Counter-spaces, no-man’s lands and mainstream public space

Representational spaces in homeless activism in Japan

Carl Cassegård

Introduction

Discussions of space and time have a long pedigree in Marxism. Lefebvre was, however, the first Marxist to make space and rhythm into centrepieces of his philosophy, using the sensory experience of space and rhythms as tools for systematically exploring capitalist society and its contradictions. His tripartite division of space in The Production of Space (Lefebvre 1991) into the spatial practices of the everyday use of space, the spaces of representation of planners and policymakers, and the representational spaces of clandestine experience and dreams has inspired researchers not least since it captures the antagonistic nature of space in capitalism. Sometimes this antagonism is openly visible — for instance, when ‘dominated’ spaces functionalised according to the needs of capital or government are challenged and transformed through acts of ‘appropriation’ when users redefine space according to their own heterogeneous needs and wishes (Lefebvre 1991: 165, 356, 363) — but the antagonism is present also in seemingly more tranquil situations where open conflict is lacking.

The ‘rhythmanalysis’ developed in Lefebvre’s later writings helps us trace these sometimes half-hidden antagonisms through our sensory experience of different rhythms in modern life. Unfortunately, there is little in these writings to suggest how he thought of rhythm in relation to the tripartite division of space in The Production of Space (Lefebvre 1991). In this chapter, I seek to throw light on this relation by focusing on representational space among activists in the Japanese homeless movements, and on how rhythm connects up with the various ways in which space was experienced in the course of two anti-eviction struggles, in Osaka’s Nagai Park in 2007 and Tokyo’s Miyashita Park in 2010.

Lefebvre defines representational space as ‘directly lived through its associated images and symbols, and hence the space of ‘inhabitants’ and ‘users’, but also of some artists and perhaps of those, such as a few writers and philosophers, who describe and aspire to do more than describe’ (Lefebvre 1991: 39). Compared to spatial practices and spaces of representation, it is here, above all, that opposition to the officially sanctioned use of space is articulated and alternative spatial visions take form. But to understand this process, the category of representational space needs
Homeless activism in Japan

to be further elaborated, sensitising it to change and conflict. I will therefore focus on processes where activists attempt to appropriate space and redefine it for their own purposes. My argument will be that representational space as experienced during such processes can be seen as comprising three important modalities – mainstream public space, counter-space and no-man’s land – which can be distinguished with the help of rhythmanalysis.

Below, I first provide a brief background on homeless activism in Japan. I then argue for the fruitfulness of distinguishing between the three modalities of representational space before summarising my findings in the conclusion. Throughout the chapter I will illustrate my arguments by drawing on my previous work on homeless activism in Japan, based on interviews with activists engaged in the Nagai Park struggle and interviews and participant observation during the Miyashita Park struggle conducted in 2009–2011 (Cassegård 2014: 117–179).

**Why the homeless?**

Activists in the homeless movement are seldom preoccupied solely with the publicly visible aspects of activism – the campaigns or protests through which social movements are usually thought to participate in the public sphere. While it is well-known that social movement activities to a considerable extent unfold not only in public but also in the ‘invisible’ networks of the everyday (Melucci 1989), the importance of having access to alternative spaces outside the mainstream public is especially crucial to homeless activists. This is because of their need to secure spaces for living and physical survival, because of the exclusion they usually suffer from the mainstream public sphere and because their mere existence in urban space is often felt by mainstream residents as a threat or rupture of the urban order. Both in daily life and in activism, their experience of space tends to be antagonistically structured around the interplay between dominated and appropriated space. That they are often forced to orient themselves simultaneously to several different forms of space in their struggles creates, I argue, a special dynamics that is one of the most important characteristics of the homeless movement.

In Japan, homeless people increased rapidly following the end of the so-called bubble economy in the early 1990s. Many settled down in encampments or ‘tent villages’ along rivers and in the parks of the big cities. There they could find water and relative safety, and make their living by collecting recyclables or other forms of simple work. The communities formed in the villages also provided a degree of protection since they could patrol the area, exchange information and look out for each other (Aoki 2006: 9; Cassegård 2014: 117). Starting in the mid-1990s, several anti-eviction struggles have taken place as authorities have attempted to evict homeless people and dismantle their villages – attempts that have often been made in conjunction with the planned urban ‘upgrading’ or gentrification of surrounding areas. Two of the most well-known of these were the struggles over the homeless encampments in Osaka’s Nagai Park in 2007 and Tokyo’s Miyashita Park in 2010. Both strikingly exemplify the increasing presence of cultural activism – including drama, dancing, paintings and music – in homeless activism.

