

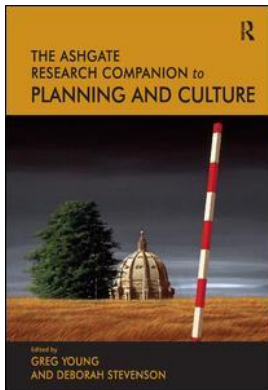
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Public Spaces: On Their Production and Consumption

Ronan Paddison

The Levels of City Living

For the visitor a late evening stroll along the riverfront in Guangzhou might bring a surprise, the sight of dancing in a public space. The music, a live band, and the evident skill of the dancers might suggest that it is a commercially organized event taking advantage of the warmth of the summer evening and the availability of a suitable space. Yet, the scale of the performance – the size of the public space in which the dancing is taking place – suggest otherwise. Equally, the obvious enjoyment of the participants, their familiarity with one another, the extent to which partners are being alternated as the evening progresses, the conviviality of the scene suggest that this is far from being a commercially organized event. A regular occurrence, many of the dancers are from the local community, the performance being a way to give alternative, and enjoyable, expression to living in a Chinese mega-city with its attendant pressures.

The space in which the performance is organized, and its meanings, is all the more remarkable for its setting. The dancers, seemingly unselfconscious of the location, have appropriated a space whose backdrop is the impressive skyline of the city, the music having to compete with the endless drone of the nearby arterial highway. The intimacy of the event appears to unfold in spite of its background, a bubble in which living the city socially is made possible, the evident enjoyment of the dancers testimony to its place. Against the dynamic backcloth of a rapidly emergent global city, the performance expressed the importance of the local in everyday life.

Cities are a mosaic of different spaces whose meaning is defined by their function as part of the overall city and the experience and imaginations citizens have of them. For most of its inhabitants much of the city is unknown territory, imagined rather than experienced through habitual movements. Mundane urban life incorporates a fraction of the city, limited to certain rhythms. The scale of the Asian mega-city, and the speed with which the urban form is changing, might be supposed to accentuate the atomism within which city living takes place (Forrest 2009). In the otherwise alienating environment of the urban the importance of the local neighbourhood becomes

accentuated, the space within which not only is much of daily life transacted but the space which gives meaning to living within the city.

As much as the local neighbourhood is central to both the experience and meaning of urban living, citizens too feel a sense of belonging to their city. Part of urban culture is rooted in the sense that its citizens have of being part of the city. Commonly, then, regardless of the specific city being considered, or the world region to which it belongs, citizens will be protective of their city, particularly when it appears to be threatened by the activities of another city (or the state or a powerful corporate entity seeking to disinvest or reinvest in a competing city). Predictably, such emotions will vary between citizens; those with a deeper investment in the city, by virtue, say, of their length of residence within it or the economic or cultural or social capital which they have tied up in it, may be more defensive of what they consider to be their city than those who consider themselves more transitory within it. Yet, for most (if not all) of its residents there is rationale to a sense of belonging to the city. (See also Dovey, Chapter 15, this volume.)

The emotive ties to the city become played out at different scales and through the imaginations and experiences we have of it. Key here is the role of public space, where and through which so much of urban life is both experienced and imagined. The particularity embraced by the term 'public' courts the binary of public and private which has its own conceptual dangers, added to which in the contemporary restructuring of cities, and linked to the growing use of surveillance and control technologies, much public space is being re-created as semi-private space. These qualifications aside, the recognition of the role public space plays, how it is imagined and used, is central to the construction of the meanings residents give to city living. (See also, Watson, Low, and Nyseth, Chapters 1, 17 and 19, this volume.) The ability of community residents in the Guangzhou neighbourhood to appropriate a local space, and the defence that is commonplace to local activism aimed at protecting local amenity – both demonstrate the importance of public space.

