Public and Private, Power and Space[1]

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The literature on public space has been described as a "literature of loss."[2] From Jane Jacobs's concern for the decline of lively public spaces and Richard Sennett's *The Fall of Public Man*, to the essays on the "disneyfication" and privatization of public spaces in the 1980s, and Don Mitchell's "The End of Public Space," geographers and others have concerned themselves with the loss of public spaces and the decline of public life.[3] But what exactly has been lost? What, if anything, do these very different observers see in common as "public space?" While some observers strive to reclaim lost public spaces, others have argued that "public" and "private" are useless or even dangerous categories that should be avoided, combined, or replaced.[4] What is at issue in these discussions? How can an empirical project be undertaken without identifying the "object of analysis," i.e., public space?

Geographers have become interested in these debates as part of the broader discussion of the social production of space. I attempt in this paper to advance this discussion in several ways. First, I identify two main strands in the literature on public space and the public sphere. Public space in this literature is emphasized either as a site for impersonal contact or as a site for representation. These approaches are often posed on opposite sides of debates over public space, although they share similar concerns. I suggest, however, that both approaches are inadequate to explain struggles over public space because they tend, albeit in different ways, to reify their object of analysis (public space) while failing to define it clearly. I argue subsequently that while spaces cannot be categorized as inherently "public" or "private," we cannot and should not collapse or eliminate the concepts of publicity and privacy. It is also insufficient to consider public and private as situated at opposite ends of a continuum. Furthermore, arguing that public space is "produced" still does not avoid the necessity of explaining how publicity and privacy operate within existing, material spaces. I will show that publicity and privacy are not

characteristics of space. Rather, they are expressions of power relationships in space and, hence, both exist in every space. Finally I give examples showing how this conception can be used to avoid a problem typical of empirical work in "public space" that almost always begins with a space that is assumed to be public or private, rather than analyzing spaces as sites of both publicity and privacy.

Public Space as a Site of Contact

The literature describing the loss of public space can be traced to Jane Jacobs's concern in the 1960s for the way that poorly planned spaces were destroying a public life she remembered in cities. Public space for Jacobs is a site of contact, but of a certain sort that is neither intimate nor anonymous. She warns against a type of contact she calls "togetherness," which is an ideal that "if anything is shared among people, much should be shared," adding that "the requirement that much shall be shared drives city people apart."[5] Richard Sennett, who shares Jacobs's concern, refers to "togetherness" as "the tyranny of intimacy."[6] In Jacobs's view, three qualities make a city neighborhood "successful": A clear demarcation between public and private space, "Eyes upon the street, eyes belonging to those we might call the natural proprietors of the street," and "Fairly continuous activity."[7] Such informal surveillance and lively activity would make public contact rewarding and safe, encouraging people to engage in public life. Jacobs's and Sennett's concern was that the loss of this public contact would mean the death of public life of the city, accompanied by empty, boring, and dangerous streets.

These ideas continue to hold great currency as numerous writers have applied them to designing or changing spaces to encourage active public life.[8] Her comments were directed mostly at planners with the intention that they would note the inadequacy of spaces designed without the potential for informal public contact. But the response has come mostly (and inadequately) in an "if you build it, they will come" approach to public space, with planners seemingly continuing to believe that certain forms lead inevitably to certain social outcomes, ignoring the ways in which public life forms space.[9]

The success of a project to create such spaces as Jacobs envisioned would derive from contact that is neither intimate nor anonymous. An individual is in the least contact when isolated or anonymous and in the greatest contact among close friends and family.[10] If a public space provides only anonymous or intimate contact, it will fail to generate the informal and impersonal contact that encourages public life. In other words, the subject in this model of public space requires contact on his or her

own terms—to meet in public without the requirement for commitment on any other level. "Good" public spaces are then those that assemble rather than disperse, integrate rather than separate, invite rather than repel.[11] As Sennett argues, "The city must be a place where people can learn to join with other people without compulsion to know them as persons."[12] Without such intermediary public spaces, Gehl and others argue, people will retreat into private spaces making only the most necessary forays into the anonymous space of the public, but neither space can provide opportunities for connection beyond an intimate clique of family and friends. One's "community" is limited to the intimate private setting, precluding any connection with those who may be outside that group.

Public Space as the Site of Representation

New approaches to social theory in geography beginning in the late 1980s stimulated a new critique of public space.[13] Greatly influenced by Henri Lefebvre's *The Production of Space*, geographers began to look beyond space as "container for social action" to consider space as a product of "spatial practice" as well as a part of the broader process of production and reproduction.[14] At the same time, publicly owned spaces were being increasingly privatized, meaning both that they were being sold to private owners and that their forms and meanings were being shaped by private interests. In the process of privatization, "undesirables" such as homosexuals and the homeless were being excluded from public space. Those who examined public space in this context were concerned less with contact for its own sake than with representation.[15] Public spaces are seen from this perspective as sites of struggle. Public space is defined not by its use for the public but by the process of its definition, "public space does not designate an empirically identifiable terrain or even space produced by social relations . . . nor . . . concrete institutional sites where meanings are manufactured or circulated. It designates instead the relations structuring the vision and discourse themselves."[16] Although I think that Deutsch overstates the point in denying the materiality of public space, her emphasis on the discursive process of producing space is a valuable addition. What is at stake then, and what must be examined is not only the spaces, nor even the representation constructed within those spaces, but the power relationships that exist within those spaces defining them as public or private and defining users as part of "the public" or part of the "undesirables." As Hannah Pitkin points out, "Our ways of distinguishing public and private, then, are heterogeneous and the question of who gets to do the defining is itself part of the problem."[17] For example, Don Mitchell's "The End of Public Space" focused on the way that homeless people