The struggle in Nagai Park is best known for the theatrical play homeless villagers performed on the day of eviction as a last-ditch attempt to keep the guards and the city staff that had come to demolish the village at bay. The eviction took place on 5 February 2007 with the 2007 IAAF World Championships in Athletics as a pretext. On that day, more than 200 activists and other supporters had arrived to defend the village. Many were sitting in a protective ring around the stage, which had been erected in front of the remaining tents. Facing them were 200 city employees and 300 guardsmen. Outside, journalists and onlookers were flocking. The play was performed two times and had just resumed for a third time when the guards moved in and started demolishing the tents. It was over in a few minutes. The activists linked arms to protect
Carl Cassegård

the stage, but finally the stage too was torn down (for vivid descriptions of these events, see Kirokushū henshū inkai 2007).

The protests around Miyashita Park were more drawn-out in time. They started in 2008 when it was revealed that Shibuya Ward had sold the park’s naming rights to Nike Japan. According to the original plans, the corporation would provide the park — renamed ‘Nike Park’ — with new facilities requiring an entrance fee and the homeless were to be evicted. Rallying against this ‘Nikefication’ of the park, a coalition to ‘preserve Miyashita Park’ was established in June 2008. In 2010 artists and activists under the name AIR (Artists in Residence) occupied the park together with remaining homeless people to block the construction work. For six months, the park was used as a basis for public protest and as the stage for a variety of artistic activities, such as art workshops, exhibitions, concerts, filming and poetry readings. In September, the park was finally cleared and fenced in by the authorities. Reconstruction started shortly afterwards and the new park, complete with Nike-sponsored sports facilities, was opened to the public in late April 2011.

Rhythms and spaces in the homeless movement

A distinction often made in research on homelessness is between prime and marginal space (Duncan 1978; Snow and Anderson 1993). Prime spaces are spaces that are routinely used by people belonging to an area’s host population or that have symbolic significance for such people, while marginal spaces are those that this population cares little about and consequently the least risky for the homeless to use — spaces such as alleys, dumps, space under bridges, abandoned buildings, vacant lots or left-over spaces around railroad yards. Duncan argues that this classification mirrors what the ‘tramp’ experiences to be the importance assigned to space by the host population (Duncan 1978: 28, 30). This means that the distinction works best when the homeless adapt so fully to mainstream classifications that conflict as to the classifications themselves tends to disappear. As Wright points out, however, space is an active relationship between city authorities and individuals, and struggles are constantly going on over the meaning of urban space. In particular, he directs attention to how homeless people resist the identities imposed on them by city and state officials by the creation of ‘resistant heterotopias’ (Wright 1997: 52).

This suggests that while the prime/marginal distinction works well enough for situations when established spatial divisions are in place and unchallenged (when space is securely dominated, to use Lefebvre’s term), other classifications are needed when the homeless appropriate space, namely when they use space in ways that go against the dominant classification. While Lefebvre’s spatial triad does not refer explicitly to resistance or contestation, it can easily be developed in that direction. Appropriating space does not simply mean asserting a given ‘representational space’ against the ‘space of representation’. The struggle against the latter is itself part of the lived reality of homeless people and hence representational space is always indelibly marked by this struggle. The shifts and transformations undergone by representational space in the course of attempted appropriations can be traced with the help of rhythmanalysis.

Lefebvre defines rhythm abstractly — as repetition where the ‘measure’ is central and where differences can be introduced — and stresses that rhythms are apprehended by ‘the most irrational’, the body (Lefebvre 2004: 8). The rhythmanalyst, he points out, uses the body as an instrument, a ‘metronome’, listening to streets or towns as one listens to a symphony (Lefebvre 2004: 19, 22; 1996: 219, 229). In general, rhythms are multiple. Not only capital and state have the power to impose their rhythms on space. Rhythms are imposed also by nature; he therefore speaks of cosmic rhythms, lunar and solar rhythms, the climate and the sea (Lefebvre 1996: 232). Ordinary people also have the power to diffuse their autonomously formed rhythms, by
challenging boundaries, carving out spaces for their own purposes and transforming them by their use. Lefebvre emphasises that each group, culture, religion, region and individual is a centre, and adds: ‘Now, what is a centre, if not a producer of rhythms in social time?’ (Lefebvre 1996: 239). The empowerment of marginal groups such as the homeless can, I suggest, be described as a process of getting rhythms of one’s own going that are heterogeneous in relation to the more dominant rhythms of the surrounding mainstream society.