Globalization accompanied by, and fuelled by, the rise of urban neoliberalism has accelerated the rate of urban change, demonstrated most visibly by the ways in which cities have sought to reconfigure themselves in order to be more competitive. Through what McCann and Ward (2011) have defined as policy mobilities the forms of urban development and redevelopment become standardized – waterfront developments, the spread of planned shopping centres to cities in the global South, the adoption of iconic architecture as a means of branding the city, the spread of gentrification from the global North to South, the increasingly widespread use of culture as the means of fostering the economic base of the city and repositioning it. (See also, Watson, Chapter 7, this volume). How these policy discourses become mobilized may be contextually dependent were their transferability needs to take into account local circumstances. Yet, the physical transformation of the city under deepening globalization displays strong commonalities.

The spread of such physical change has direct consequences on the public spaces defining cities. Early discussions of such changes became associated with the debate on the 'end of public space', not in any absolute sense but through the progressive appropriation and redefinition of public to semi-private space through, in particular, the spread of the planning shopping centre and the spread of disciplinary practices accompanying the regeneration of the city. Even where the term 'end' was contested

and needed qualification, there is a common understanding that in different ways cities have become increasingly privatized and that this has had significant consequences on the ways in which public spaces have been produced and reproduced, and consequently on the ways in which they are consumed. The contradictions and tensions to which such changes give rise may not be new: the development of cities in early industrial urbanism gave rise to not dissimilar conflicts, as did the development of colonial cities. It is their re-emergence under more globalized and competitive conditions that helps to define the present round of urban restructuring.

This chapter explores the ramification of such changes on public space. Taking the simplified distinction outlined earlier of the two scales into which city living can be divided, the chapter centres on the implications of two forms of aesthetic intervention which have become commonplace in cities in the global North and increasingly so in the global South, the use of iconic architecture and of public art. Focusing the argument in this way is important for a variety of reasons – both are linked to the cultural appreciations and imaginations of the city and of local neighbourhoods, both potentially link to the emotional understandings that residents have of city spaces at different scales, both are connected to the re-aestheticization of the city, both are connected to the recapitalization of the city and the extraction of surplus value through the redevelopment of city spaces. Critically, too, they tend to operate at different scales, the production of iconic architecture to the city as a whole and how it is (and should be) imagined both externally and internally for its residents, public art as a means of (re)aestheticizing (though not exclusively) local neighbourhood spaces. For both the processes of production and how they are consumed are inter-connected, though as the chapter will argue how such inter-connections unfold differ to the extent to which the interventions are contested or not. Key here – and bringing into focus again the dancers on the riverfront space in Guangzhou – is the accessibility of public space, its possible appropriation, if only temporarily, for collective good, in effect the degree to which city residents are able to claim a sense of ownership over a local space. The argument revisits the definitions that surround public space to which the chapter turns before looking at iconic architecture and public art.

Defining Public Space

What constitutes public space, what is its nature, what have been its histories in different cities, and how should it be defined has been the subject of considerable debate. First, it is clear that public spaces are both ubiquitous and fall into a large number of types. Taking Brown's (1990) understanding of public space as the public sector expressed in physical terms, it includes not just parks, squares and streets – those spaces traditionally associated with the public realm – but also a diverse range of other facilities meeting common needs through collective provision, including churches, marketplaces, sports centres as well as public libraries. Some, such as major civic spaces, define the city as a collective entity and are an appeal to *external* audiences, others, by virtue of their location, as well as often their function, become defined more around the local spaces into which the city is divided and which are more closely bound with everyday urban living. It is in the latter in particular that Mean and Tims (2005) identified a range of

public spaces that were defined by their relatively high levels of social interaction and sometimes conviviality, but which perhaps were not thought of as public spaces in the first instance, including libraries, car boot sales and allotments. Their list begins to define spaces which may be to a degree privatized – allotments, for example – while car boot sales reflect a commodified, if open, use of space. Listing in any exhaustive sense the different types of public spaces, while able to show their diversity besides in many cases their obvious importance to the conduct of everyday life in the city, begins to demonstrate the problems in defining what is meant by public space and in maintaining the public/private binary.