are defined out of "the public." He argued that what they needed was "spaces for representation."[18] Rather than changing the design of public spaces, a change was needed in the processes by which public spaces, and the public that occupied them, were defined. Mitchell describes how the homeless people who use People's Park in Berkeley are not considered "representative of the community." In an effort to exclude these "undesirables," the city and the University of California began a plan to reclaim the park as an orderly, safe (defensible?) space with volleyball courts for college students.[19] What excluded groups like homeless people need, according to Mitchell, is "spaces for representation."

Thus the important issue for "representation" is not so much spaces as they exist but the way that "public spaces" are socially constructed. "Who occupies public space is often decided by negotiations over physical security, cultural identity, and social and geographical community."[20] The reverse is also true. Cultural identity, including who is safe and who is part of one's community, are also deeply affected by who appears in public space. Those who write about the representative role of public space are concerned with exclusions, which are often created by the definition of the "appropriate use" of public space.[21] The importance of public space for those concerned with representation is not contact in a limited liberal sense, but being an active part of "the public" in a political space. The individual alone is un-represented, hence without political power. In Hannah Arendt's terms, such a person does not have the "right to have rights" and does not exist in the "world of appearances," the political space of the public.[22] When an individual or a group is excluded from public space, their needs can be ignored.

When certain actions and spaces are defined as private, the groups associated with those spaces and actions may be marginalized by being categorized as "private." Lynn Staeheli focuses particularly on "women's issues" that typically have been considered private and therefore inferior.[23] The issue for Staeheli is in explaining the mutual and shifting constructions of public and private and how these constructions relate to power. She gives numerous examples of public protest demonstrations where actions that are deemed private, such as breast-feeding and kissing among homosexuals, are enacted in public. This transgression of spatial definitions "pushes back the boundaries between publicity and privacy and the ideologies that construct privacy as inferior and as off-limits for public view."[24]

Critiques of "Public Space"

The two approaches to public space described above, which are often on opposing sides of debates, reflect two meanings of privacy (and publicity

by implication). Privacy can signify both privilege and deprivation. In the liberal view of public and private, privacy is privilege; it is power over the space surrounding oneself. As such it is necessary for individuality, confidentiality, and the maintenance of tolerance and pluralism. From this perspective the importance of public space is the provision of contact in a sphere outside the private. Protection of the privacy of the individual is of utmost importance, and public life must be available on one's own terms—on the basis of one's privacy. In the civic republican tradition, on the other hand, privacy is deprivation. It is the absence of power. Power exists only in public space, the site of politics and power. Without access to the public, one has no access to power. According to Hannah Arendt, who is often identified with this position, public life is an essential element of the human condition—without publicity one cannot be fully human.[25]

The liberal "contact" approach to public space has been criticized for its tendency to focus on a public life that is limited and constrained by a bourgeois sensibility. Jacobs's "eyes on the street," especially as developed in Oscar Newman's influential *Defensible Space*, becomes less the empowering activity of a community and more the repressive surveillance of the panopticon.[26] The goal becomes to fill the streets with "normal" users and thereby eliminate "undesirables." William Whyte's public is similarly positioned in a middle class or wealthy, generally male, perspective. His ideal public spaces are free of panhandlers and often good places for "girl watching."[27] Newman and Whyte's ideas were often used in ways that were quite the opposite of what Jacobs had in mind. "Public spaces" were created that were intentionally unusable or exclusionary to prevent them from becoming habitations for "undesirables." Disneyland and New York's Business Improvement Districts are perhaps the ideal defensible spaces.[28] These spaces take full advantage of the sense of loss of public life to create a nostalgic, idealized, and active but also safe and sanitized public space—a "consumable vision of civility" accessible to all who can meet the price of admission and agree to adhere to a strict set of rules of conduct.[29]

This liberal vision of public space reifies both "the public" and public space, masking the internal contradictions that are part of the production of "public spaces." An example of the internal contradiction of definitions of spaces as public or private may be found in Lyn Lofland's definition of public spaces as those spaces "to which, in the main, all persons have *legal access* . . . Public space may be distinguished from private space in that access to the latter may be *legally restricted*."[30] Later in the same work though, this definition is made moot by the description of laws that restrict certain activities in public such as loitering, creating a nuisance, and begging. Such laws have "usefully vague wordings (that) can be used

and are enforced quite selectively. In many instances they probably only legalize the practice of spatial segregation that developed independently of the law and that subsequently came to be seen as proper."[31] Reliance on legal definitions is impossibly fraught with contradictions and tautologies as spaces become "public" based on the legalization of exclusions that preceded the law. Mitchell discusses a similar process by which labor protests in the United States were limited when they might potentially disrupt the existing order.[32] In this way, protests were made legal only when they were by definition ineffective.