The ways activists adapt to dominant rhythms or try to impose rhythms of their own on space are reflected in how they relate to norms. I find it useful to think of spaces as structured by norms, which in turn are embodied in space. Space and norms together form a ‘sens-escape’, to speak with Degen (2010), or a distribution of the ‘sensible’, as Rancière (2004) calls it. In this context, a helpful distinction is between moral ideals and norms. Drawing on Durkheim, Jacobsson and Lindblom (2016) points out how activists in social movements often need to strike a precarious balance between their pursuit of various ideals and the danger of being perceived as norm-transgressors by mainstream society if they pursue their ideals too zealously. To avoid the latter danger, activists may try to minimise the norm-transgressive aspects of activism and adapt outwardly to mainstream norms. This does not necessarily mean compromising or abandoning their ideals, but often instead involves a struggle with how the ideals can be convincingly pursued within the framework of mainstream norms. This struggle, I would argue, produces a certain experience of space, which I will refer to as ‘mainstream public space’.

**Mainstream public space**

When space is used by activists for staging their participation in the mainstream public sphere, as a platform for addressing authorities or the general public, it is part of *mainstream public space* – space for officially sanctioned dialogue. This is the way activists conceive of and experience space when they adapt to mainstream norms, for instance in regard to behaviour or outward appearance, in order to participate in public debate with mainstream audiences. Such spaces can be crucially important for political challengers since it helps them project messages to a wider public and to authorities. At the same time, there are limits to how radical the demands and the conduct permitted in mainstream public space can be, since they need to be considered legitimate or in tune with the normative expectations of authorities and mainstream society. To speak in Lefebvre’s terms, such space is ‘isotopic’ in relation to mainstream society, attuned to the rhythms of mainstream life, in relation to which it poses few or no jarring elements.

In practice, this means that even in acts of protest, activists adapt to the rhythm of the official political system, synchronising with mainstream debates and political decision-making. It becomes important for activists to move in line with the political calendar of mainstream politics, e.g. elections, schedules for debates and voting in assemblies, scheduled negotiations or the debate in the major media. Protest becomes predictable. This does not necessarily mean that it is de-politicised or emptied of oppositional force: there are many examples of campaigns that have been successful precisely thanks to the ability of activists to utilise time and space strategically, playing to mainstream sensibilities and garnering support among established political actors. Moreover, the need to adapt to officially set schedules can often help speed up the rhythm of criticism and mobilisation. An example might be the frantic planning among activists in Nagai Park, and their hectic preparations to get the play ready in time, which was triggered by the official announcement of an eviction date. The rhythm of activism here should not be seen as a mere mirror of the more powerful rhythms of state and capital but is better seen as a rhythm of the public sphere, in which criticism against state and capital is allowed to play part.
Both in Nagai Park and Miyashita Park, great efforts were made by activists to participate in the officially sanctioned debate around the parks. Even when negotiations had proven futile, attempts to frame the encampments as mainstream public space remained. This was most evident in the case of Nagai Park, where the idea of dialogue was expressed by a huge banner over the stage with the words ‘We seek dialogue, not fighting’. Activists in Nagai Park repeatedly expressed the idea that the idea of staging a play was to demonstrate the villagers’ willingness to reach out and engage in peaceful dialogue with authorities and the general public. This was felt to be urgent in light of the experience of the anti-eviction struggles of Osaka Castle Park and Utsubo Park the previous year, where the media had highlighted conflict and confrontation (Kirokushū henshū iinkai 2007: 14). This goal of inviting dialogue, however, was hardly successful. Neither city officials nor the city staff on the ground responded to the play or the activists’ invitation to dialogue. In the Miyashita Park struggle also, many activists and artists saw themselves as participating in mainstream public space, attempting to initiate a dialogue with politicians and the general public through street demonstrations, petitions and demands for negotiations. The appeal to the mainstream public could be most clearly seen in the often voiced arguments that entrance fees and evictions were inconsistent with the idea of ‘public gardens’ (the literal translation of kōen, park), which ought to be open to everybody, and that the renovation plans would transform the park into an ‘ad for Nike’, a place for consumers rather than citizens (see Cassegård 2014: 171).

