenas of social and political contest and struggle. As several of the chapters here suggest, the privatization of public space and the curtailment of the public sphere are certainly not a *fait accompli*. Indeed the dilemma of public space is surely trivialized by collapsing our contemporary diagnosis into a lament about private versus public. Insofar as the so-called public sector, represented by the state, often acts as the cutting edge of efforts to deny public access to places, media (themselves a part of the state according to classical definition), and other institutions, the contest to render spaces truly public is not always simply a contest against private interests. Union Square Park in New York City, following September 11, 2001, provides an exemplary case: There a spontaneous demonstration of public activism, commemoration, grief, and organization erupted, but was eventually circumscribed by the reasserted police power of the local state.

Less than three miles from where the World Trade Center had stood, Union Square is a highly symbolic space. As its name connotes, it had been a parade ground for the Union Army during the Civil War and still hosts statues celebrating that war. In subsequent years, presumably because of efforts to suture the “official” symbolism of the space to its public popularity were periodically ruptured at the hands of a public with different ideas. The square was renovated in the 1980s in consort with the northward anchoring of gentrification in the Lower East Side, and as such became a low-intensity battleground over the rights of homeless people to occupy public space. In September 2001, it became the scene of a unique outpouring of public sentiment, a genuine and spontaneous, if rare, expression of the public sphere that for a while operated outside official control. Antiwar demonstrators mixed with religious proselytizers, peaceful candle vigilants with tripped-out babblers, angry anti-Muslim ranters and racists with socialists recounting the largely unpublicized history of U.S. imperial ambition in the Middle East that helped explain—though hardly justify—the 9/11 attacks. In those days and weeks, Union Square witnessed an especially poignant expression of public sentiment, given New York’s aggressive policing of parks, its zero tolerance campaign aimed at strict official control of public space (a campaign that began with the

1990s repression of publicly visible homeless people), and its broad, energetic support for gentrification.

In Union Square after 9/11, by contrast, anything went. People stayed day and night, unconcerned by newly rediscovered curfew laws and unrassured by the revanchist mayor’s police force, which only days earlier would have arrested many for the kinds of social events, gatherings, activities, proclamations, and public expressions that now transpired in the park. It took 9/11, in other words (and the response to it in Union Square Park), manufactured as a *national* rather than a local or global scale threat, and therefore one that could be parsed into a patriotic mold, to slice open the skin of repressive control and reveal so starkly the completeness of authoritarian command over public space that New Yorkers had come to experience as normal.

But the new spontaneous social and political energy of the Park and its revelatory apotheosis of a truly public sphere were too honest, too raw, and too threatening to be allowed to stand. After barely two weeks, the New York Police Department began to reimpose state authority by invoking specific regulations, beginning at the margins—geographically, legally, and politically—and working their way to the center until this unprecedented expression of the public sphere, occupying and remaking public space, was eventually closed down.

The same closure of public space has been orchestrated at various scales. The national boundaries are refixed against supposedly dangerous invasions of people, capital, goods, and ideas, much as the cities of “Fortress America” are increasingly gated within (Low, 2003). Even more sinister, the 2001 Patriot Act thoroughly spatialized its circumscription of the public sphere with the invention of “homeland security” as a cabinet level preoccupation. Consequently, the domestic public sphere suffered a clampdown, with library accounts, university computers, bank accounts, and even the normal modes of daily communication and movement placed under unprecedented surveillance. Whole new categories have been constructed beyond the traditional public sphere. The bureaucratic neologism designating prisoners of war as “enemy combatants” and their spatial incarceration in the legal limbo of Abu Ghraib and Guantánamo (not coincidentally a relict colonial outpost in Cuba), where they have absolutely no access to the supposed entitlements of the public sphere (legal representation, constitutional protection), is only the foremost means by which this circumscription of the (national) public sphere is globalized. The forced flight of prisoners to third countries where torture can be outsourced represents another. Here too it is not so much a matter of the privatization of the public sphere as of its global curtailment by the most supposedly public of all institutions, the national state.

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The struggle for public space today has everything to do with contemporary debates pitting the public against the private, and vice versa, but it also has to do with the ways in which contemporary society is living a reprise of its liberal—as in conservative eighteenth century—origins. More than anything else, the Patriot Act and related legislation revisit the hypocrisy of that founding moment. In the eighteenth century, the founding rights lying at the base of the public sphere were supposed to be universal, but were of course highly restricted by class, race/ethnicity, and gender, not to mention national citizenship; assertions of universal rights coexisted quite sanctimoniously with class exploitation, slavery, and the oppression of women. Today the basic rights that undergird any coherent sense of the public sphere are also increasingly circumscribed, especially since 9/11, in terms of race and class especially, but also the geography of origin, real, suspected, or inherited, and in terms of other dimensions of deeper epochal shift.

That shift was long evident before 2001. Even as crime rates plummeted across the country in the 1980s and 1990s, the sense of insecurity was heightened, sentencing laws were escalated, and states were building more and more prisons. The underlying reasons for heightened angst in these decades probably had less to do with real threats to bodily or property security than with economic and deep-seated ontological security concerning identity. However that may be, the Bush administration has adeptly appropriated 9/11 to provide an ever-ready pushbutton source of widespread insecurity. This applies not just at the global scale but all the way down. Thus, in suburban Simi Valley, California, many new gated communities are actually faux fortresses. They exhibit all of the signs of a gated community—walls, gates, fences, guard houses—but without the guards, and they work insofar as the residents feel a sense of psychological security and a reaffirmation of class status (Low, 2003).