The "representation" approach began in many ways as a response to these contradictions in the literature on public space. I find this approach much more useful in terms of understanding the actual processes by which people produce and use space in everyday political practice. But despite numerous attempts to operationalize the conception of space as process, when empirical research is undertaken, the "representation" approach often reifies a weakly defined "public space" and suffers many of the same problems as the "contact" approach. Mitchell's description of People's Park, for example, offers two competing images of what public space can be. The normative vision that Mitchell prefers is a space of unmediated political interaction.[33] This is in opposition to the regulated and exclusionary public space envisioned by the (legal) owners of People's Park. Mitchell's claim is that in an anarchic public space, homeless people and other "political movements can stake out a space that allows them to be *seen*. By claiming space in public, by creating public spaces, social groups themselves become public. *Only* in public spaces can the homeless, for example, represent themselves as a legitimate part of 'the public'."[34]

While representation is the goal, Mitchell recognizes that being seen is not the same as being represented as part of a legitimate public. He argues that while the homeless are "all too visible" they are "rarely counted as part of the public."[35] Their publicity is not the same as representation. In reviewing the "reclamation" of Greenwich Village's Jackson Park from "undesirables," Rosalyn Deutsch similarly points out how contestation over public space by homeless people actually enhanced the representation of the homeless as outside "the (legitimate) public . . . seeming to acknowledge public space as conflictual yet disavowing the social conflicts that *produce* space."[36] To the extent that public space is constructed within power relationships that favor powerful institutions of capital and the state, marginal groups are already by definition at a disadvantage in being considered part of "the public." In Lefebvre's terms, the conditions of the "spatial practice" that is created within capitalism are uneven.

Staeheli also finds it difficult to deal adequately with the contradictions of power in space, as she acknowledges when she observes, "understanding that places are constructed through social processes may not provide much analytical leverage when places appear to be constructed as *both* public and private."[37] Staeheli notes that private spaces may be necessary for the protection of marginal groups when, as in Eastern and Central Europe, the power of the state prevented political action in public space. But the groups that organized in private in pre-1989 Eastern and Central Europe did not gain power until they asserted themselves into public space. If the goal then is movement from the powerless private to the public, what happens when such movement yields visibility and vulnerability rather than representation? An exposed, marginalized group is no more represented than it was without visibility. Entry into "the public sphere" indeed may "set the stage for backlash, in which acts intended to outrage are portrayed as typical (of marginal groups)."[38]

When Mitchell argues for a different sort of public space in which no such controls and exclusions occur, he is arguing for a different spatial practice. He envisions an anarchical public space. This is in opposition to the controlled, "disneyfied," privatized public spaces of the volleyball courts and to the elimination of undesirables. Mitchell's normative vision of public space is "politicized at its very core . . . and . . . tolerates the risks of disorder (including recidivist political movements) as central to its functioning."[39] But how can an "unmediated" space be anything but a Hobbesian condition where the most powerful and violent rule? Under conditions of uneven capitalist spatial practice, the homeless would be at a clear disadvantage in this struggle unless it involves a *different* and, as yet, unidentified spatial practice. Mitchell implies an alternative in which space is regulated through a process that is produced internally and "remade by political actors," not unregulated or unmediated (arguably an impossibility).[40] This vision is not unlike a spatialized version of Habermas's public sphere, which is defined and redefined through discursive rationality—political debate.

The public sphere that Habermas envisions as an alternative in which public issues are decided by rational discourse rather than force is also clearly problematic. Habermas has been strongly critiqued for presenting a bourgeois public sphere as "the public sphere," thereby masking the exclusions that it contains. As Jane Mansbridge points out, "the transformation of 'I' into 'we' brought through political deliberation can easily mask subtle forms of control."[41] Similarly, according to Nancy Fraser, the bourgeois public sphere does not only represent an "unrealized utopian ideal" but "also a masculinist ideological notion that functioned to legitimate an emergent form of class rule."[42] Fraser argues that because "the" public sphere has been constructed in an exclusionary manner, the entry into that sphere by subaltern groups implies their acceptance of those exclusionary terms. "Insofar as the bracketing of social inequalities means

proceeding as if they don't exist when they do, this does not foster participatory democracy. On the contrary, such bracketing usually works to the advantage of dominant groups in society and to the disadvantage of subordinates."[43] In other words, women and other groups who are not part of the dominant construction (male, white, bourgeois . . .) must debate in a public sphere that by definition does not recognize their needs. "Declaring a deliberative arena to be a space where extant status distinctions are bracketed and neutralized does not make it so."[44] What is true of the public sphere is also true of public spaces. Mere appearance in that space is not equivalent to *access*: a servant at the master's table is no more powerful or part of the legitimate "public" in the room than the furniture, despite the fact that master and servant share the same space. Fraser argues that by continuing to look toward an ideal public sphere, we look in the wrong direction for power. Rather than attempt entry into "the" generalized public sphere, we should look toward empowering the existing, competing public spheres that she calls "subaltern counterpublics."[45]

Although I agree with Fraser's assessment of the limitations of "the" public sphere and the importance of examining other publics, her solution falls into the same traps as those she criticizes. First, "subaltern counterpublics" are necessarily separate from the spaces of power that make up "the public." Within her own argument, Fraser admits that these alternative publics must somehow connect within a larger public: "however limited a public may be in its empirical manifestation at any given time, its members understand themselves as part of a potentially wider public, that indeterminate, empirically counterfactual body we call 'the public at large." Her argument that "the concept of a counterpublic militates in the long run against separatism because it assumes a *publicist* orientation and that "insofar as these arenas are *publics* they are by definition not enclaves" does not give these publics access to publicity and power. Indeed, she notes that these publics are "often involuntarily enclav*ed*."[46] I disagree with Fraser in her argument that these alternative publics are sufficient in themselves to be politically viable. A subaltern counterpublic can either engage with "the public at large," hence facing the power relations therein, or remain an isolated group, perhaps as a utopian community.