Mainstream public space often invites dissatisfaction since attempts to participate often prove futile and since it is associated with norms that are felt to be discriminatory against homeless people and that limit the radicalness of demands and conduct. Such space is experienced as dominated, and hence as unfree and exclusive. Politics, however, is not limited to mainstream public space. There are also ways to appropriate space, by using space in ways that are contrary to mainstream norms. Examples of such use can be seen both in what I call counter-space and in no-man’s land.

Counter-space

When activists refuse to conform to mainstream norms, space may shift into what I, following Lefebvre, call counter-space. Lefebvre describes these as sites for questioning the dominant organisation of space and as local resistance against the homogenisation of abstract space (Lefebvre 1991: 381ff). They arise by visibilising claims and behaviour normally suppressed in mainstream public space; in counter-spaces, mainstream norms are openly transgressed. One way of doing this is by trespassing on established division of space, occupying or publicly claiming space in provocative disregard of mainstream norms. As Don Mitchell points out, the struggles of homeless people have often involved the creation of new and alternative forms of publicness. Against the exclusion they experience in the mainstream public sphere – where participation is limited to an ‘appropriate public’ (Mitchell 2003: 51, 122) – they react by taking to the streets, plazas or parks to win the right to political participation, upsetting the spatial order by appearing where they are not meant to be. Using the language of rhythmanalysis, counter-spaces are places where autonomous rhythms are developed that aim at disrupting and, at least temporarily, overpowering those of the surrounding society, which for its part is usually quick to dismiss these rhythms as mere noise. Counter-spaces are thus prime locations for the study of ‘becoming irregular’, ‘throwing out of order’ and ‘crisis’, which Lefebvre points to as an important part of the analysis of rhythms (Lefebvre 2004: 44).

That counter-spaces tend towards a clash of rhythms could be seen both in Nagai Park and Miyashita Park, where activists used art and culture to challenge the restrictive norms
Homeless activism in Japan

of mainstream society. In both cases they did so by taking space where they were not meant to be, making it public by calling attention to themselves, thereby upsetting the official plans and schedules set by authorities. In both cases, activists did not rest content with delivering a political message for wider circulation in the mainstream public; they also sought to directly embody alternative norms that would prefigure a better society. Thus one aim expressed by activists concerning the play staged in Nagai Park was that of visibilising the ‘culture of the excluded’ through an act of ‘cultural resistance’ (Ōta 2009: 117, 120). In this case, the counter-space was short-lived and limited to a few hours on the day of eviction. Miyashita Park, however, exemplifies a more sustained challenge to the mainstream order. Here activists managed for a longer period to at least partially overwhelm and intrude on the rhythms of the surrounding society. The struggle entered an intense stage in March 2010, when the authorities announced the imminent closure of the park in order for construction work to begin. In response to this, AIR was formed and occupied the park for six months, turning the park into an exuberant playground for art and activism. During the occupation, the park was filled with dolls, banners, sculptures and a variety of other art objects assembled from the garbage that happened to be at hand in the park. Activists cooked food together and arranged workshops, rock concerts, rave parties, film screenings, outdoor karaoke, poetry readings and football. The park was also used for offensive forays into the surrounding public spaces. So-called ‘home-made’ street parties were arranged, in which hundreds of homeless, musicians and other participants paraded or danced through Shibuya while drumming, blowing trumpets and trombones or beating frying pans, metal cans or other sound-making items. The occupied park thus functioned as a generator of rhythms created by the activists themselves that spread into the surroundings, sometimes successfully disrupting the mainstream order and generating an empowering rhythm for the activists and their supporters. One example is when the activists retaliated against the planned ‘Nikefication’ of the park by marching to a nearby Nike store to do a sit-in, thereby ‘parkifying’ Nike. Activities like these often involved symbolical challenges to modernity, for instance via references to things and beings that had been discarded or sacrificed in the course of modernisation (such as the eel that had once lived in the now submerged river next to the park), and that now, through the protests, had come back to haunt modern Japan and seek revenge. These things were symbolised in the figure of ‘Miyashita-san’, a giant puppet which was carried around in the street demonstrations and in whose figure all discarded and downtrodden things achieved symbolic resurrection (Kindstrand 2012).