Most definitions of public space begin by emphasizing its accessibility and how this can be connected normatively to the notion of a democratic public space. Young (1986) offers a description of such spaces as ‘accessible to anyone, where people engage in activity as individuals or in small groups ... [where] people are aware of each other’s presence ... [where] the diversity of the city’s residents come together and dwell side by side’ (1986: 22). Accessibility, inclusion tolerance of difference – the openness to ‘unassimilated otherness’ – define the ideal Young (1990) terms the ‘unoppressive city’. For Arendt (1958) public space is part of what she terms the public realm and again it must be accessible to all, but added to this it should be used by all and historically durable. The emphasis given to accessibility is based on the inclusivity of public space; by definition, public spaces should avoid being exclusive to particular groups or individuals.

The normativity of such arguments reflects their origins from political philosophers, just as their aspirations for public space are challenged by reality. One consistent observation of any city – and probably approximating a universal truth in the study of cities – is that public space, its production and reproduction, is deeply contested. The origins of such contestation varies, but if unequal power relations and the consistent role of dominant forces, capital and/or elites in particular, linked with appropriation of public space and its resistance, is commonplace, it is not the only source of such contest. Intra-community differences are also a common enough source of contest, where how public space should be used (for example) highlights different interests, setting in tow possible conflicts. (See also Low, Chapter 17, this volume.) Within these too, however, differences in the power relations between groups will tend to be critical to how conflict unfolds, as well as potentially to outcomes.

Where power and power relations become central to understanding the ‘operation’ of public space, Mitchell (2003) has argued that increasingly our public spaces are being produced *for* us rather than *by* us. The claim is in some ways contestable, particularly in its apparent downplaying of the historicity of such relations – in pre-industrial, early urban-industrial cities in the global North, and colonial cities, the production of public spaces and how they were managed invariably reflected elite interests. Public spaces that are produced by us are the exception. Nevertheless, the argument helps to reaffirm arguments about how dominant interests are able to appropriate public space, and how this in turn reflects the fragility of public space and the extent to which it can be captured by elites. As a significant vein of urban scholarship has sought to show, it is through these arguments that we can begin to understand how and why in the contemporary city there is an apparent assault on *public* space.

Such claims provide an important backdrop to the arguments here. But what is even more important to emphasize is how public space, its production and reproduction, is

closely linked to inclusion and accessibility. Both help to define a sense of (collective) ownership over space within which (arguably) how such spaces are produced may play a part. Expressed alternatively and in Mitchell's terminology, public spaces made *by* us are the ones more likely to be considered democratic, inclusive spaces. Whether and how reality matches such an expectation is a moot point, but what is critical here is that the premise underpins much of the endeavour to incorporate public participation into the planning process – that, even if it is articulated somewhat opaquely, public participation will be able to assist the processes of designing cities and result in outcomes that are closer to the preferences of its residents. Clearly, the argument is deeply contestable, as well as possibly naïve, but what is salutary to bear in mind is that its converse, the production and reproduction of public spaces which are imposed, and therefore reflective of particular interests, is linked to current unease among scholars over the trends apparent in public space. We can begin to explore these ideas through the use of iconic architecture and public art which is undertaken through looking at specific examples. The emphasis here will be on that class of cities, largely within the global North, that as a result of deindustrialization and attendant processes of decline, have had to redefine themselves in terms of their economy, a project which in turn has become closely associated with their imagineering.

Interpreting Iconic Architecture

The use of iconic architecture as a means of projecting the image of the city has become a hallmark of post-modern urbanism just as it was to be employed in the modernist, and indeed, earlier cities. Debates around the meaning of iconic architecture and its rapid rise in the urban townscapes of a growing number of cities globally have sought to unravel the processes through which its production has been achieved and to offer an explanation of its increasing use (Jencks 2004, Sudjic 2005). As Kaika and Thielen (2006) have argued, during industrial urbanism cities sought to showcase their economic and political prowess through the building of impressive town halls (as in Brussels, Manchester, the major German cities and many other examples). To these could be added new cultural facilities catering for the interests of the burgeoning middle classes (concert halls, art galleries) and less commonly, though more spectacularly, through architectural interventions linked to mega-events (Crystal Palace to the holding of the Great Exhibition of 1851 in London, for example). The spread of contemporary iconic building is not dissimilar to its nineteenth-century counterpart in European cities in a number of respects; in particular the ability of the iconic building to be a visual marker of distinction. The reasoning behind the Burj al-Arab hotel in Dubai in this sense is not unlike that of the Eiffel Tower completed more than a century earlier.