A second critique of counterpublics is that Fraser ignores the potential for regressive politics within these sub-publics. She seems to assume that subaltern counterpublics will not suffer from the same ills as the mainstream public. In fact, counterpublics may reproduce the same inequalities internally or simply act as expressions of power relations produced at a different scale. As Richard Sennett notes:

> "We understand that power is a matter of national and international interests, the play of classes and ethnic groups, the conflict of regions or religions. But we do not act upon that understanding. Localism and local autonomy are becoming widespread political creeds, as though the experience of power relations will have more human meaning the more intimate the scale—even though the actual structures of power grow ever more into an international system. The result is that the forces of domination or inequity remain unchallenged."[47]

These counterpublics, insofar as they are public, will surely disenfranchise some people, though at a smaller scale, just as the bourgeois public sphere does. For example, within the women's movement that Fraser identifies as a potential counterpublic, conflicts over race and class have arisen as some women's voices were subordinated within that public.

The Trap

We seem to be left with three equally unpalatable options. The first is that public space as the site of endless Hobbesian struggle in which endless restless fighting is the only outcome. Rejecting this option leaves a difficult choice. Either we must eliminate all inequality before we can engage the political action in public space that would produce an egalitarian, Habermasian public sphere—an impossible contradiction—or we must assume that the public sphere is a sham that masks power relationships, leaving no option but withdrawal into enclaves to avoid co-optation.

This set of contradictory outcomes is largely an artifact of the transition from theory to empirical study in public space studies that maintains a distinction of public and private as separate categories (or ends of a continuum). As Staeheli notes, "the process orientation of theories that emphasize the social construction of space and place as public or private breaks down in some senses when analysts attempt to examine concrete settings."[48]

Both Mitchell and Staeheli choose examples that are thought of in the popular imagination, or explicitly in a legal sense, as "public" or "private," and then expose the contradictions within those spaces. This strategy moves the debate forward by showing how space is defined as public or private through political struggle. However, because public and private are still seen as separate categories (or as ends of a continuum, in Staeheli's case), marginalized groups are seen as not having enough publicity while owners are seen as having too much privacy. The exclusions that exist in public spaces are deemed to make those spaces less public. The solution offered then is to increase the publicity of the marginalized group by transgressing the exclusions that keep them out of the public and by asserting their identities into spaces, thereby claiming it as public.

I would not argue, as others have, for the creation of new categories to replace public and private,[49] that would suffer from the same reification of space as any other categorization. Others have suggested collapsing the categories of public and private altogether, but as Staeheli shows, public and private can be used strategically to empower groups. Collapsing these categories, if it were to become more than an academic exercise, would eliminate a powerful conceptual framework that has served many marginal political movements. What I argue is that public and private are very real and very necessary categories but that public and private *spaces* do not exist as such. This is more than saying, as does Rosalyn Deutsch, that "Any space can be transformed into a public or for that matter a private sphere."[50] I am arguing that publicity and privacy are power relationships that play out in space, and that both publicity and privacy exist as part of all spaces. Ignoring this duality (real physical space and socially constructed publicity or privacy) dooms any definition of public space to insufficiency.

Public and Private as Coexisting Power Relationships within Space

What is required is a method of analysis that does not reify spaces as "public" or "private." I would argue that far from being a contradiction even to the normative vision of public space, privacy—the power of exclusion—is a *necessary* part of all space along with publicity—the power of access. It is impossible to envision a space in which people interact without both exclusion and access as part of its social structure. The "analytical leverage" Staeheli seeks lies in finding publicity and privacy in tension within all space. Privacy is the power to exclude while publicity is power to gain access (see fig. 7.1). The workplaces that Staeheli identifies as private appear private because the publicity of workers is overwhelmed in those spaces by the power of privacy of the owner.[51] Disruption of worker organization entails invading the privacy of workers—where privacy means their power to exclude management intervention—as workers attempt to meet, recruit, distribute literature, and engage in similar activities. Organizing successes come when workers manage to create a counterpublic that by definition excludes other publics, such as management, that is large enough to contest the power to exclude that management otherwise has. This same understanding applies to the labor movements that Mitchell describes.[52]

Public and private space are meaningless terms in the absence of social interaction. To be considered "public," streets, squares, and parks must operate under certain rules and exclusions that paradoxically limit their

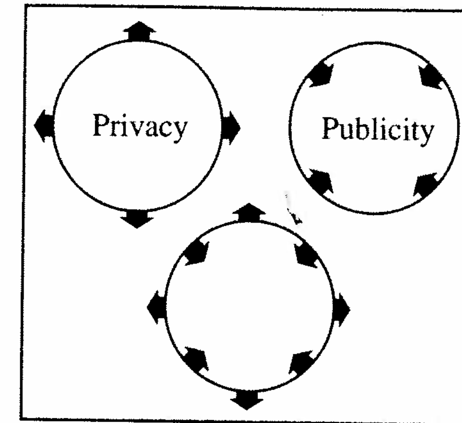

Figure 7.1. Publicity is the power of access. Privacy is the power of exclusion. Both forces operate in tension within the same space.