In both cases, activists tried to disrupt the calendar set up by the authorities and thereby change the course of the planned action, stealing time by occupations to prolong the life of the tent villages. In Nagai Park, the clash of rhythms was very literal as activists and city staff did their best to mutually disturb each other. Guards and city staff constantly interrupted the play with announcements and the noise of removal preparations, making it hard for onlookers to hear what the actors were saying. In return, the activists tried to get their own rhythm going with the help of bongo drums and shouts. The activists of AIR constantly tried to resort to the unpredictable, first in the timing of their sudden occupation of Miyashita Park and then again in the following series of actions that all seemed exhilarating since they came unexpectedly and caught Nike and the ward authorities off guard. The activists thus went by an old rule of war, avoiding getting caught up in the opponent’s rhythm while looking for opportunities to impose their own on the opponent – ‘knowing the rhythm of the opponents and using rhythms that they do not expect’ (Miyamoto 2005: 21). City authorities too made use of unpredictability to weaken the activists, keeping them in suspense to wear them out. To the activists, the occupation was a time fraught with anxious anticipation: every day
they kept watch for the city authorities who were bound to come, sooner or later, to close
the park.

No-man’s land

That activities in mainstream public space and counter-space seek public visibility makes them
unlike activities in what I call no-man’s lands. These are spaces that are experienced as enveloped
in public neglect, but precisely for that reason are felt to allow for behaviour not normally
approved in mainstream public life. Here the rhythms of mainstream society are too far to be
clearly heard, and in their absence a relatively independent and heterogeneous world is allowed
to develop. Even though the tent villages in Tokyo and Osaka were subjected to surveillance by
park guards, they were experienced as sanctuaries where homeless people could withdraw into
a community of their own, relatively free from the scrutinising view of mainstream society. Park
guards attempted to prohibit new tents from being set up, but people living in these villages
nevertheless described them as ‘public’ in the sense of being hospitable to marginal populations.
Visitors to the villages as well as villagers themselves have described the time characterising
them as tranquil and set off from mainstream society. To a large extent, rhythms were set by
the seasons and by nature. Sharing space with birds, mosquitoes, cicadas and other animals, the
homeless had to take part in their rhythms. The work necessary to secure subsistence also gener-
ated its own rhythms (for instance the need to get up early in the night to collect cans, or the
weekly schedule of soup kitchens). In addition, some villagers took initiatives to joint activities
like tea gatherings, painting circles and so on that had their own rhythms (for descriptions, see
Ichimura 2006).

During the anti-eviction struggles, the encampments tended to lose their no-man’s land
character. Many villagers left the parks, leaving only a handful of activists to continue the pro-
tests. Instead, outside activists arrived to support the struggle. As the space of the parks shifted
into counter-space, it attracted public light, destroying one of the premises of a no-man’s land,
namely public inattention. During these struggles, however, no-man’s land continued to play
a role as a memory and as a wistfully expressed ideal. In Miyashita Park, several activists were
explicit in invoking no-man’s land as an ideal. One of them stated that he liked Miyashita Park
since it was ‘more like a vacant lot [akichi] than a park’. It was because it had remained a vacant
lot so long, he explained, that the homeless had been able to build their huts there. Furthermore,
he added, vacant lots were birthplaces of culture and art (Ogawa 2009: 185). That the idea of
vacant lot was held in high regard among many activists was also shown by cardboard signs
in the park saying ‘I love vacant lots!’ Again, after the closure of the park, the activists on their
homepage expressed the hope that in the future the park would again revert to a ‘vacant lot’
(MC Kasurippa 2010). In statements like these the idea of no-man’s land is wedded to a Utopian
imagination, linked symbolically to things discarded by modern society – like the eels of the
submerged river or the homeless people themselves. The time of no-man’s land no longer stands
merely for the circular rhythms of nature or daily life, but becomes the seed of Utopian hopes
and the resurrection of a past eradicated in the course of Japan’s modernisation.