Early on, Habermas glimpsed that the blurring of boundaries between society and the state, which began to become apparent in the nineteenth century and was consummated in the twentieth, led to the end of a certain kind of liberal public sphere, first announced in the eighteenth century. He noted the progressive exclusion of the public from the resulting competition between and among private and governmental interests in a putatively postliberal public sphere. Today, however, a further element enters the equation. Since the 1970s, the social restructuring of economies in Europe, Asia, and the Americas has brought about a capitalization of social life that would have been inconceivable several decades earlier, from the biotechnological privatization of nature spanning from the entire Amazon to the human body, to the corporatization of the media and the

financialization of everyday life (Frank, 2000; Martin, 2002), we now live in an era appropriately described, in starkly political economic terms, as neoliberal. Suddenly nothing is immune from appropriation as an accumulation strategy. This shift breaks the connection to twentieth-century American liberalism, which was in any case an extraordinary national anomaly in a wider global perspective, and reaches back to resuscitate the eighteenth-century liberalism, which, from the vantage point of the twentieth or twenty-first century, now looks jarringly conservative (Smith, 2005). Not only does society merge with the state, as Habermas intimated, but it increasingly and forcefully merges with the sphere of private capitalist economic calculation in a way that the theories of Adam Smith, a genuine progressive in his time, could hardly anticipate. The difference between now and the eighteenth century is that the infusion of society with the state and the economy is more complete than could have been dreamt of in that period, and the results are far from progressive.

What does this mean for the politics of public space? The outlook is not immediately optimistic. There is less and less room for the kind of ideal public sphere that Habermas envisages. The advent of neoliberalism clearly threatens a return to the exclusionary liberalism of its eighteenth-century template, but with the technology of the twenty-first century. It masquerades under the same pretension of universal democratic rights fused with the particular interests of an assertive and nationally rooted yet fundamentally transnational capitalist class. The heightened policing of public space at all scales is an integral result of the new political deep freeze. Today's neoliberalism may not divide the populace as bluntly as in the days of high liberal principle when slavery was legal, African Americans were counted as three-fifths of a person, and neither women nor the propertyless possessed a vote, but it makes its own discriminations.

As the papers in this volume suggest in various ways, the neoliberal regime that has taken hold of political and cultural power around the world involves the sharpening of social divisions, based especially on class, race/ethnic, national, and gender differences, but stretching much further into the fabric of social difference. The control of public space is a central strategy of that neoliberalism. For almost a million people deported from the United States in 2003, "America" is no longer part of their public space. Internally, antiglobalization and anticapitalist protesters, and social justice or antiwar activists, have borne the brunt of heightened assault on political dissent (invariably justified under the ludicrous rubric of antiterrorism). In September 2004 while the Republican National Convention (known locally as the Republican National Convulsion) was in town, midtown Manhattan was transformed into a police state (much as Boston had been weeks earlier for the Democratic convention), and the illegal sweep and

detention of nearly 2,000 activists from New York City streets made clear the stakes over public space. Political movements are always about place and asserting the right, against the state, to mass in public space. Who can imagine the 1870 commune without Paris? The Russian revolution without the Winter Palace? The civil rights movement without the marches on Washington, Montgomery, and Selma? The British feminist antimilitary movement without Greenham Common? Gay, lesbian, and queer politics without Stonewall?

The neoliberalism of public space is neither indomitable nor inevitable, and however much public space is now under a clampdown, it is not closed. New events, new technologies, new ways of responding to the neoliberalization of public space, new forms of social organization—transnational labor organizing, indigenous rights and environmental justice movements, in addition to those cited above—are always creating alternative new spaces of and for public political expression. In addition to diagnosing the multifaceted assaults on the public sphere, the central message of the essays in this volume is 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.

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CHAPTER 2

The Political Economy of Public Space

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The idea of the "public sphere" as an arena of political deliberation and participation, and therefore as fundamental to democratic governance, has a long and distinguished history. The imagery of the Athenian *agora* as the physical space wherein that democratic ideal might be attained has also had a powerful hold on the political imagination. As a result, some kind of association or even identity has been forged between the proper shaping of urban public space and the proper functioning of democratic governance. But the status of this association is often left vague. For some it seems to offer merely a convenient metaphor, and with the arrival of the Internet and the construction of "virtual communities" the physical materiality of spatial organization seems irrelevant. Others will ask more pointedly how it might be possible to encourage political participation in an urban world constructed out of segregated suburbs, gated communities, privatized spaces, and shopping malls under surveillance and downtown streets monitored (thanks, these days, to some shadowy form of governance in U.S. cities called a "business partnership") with a video camera at every corner.

While it may well prove impossible to sort out the relationship between the physicality of urban public space and the politics of the public sphere with any exactitude, there are, I think, some potent points of linkage between them. We do not, after all, experience the city blankly, and much