publicity. People have the right to certain expectations of privacy in public. How can a space be considered public without such restrictions? If a woman "gets what is coming to her" (i.e., is harassed or attacked) for jogging in a park in the dark of early morning, how is that space "public" from her perspective? On the other hand, if all "undesirables" are removed from the park in the name of protecting that woman's rights, the publicity of that park is questionable for those who may be considered "undesirable" on the basis of their race, class, or unconventional appearance. In both cases, public is defined by the idealized (and impossibly contradictory) vision of a space in which privacy—the ability to exclude—is not a necessary component of social relationships. Without the ability to exclude, the ability to limit contact, without boundaries, one is at the mercy of the power of others.

Violations of privacy, whether the privacy of an individual or a group, are violations because they contravene one's right to exert control over some "space." Human rights imply the right to exclusion, at least at the scale of the body. "Privacy is viewed as the means of achieving individuality by providing the barriers necessary to enable the individual to make uncoerced choices in life. Privacy could therefore be viewed as a mechanism for the realization of pluralism and tolerance."[53] The idea that that which is private is privileged does not rely on a liberal individual vision of social relations. Groups as well require such protection for the formation and maintenance of their identities. Counterpublics "function as spaces of withdrawal and regroupment."[54] However, that which is private is also deprived if that privacy is imposed by others.

The power of exclusion and autonomy is necessary to maintain one's rights or one's identity, but these power relationships are maintained through public interaction. Only in a Hobbesian world of "war of all against all" can we imagine a situation in which individuals are entirely responsible for maintaining the boundaries of their private space. Agreements are reproduced in social relationships whether formalized in law or tradition or maintained on the basis of manners, respect, love, fear, or other relations of power. Therefore, unless one has access to the public processes of politics, one's ability to assert privacy is greatly limited.

Counterpublics also function as "bases and training grounds for agitational activities directed toward wider publics."[55] As discussed earlier, if one cannot access the public sphere on one's own terms, then there is no real access. Fraser's counterpublics are "public" in that they are accessible to those who identify themselves in similar ways, but I would argue that they are also necessarily "private" inasmuch as they exclude the discourse of the dominant public sphere (and perhaps other subaltern counterpublics as well) in favor of their own discourse. Without this power of exclusion how can these groupings exist at all? They may be privileged within themselves, and therefore empowering, but so long as they remain outside "the public at large" they are deprived as well, unable to effect social change. Access to political power on one's own terms requires both the power of exclusion (privacy) and the power of access (publicity).

In order to understand publicity and privacy as categories of power, power must be understood as a relationship rather than a commodity. Power is a relationship among social actors, not a commodity that is given or taken away or of which one has more or less.[56] One cannot be in the category "powerful" or "powerless," rather we exist in power relationships with others.[57] This relationship is constantly contested and reproduced so one may have more or less power of exclusion or access in any space depending on the power relationships that exist in that situation.

Hence what Staeheli sees as "pushing back boundaries of public and private" is more accurately a thinning of those boundaries.[58] The limitations of being forcibly relegated to the private are diminished, but so are the protections provided by privacy. What gay protesters at kiss-ins and publicly nursing mothers seek is not an increased publicity but an increased public legitimacy of their privacy. In fact, they already suffer from too much publicity inasmuch as their private affairs are proscribed by the public. Increased publicity only means exposure and vulnerability unless it is based in the power of a privacy that allows a group to maintain its identity. Staeheli states as much when she notes that public nurturing "instilled a sense of public responsibility in maintaining an act as private."[59] Mitchell similarly notes that the homeless people in People's Park are fighting to maintain their identity—their difference, which is threatened with absorption by the state and capital.[60] What the homeless people in Mitchell's example need more of is *both* publicity—through which their needs can be recognized as legitimate—and privacy—through which they can protect themselves from absorption or delegitimation by the public.

This does not mean, as Staeheli suggests, that public and private lie along a continuum. It would be wrong to follow this logic by placing public and private at opposite ends of a power relationship. Those who have the greatest power over space have *both* the greatest power of access and the greatest exclusion.[61] One can have virtually unlimited power of access, but without the power to exclude, that access will be at the mercy of those who define public space. Unless a homeless person has privacy rights, no amount of publicity will give them meaningful access to the public and the right to define the appropriateness of their behavior or their identity in public. In fact, for many homeless people the anonymity of the street, which provides some privacy in isolation, is preferable to life in shelters which, although enclosed, take away privacy through excessive rules and regimentation of contact. Neither option provides any protected access to the public sphere as both marginalize homelessness without acknowledging the "right" of the homeless "to have rights."