The use of iconic architecture is contentious not least because of how it is produced as well as what it represents. Architecture itself is a 'discourse', the projection through ideas and material construction of a normative appreciation of the city. By this token iconic architecture becomes an emphatic type of architectural discourse, one in which the production is aimed at ensuring that the intervention is visually arresting, memorable as well as often challenging. Underpinning its production are unequal power relations, an argument equally true of pre-industrial as well as modern cities.

Thus in the pre-modern city religion was a powerful force around which elite interests coalesced reflected in the building of cathedrals (Kaika and Thielen 2006) while in the industrial city the local state became dominant, reflected in the development of town halls and other municipal buildings aimed at making a visual statement reflecting the prowess of the city. Contemporary iconicity for Sklair (2009, 2005) is rooted in the power of the international capitalist class, although in many cities its adoption may be more immediately linked with the aspirations of local political and economic elites striving to rebrand the city (Evans 2003, see also Searle, Chapter 8, this volume).

Where the contemporary revival of iconic architecture differs from its earlier counterpart is in its cooption with the commodification of the city. Iconicity has become drawn into the wider neoliberal project in which the city is a product to be marketed and as city marketing becomes through policy emulation a widely adopted strategy, so iconicity becomes the means by which to create distinction (DCMS 2004). As Jones (2011: 117) has argued

the incorporation of iconic architecture and the respective brands of the famous architects responsible for the design of such buildings into the place marketing projects so central to UK urban regeneration strategies represents a rich research agenda for sociologists interested in the ways in which regeneration agencies seek to mobilize urban space and culture to produce surplus value.

Nor, as it has been argued, is such an analysis to be restricted only to the UK where the quest for the architecturally iconic has become globalized.

Besides the production and extraction of surplus capital value iconic architecture is also able to replicate the processes through its symbolic value and it is through this that its ramifications for citizens will become apparent. Where iconic architecture has become contested often results from the different audiences it attempts to address, external and internal, and the extent which the former is apparently privileged over the latter. As part of the wider project of reimagining the city iconicity becomes entangled with strategies aimed at making cities attractive, of drawing them into the network of urban tourism destinations. More ambitiously, iconicity becomes drawn into the discourse of the attractive city (Florida 2004, Landry 2004, 2002). Such strategies tend to be aimed, initially at least, at the external market – at drawing in external investment to the city, at attracting tourists to the city. How it addresses the city's own population, and how it is consumed by them, may raise different issues than it does for external audiences.

These issues were to become apparent in the ill-fated 'Fourth Grace' commissioned as part of Liverpool's status as Capital of Culture in 2008. Commissioned from a key architect, Will Allsop, the Fourth Grace was to complement the existing three graces of iconic status on the city's waterfront. Jones (2011) details its origins leading through to its abandonment which reflected the problems realization of the intervention encountered. Among these were problems arising from its cost and funding as well as concerns as to whether the building would be completed in time. Significant, too, and reflecting the audacious ambitions of the architect, there was considerable opposition to its installation from Liverpoolians. Drawing from the discussion aired in the local press the building was variously described as an 'eyesore', a 'monstrosity' and a 'cow pat'. Allsop's design was considered intrusive to the city and the cityscape and, however

much the architect sought to stress that the structure reflected the city's history, one which was perceived to be out of place. Public reaction was to be just one factor in the abandonment of the project, and may have been less significant than the other reasons, but the lack of popular support did counter what initially had been a project that was considered by the local elites as central to the wider project of culture-led regeneration.