In Nagai Park, the ideal of no-man’s land was just as crucial, although less explicitly expressed.
As I have argued elsewhere, it was not the cultural performance on the day of eviction, but
rather the memory of no-man’s land that provided the image of Utopia for the core activists in
Nagai Park (Cassegård 2014:166). Behind the choice of staging a theatrical play was not simply
artistic desire or the instrumental idea of using the play to project a more appealing image to
the general public. Many villagers realised from the start that resisting the eviction would be
futile, and to them a prime reason for the play was the desire to bid farewell to the village in a
Homeless activism in Japan

A common argument for staging the play was that it would be a good way to end the village, since it would give them the opportunity to ‘speak their mind’ and ‘say what’s on their heart’ without leaving regrets (Cassegård 2014: 161). The play was a way of paying respect to the lost community of the time when the park had been a no-man’s land. What the core activists appear to have cherished most dearly was their image of that community, rather than the counter-space created in the attempt to resist the eviction.

In the struggles of both Miyashita Park and Nagai Park, then, no-man’s lands were important reference points to activists, although less as a lived reality than as a memory, linked to new rhythms, namely those of mourning and nostalgia for the park as it used to be. At the same time, this memory became linked to a rhythm of Utopian anticipation.

Conclusion

What has the value been of using concepts such as mainstream public space, counter-space and no-man’s land? First, the investigation into the role of different spaces in homeless activism has thrown light on the connection between space and rhythm. In mainstream public space, activists move in step with mainstream rhythms. In no-man’s land and counter-space, by contrast, activists disengage from mainstream rhythms, but they do so in different ways. No-man’s land is space that is felt to allow for behaviour considered contrary to mainstream norms since it is neglected or ignored by authorities. It thus offers space for alternative rhythms that unfold clandestinely in relation to those of the mainstream world, neither significantly disturbing nor being disturbed by the latter. Counter-spaces by contrast are spaces where such behaviour is intentionally made visible. Unlike no-man’s lands, they bathe in public light, provocatively unfurling rhythms meant to clash with those of the surrounding world.

Second, they have helped us refine the notion of representational space and to see how it shifts in the course of contestation and appropriation. This, I suggest, gives us a better feel for the dynamics of the struggle and for how the spatial experiences of activists interconnect with larger contexts. Both of the two anti-eviction struggles on which I have focused, the ones in Nagai Park and Miyashita Park, are known as examples of how activists in the final stages of their struggles constructed spectacular counter-spaces. However, elements of orientations towards mainstream public space also existed and could be seen in the attempts by activists to initiate a dialogue with authorities or the general public. A central role in both struggles was also played by artists and activists oriented to the idea of no-man’s land, the latter being idealised as a refuge and an arena of freedom and creativity. In both struggles, it was precisely the attraction many activists felt to the ideal of no-man’s land that made them resort to counter-space as a last resort to defend their encampments. Only at a comparatively late stage did the idea of counter-space emerge as a major model for the parks. When it did, it was largely as a by-product of the activists’ desire to preserve the parks as no-man’s land. Ironically, although the counter-spaces had their origin largely in the desire to protect a no-man’s land against outside forces, the latter became transformed in the process of being defended since what was typical of the no-man’s land, namely its clandestine, neglected and unregulated character, was lost.

Finally, we have also gotten a better feel for possible tension within activism. The three forms of space are brought into play for different purposes and are attuned to different demands. Mainstream public space is a venue for peaceful protest and public dialogue, counter-space for joyful expression of alternative norms and rhythms and no-man’s land is an object of devotion to which farewell must be bid properly and which holds a Utopian promise. Whereas no-man’s land and counter-space can be seen as varieties of appropriated space, mainstream public space emerges through the (often futile) effort to make one’s claims heard while remaining in
tune with dominant norms. In contrast to the common portrayal in social movement literature of performances and other forms of cultural activism, I have tried to show that in homeless activism it is not necessarily the spectacular and eye-catching counter-spatial mobilisations that embody a utopian element, but rather the memory of the free and unregulated no-man’s land which the encampment was once felt to have been. In both Nagai Park and Miyashita Park, a primary motivation for activists was the desire to protect a threatened no-man’s land, to mourn it, to pay respect to it or to recreate it.

The distinction between mainstream public space, counter-space and no-man’s land is, I argue, crucial to understanding the dynamics of anti-eviction struggles, not only in Japan but also elsewhere. It is also relevant to understanding the relation between space and social movements more generally. While social movement studies have tended to focus on the publicly visible aspects of activism, no-man’s lands are arguably crucial for furthering empowerment, providing space for alternative lifestyles and discourses and serving as bases in times of mobilisation and places of retreat and hibernation in times of adversity. All three modalities of space are also, I suggest, important to keep in mind in order to understand how activists grope for more inclusive notions of publicness.

References