Conversely, complete power of exclusion means nothing without the power to access the public sphere. During the years leading up to the Velvet Revolution in 1989 in Czechoslovakia, Vaclav Benda used the term "parallel polis" to describe a protected, alternative public sphere.[62] Similar to Fraser's subaltern counterpublics, the parallel polis was the site of underground opposition. It was public in that it provided access to a public sphere, but also necessarily underground, separate, protected, and therefore private. In the spaces of the parallel polis, power to access "the public at large" was built up within these "private" (protected) organizations. Although they built strength within these enclaves, it was not until they confronted the hegemonic power of the "Communist" regime that they achieved any social change. This was done in incremental form with the release of the "Charter 77" declaration and the publication of *samizdat* press, but the moment of revolution came when the parallel polis appeared on the streets and squares of Czechoslovakia in late 1989. Acknowledging this transformation, one group, which called itself the Movement for Civil Liberties, issued a statement just before the student marches that began with the line "The time has come to get involved in politics."[63]

We do not move from public to private, rather we are constantly within both, simultaneously protecting ourselves from absorption into the public through the power of privacy (exclusion) and asserting ourselves into the public sphere (the realm of political power). Without access to the public,

we are politically and socially marginalized, but without a basis in privacy, we enter the public sphere with no basis—we are there without being there.

Toward a New Conceptualization?

The importance of protected but visible space is explained in Lefebvre's argument that social movements must produce their own space. He is arguing for control of the "differential spaces" that are produced in opposition to the hegemony of "abstract space."[64] To have any power or ability to contest domination, social movements must have spaces in which they have both the right of privacy and the right of publicity. This requires the ability to access and challenge the dominant discourse, but in terms of a self-defined and protected alternative. The "differential spaces" in which "abstract space" may be challenged can be different only if they have the power to exclude the dominant representations of space.[65] Differential space must have the protection of privacy. At the same time, the potential for a space to be emancipatory depends on the power of access. So long as a "spatial practice" remains marginal, it can lead only to marginal and easily absorbed or deflected changes. The challenge to dominance may originate on the margins, but it must enter the mainstream (on its own terms) to be effective.

This vision of public space implies a different empirical project than the one that traditionally has been undertaken. It is worthwhile to consider "public" (as well as "private") spaces, but only inasmuch as we consider the power relationships of publicity and privacy at work within all spaces. Studies that decry the loss of public space should recognize that this is not a change simply in the publicity of that space, but a change in the power relationships of publicity and privacy.

The material spaces remain no less important in this conception. In the earlier example of the Velvet Revolution, as well as in Hershkovitz's analysis of the Tiananmen Square student uprising in 1989, material spaces are significant sites of contested meaning that cannot be ignored or replaced by electronic communication.[66] "Ideologies, or as Foucault puts it, discursive practices, are created in specific spaces. These spaces provide the pictures in our minds when we conceive our identities. In turn, ideologies structure, and continue to structure, the ongoing production of spaces; the distinctions between high and low, sacred and profane, gentrified neighborhood or inner city."[67] As the material realization of ideology, material spaces expose the "contradictions in space" that necessarily precede the formation of alternatives.[68] "The built environment materializes meanings—sets them in concrete and stone. In the process of making meaning material, these images become open to question and challenge."[69]

Toward a Methodology

Having argued that public and private are power relations that exist simultaneously in space, and that space is itself socially produced, how can we move toward empirical study that doesn't reify spaces as public or private? How can we examine both material spaces and social processes without absorbing either one into the other. In *Buildings and Power*, Thomas Markus provides a framework for understanding power constellations among three categories of people that buildings serve to "interface." This framework can be used for understanding relationships within any space. For our purposes we can rank Markus's groups in terms of their powers of access and exclusion:

> Inhabitants: These are the controllers who have rights to access and exclusion. They may be owners or may be otherwise empowered by the state to exert exclusionary control over space.
>
> Visitors: These are the controlled. They "enter or stay as subjects of the system."[70] They have rights to access for specific "appropriate" purposes, subject to approval by the inhabitants, and have no rights to exclusion.
>
> Strangers: These are the "undesirables." They have no rights to either access or exclusion and are in fact excluded by definition.[71]

These are fluid categories whose members change depending on the space in question. For example, in your home, you may claim the rights of inhabitant with complete rights to access at any time and for any reason. Visitors are only those whom you invite for a purpose and they have no recourse if you choose not to invite them (even if on the basis of race or some other arbitrary measure). Anyone who is not invited by you is a stranger and you have complete power to exclude them. Such spaces are more "private" because the inhabitants have almost complete discretion over visitors and strangers. The decision about who is a visitor and who is a stranger is almost completely at the discretion of the inhabitants. Of course, the state may allow access by others to even this most private space against the inhabitant's will under various conditions such as search warrant or repossession.

A restaurant, on the other hand is more "public" in its power structure. The employees are ranked as inhabitants who may have greater or lesser

degrees of access and rights to exclude. The owner or manager may have access to all spaces in the restaurant, but a waiter or busboy may not be allowed in the office. Similarly, a waiter will not likely ask a "stranger" to leave, but rather call a manager. Customers are visitors who are allowed to enter to eat, because that is the appropriate use of the restaurant. Others may come in as visitors too, but if they are outside the "appropriate use" of the space, they may be treated as strangers. For example, if someone comes in looking for a bathroom or to come in out of the rain, she may be allowed to remain as a visitor for that purpose, but the inhabitants (restaurant management) can also deny her entry if they so desire. Strangers are defined by the inhabitants in accordance with laws and norms of the society. The appropriate use of the space is clearly defined, and inhabitants have broad powers of exclusion within that definition; they do not have, however, the nearly absolute rights of exclusion that exist in a private home. The lunch counter sit-ins of the 1960s in the United States were a challenge to the right of inhabitants/owners to exclude visitors on the basis of race. It was decided, by law and in the face of social pressure, that visitors (i.e., restaurant customers) could not be excluded, but strangers (i.e., people who enter as other than customers) could be.

A park is structured as even more "public" than a restaurant. No one group has total power of exclusion except the state. The police and park employees, as agents of the state, have the power to act as inhabitants. Decisions about who is a stranger and who is a visitor are not made arbitrarily by the police, but by a set of laws that define (albeit vaguely) appropriate and inappropriate uses. Because these decisions are made on behalf of inhabitants vaguely defined as "the public," they are open to debate. And because laws often normalize existing exclusions, marginal groups may be deemed by law to be inappropriate. Loitering is difficult to define in a park full of unstructured activity (hence the installation of volleyball courts in People's Park helps define "appropriate use" more exactly).

The difference among these cases, and their resultant level of "privacy or publicity" has to do with the power that inhabitants and visitors have in defining strangers, or inappropriate users. In other words, the definition of powers of exclusion or access depends on how one is categorized within these groups. In the most "private" spaces, inhabitants have almost complete discretion over both access and exclusion, strangers have, by definition, no power of access or exclusion, and visitors have access but virtually no voice in defining the space. The more "public" a space is, the more power its visitors and strangers have to contest their status and the appropriate use of that space.

This approach implies a different political project as well. If we argue for the right of subalterns to "access public space," they enter at the mercy of the "inhabitants"—those actors who have more power over exclusion and access and the power to define the "appropriate use" of spaces.[72] We find ourselves in the unenviable position of arguing for the rights of the homeless to sleep in parks, instead of for their human right to privacy—to a home. If we argue against surveillance in public spaces, how do we answer those who argue that prior to surveillance in a space the women, children, elderly, and other groups were afraid to use those spaces? The focus of this argument should be against the process of surveillance. Who surveys whom, not whether or not there is surveillance. Like the position of being intolerant of intolerant people, a policy of eliminating exclusion can only become a process of replacing one exclusion with another. Rather than seek an ideal public sphere that is free of exclusion, power, and privacy, we should focus on the processes in which the necessary contestation of privacy and publicity is played out. This is not a utopian outcome, there is no end point; in fact, it is arguably anti-utopian inasmuch as it implies an inescapable struggle within power relationships, that may change, but cannot be eliminated without absorbing difference.

Notes

1. My thanks to the members of the Rutgers Geography "Public Space" reading group and to Bob Lake and Don Mitchell for many very helpful comments.

2. Michael Brill, "Transformation, Nostalgia, and Illusion in Public Life and Public Place," in *Public Places and Spaces*, ed. Irwin Altman and Ervin H. Zube (New York: Plenum, 1989), 8.

3. Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, (New York: Random House, 1961); Richard Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man: On the Social Psychology of Capitalism*, (New York: Random House, Vintage, 1977); Michael Sorkin, ed, *Variations on a Theme Park*, (New York: Hill and Wang, 1992); Sharon Zukin, *The Cultures of Cities*, (Oxford and Cambridge, Mass.: Basil Blackwell, 1995); Don Mitchell, "The End of Public Space," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 85, no. 1 (1995): 108-33. I should note that Mitchell's work has been very important to my own understanding of public space. I critique his work here not because I find it lacking, but because I find it to be a fruitful starting point.

4. Liz Bondi, "Geographical Perspectives on Women Specialty Groups: Rethinking Public/Private Space" (paper presented at a panel of that name at the National Conference of the American Association of Geographers, Charlotte, N.C. April 1996).

5. Jacobs, *Death and Life of Great American Cities*, 62.

6. Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man*, 338.

7. Jacobs, *Death and Life of Great American Cities*, 35.

8. Jan Gehl, *Life Between Buildings: Using Public Space* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1987); Stephen Carr, Leanne G. Rivlin, Mark Francis, and An-

drew M. Stone, *Public Space* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); William H. Whyte, *City: Rediscovering the Center* (New York: Doubleday, 1988).

9. This and many other ideas came out of the reading group on public space at Rutgers University in 1995–1996.

10. Gehl, *Life Between Building*, 17.

11. Gehl, *Life Between Buildings*.

12. Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man*, 339.

13. Edward W. Soja, *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory*, (London: Verso, 1989); Derek Gregory, *Geographical Imaginations*, (Oxford and Cambridge, Mass.: Basil Blackwell, 1994).

14. *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford and Cambridge, Mass.: Basil Blackwell, 1991) was only translated into English in 1991, so the introduction of Lefebvre's ideas to an English-speaking audience came largely through the work of David Harvey, especially *Social Justice and the City* (London: Edward Arnold, 1973). The quotes are from Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 38.

15. See especially Sorkin, ed, *Variations on a Theme Park*; Rosalyn Deutsch, "Art and Public Space: Questions of Democracy," *Social Text* 33 (1992): 34–53; Mitchell, "The End of Public Space?" Contact remains an important part of what I am calling the representation perspective, but it is most significant as it relates to the power of groups to be a part of defining the public and public space.

16. Deutsch, "Art and Public Space," 43–44, italics added.

17. Hanna Fenichel Pitkin, "Justice: On Relating Private and Public," *Political Theory* 9, no. 3 (1981): 329.

18. Mitchell, "The End of Public Space?", 115.

19. Mitchell, "The End of Public Space?", 110.

20. Zukin, *The Cultures of Cities*, 24.

21. Tim Cresswell, *In Place/Out of Place: Geography, Ideology, and Transgression*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).

22. Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958).

23. Lynn Staeheli, "Publicity, Privacy and Women's Political Action," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 14 (1996): 601–19.

24. Ibid., 610–11.

25. Arendt, *The Human Condition*.

26. Oscar Newman, *Defensible Space; Crime Prevention through Urban Design* (New York: Macmillan, 1972).

27. Whyte, *City: Rediscovering the Center*, 28.

28. See especially Sorkin, ed, *Variations on a Theme Park*, Mike Davis, *City of Quartz* (New York: Vintage, 1992), and Zukin, *The Cultures of Cities*.

29. Zukin, *The Cultures of Cities*, 26.

30. Lyn H. Lofland, *A World of Strangers: Order and Action in Urban Public Space* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 15–19; italics in the original.

31. Lofland, *A World of Strangers*, 71.

32. Don Mitchell, "Political Violence, Order, and the Legal Construction of Public Space: Power and the Public Forum Doctrine," *Urban Geography* 17, 2 (1996).

33. Mitchell, "The End of Public Space?", 115.

34. Ibid., 115; italics in the original.

35. Ibid., 118.

36. Deutsch, "Art and Public Space," 39; italics in the original.

37. Staeheli, "Publicity, Privacy and Women's Political Action," 607; italics in the original.

38. Ibid., 611.

39. Mitchell, "The End of Public Space?", 115.

40. Ibid., 115.

41. Jane Mansbridge, "Feminism and Democracy," *The American Prospect* 1 (Spring 1990): 127.

42. Nancy Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to Actually Existing Democracy," *Social Text* 25/26 (1990): 116.

43. Ibid., 120.

44. Ibid., 115.

45. Ibid., 123.

46. Ibid., 124.

47. Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man*, 339.

48. Staeheli, "Publicity, Privacy and Women's Political Action," 607.

49. Doreen Mattingly, "Geographical Perspectives on Women Specialty Groups: Rethinking Public/Private Space" (paper presented at a panel of that name at the National Conference of the American Association of Geographers, Charlotte, N.C. April 1996).

50. Deutsch, "Art and Public Space," 39.

51. Staeheli, "Publicity, Privacy and Women's Political Action," 614.

52. Don Mitchell, "Political Violence, Order."

53. Judith Squires, "Private Lives, Secluded Places: Privacy as Political Possibility," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 12 (1994): 390.

54. Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere," 124.

55. Ibid., 124.

56. Robert W. Lake, "Negotiating Local Autonomy," *Political Geography* 13 (1994): 423–42.

57. Michael P. Brown, "The Possibility of Local Autonomy," *Urban Geography* 13 (1993): 257–79.

58. Staeheli, "Publicity, Privacy and Women's Political Action," 610–11.

59. Ibid., 613.

60. Mitchell, "The End of Public Space?", 124.

61. Staeheli notes this on page 607, but it contradicts her conception of public and private as continuum.

62. Vaclav Benda, "The Parallel Polis," in *Civic Freedom in Central Europe*, ed. H. Gordon Skilling and Paul Wilson. (New York: St. Martin's, 1991).

63. Gale Stokes, *The Walls Came Tumbling Down: The Collapse of Communism in Eastern Europe* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 153.

64. Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 370–72.

65. Ibid., 373.

66. Linda Hershkovitz, "Tianenmen Square and the Politics of Place," *Political Geography* 12 (1993): 395–420.

67. Zukin, *The Cultures of Cities*, 293.
68. Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 292 ff.
69. Cresswell, *In Place/Out of Place*, 47.
70. Thomas A. Markus, *Buildings and Power: Freedom and Control in the Origin of Modern Building Types* (London: Routledge, 1993), 13.
71. Ibid., 13.
72. Cresswell, *In Place/Out of Place*.

The "Disappearance of Public Space": An Ecological Marxist and Lefebvrian Approach[1]

John Gulick

Responding to epochal changes in the social and spatial composition of the contemporary capitalist metropolis—novel varieties of public indigence, gentrification, surveillance, and segregation—urbanists of different stripes are writing books and staging conferences around a dramatic theme: "the disappearance of public space." Among the writings are Richard Sennett's *The Conscience of the Eye*, Elizabeth Wilson's *The Sphinx in the City*, Sharon Zukin's *Landscapes of Power*, Michael Sorkin's edited collection of essays—*Variations on a Theme Park*, and Nigel Thrift's "An Urban Impasse?". The conferences included "Remapping Public Space: The New Geographies" (held at Stanford University in mid-October 1993), "Bright Lights, Mean Streets: California as City" (held at the Oakland Museum in Oakland, California, from February 10–12, 1994), and "Cities on the Edge" (held in San Diego in May, 1994). The theme of "the disappearance of public space" draws commentators from a range of disciplines: architecture, comparative literature, geography, history, planning, and sociology.[2]

The Definitions

Whatever the forum—a singular author in dialogue with his/her imagined interlocutors, a book introduction tying together a compendium of essays, a plenary session at a conference—these commentators do not offer a coherent and consistent definition of "public space." This might lead one to conclude that all the commentators are remarking about the same phenomenon. In fact, they are not. Not one, but three overarching connotations of "public space" can be found: (1) physical property formally

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