The story of the Fourth Grace demonstrated that, where iconic architecture can be visually contentious, its installation within public space may become contested and that contestation in itself is able to contribute to the abandonment of the project. Yet, iconic buildings, insofar as they reflect elite visions for the marketing of the city, the interests of capital combined with the professional expertise of 'starchitects' embrace powerful agents whose ambitions become key to how cities are regenerated (McNeill 2009). In attempting to attract the attention of external audiences the appeal of installing an iconic building tends to become taken for granted in what has been defined, on the precedent set by Bilbao, as the 'Guggenheim effect' – tourists and, more generally, investment will be drawn to the city because of how iconicity contributes to place-making. Such projects need to be sold to the city too – ensuring that the development is able to attract popular support in the city, the 'internal audience' becomes part of the marketing process. Exploring how this was undertaken in another city – Glasgow with the opening of the Riverside Museum in 2011 – helps to show how what can be a contentious process, can be depoliticized.

The recent transformation of Glasgow, its re-instatement as a post-industrial city, has achieved almost paradigmatic status in the urban literature. It is frequently cited as a textbook example of an old industrial city that has sought within the last 30 years to engineer a new image for itself as part of a wider project to rebuild the city's economy. From the 'dark days' of the early 1980s, when unemployment rose to over 15 per cent, well in excess of twice the UK rate, the city council initiated a city marketing campaign – 'Glasgow's Miles Better' – that sought to project a more positive image of the city, nationally and internationally as well as for citizens themselves (Paddison 1993). Based on ideas from the marketing of New York the initiative was aimed at countering the poor external image of the city linked to its faltering economy based on heavy industries that had largely collapsed accompanied by high levels of social deprivation, poor housing and high crime rates. While some 30 years later the city has made inroads into redefining itself as a post-industrial city – in which the establishment of new financial industries, emergent cultural industries, the development of international tourism and the hosting of conferences have played a particular role – Glasgow remains in many respects a dual city in which high levels of social deprivation persist alongside the ostentatious consumerism reflected in the city's new logo, 'Glasgow, Scotland with Style'.

The process of transformation and how it has been achieved by the city's development agencies has not gone unchallenged. Much of the opposition has centred around the issue common to many cities undergoing physical and economic restatement of 'whose city'. During the milestone year in the city's reimagining, 1990, in which it had been awarded European Capital of Culture, there was considerable opposition as to what and whose culture was being represented in the reimagining of the city (Boyle and Hughes 1991). The conflict has been persistent, reflecting how the city was actually developing and its growing inequalities, reflected in a major and more recent report by Demos that presented alternative imaginations for the future city to those being implemented by its development agencies. Central to the project of

the city's restructuring has been its physical transformation dominated by waterfront regeneration and the gentrification of parts of the inner city, both of which have been contributory to the growing inequalities in the city and to what Mooney (2004) and others have characterized as the dual city.

Part of the process of re-presenting the city as a dynamic and attractive place that had shed its old image centred on the quest for architectural iconicity. The quest has had a chequered history. Initially, attention focused on the installation of a tower providing an architectural stop at one end of the city's most prestigious shopping thoroughfare, though the idea was abandoned in favour of a high tower to accompany the then newly built Science Centre on the riverside. As part of a larger set of developments taking place on either side of the river, the Science Tower was to incorporate a lift enabling visitors to appreciate the changes taking place in the city and particularly along the Clyde. Since its opening the Tower has been plagued by successive mechanical problems all but making it defunct – it is not even included in the current edition of the official map of city sights published by Glasgow City Marketing Bureau. These ill-fated attempts to establish an iconic building for the city have been answered through the recent (2011) opening of the Riverside Museum. Designed by the architect Zaha Hadid, the Museum is a flagship development within the ongoing redevelopment of the riverfront which, as the Leader of the City Council put it, is 'a building which itself would be a major statement and attraction' (Jamieson 2011).

A significant addition to the cityscape, what is of importance to the argument here is that, while it has had its detractors, the museum, occupying a prominent space that addresses the city as a whole rather than the specific neighbourhood in which it is located, appears to have been enthusiastically accepted by the city's residents (as well as becoming an attraction to the city's 'external audiences'). Part of the reasoning no doubt as to why it has become a popular local attraction stems from what the museum contains – replacing the former popular transport museum, the contents centre on exhibits many of which play to the memories citizens have of the city. In the immediate sense of the number of visitors attracted to Riverside the museum has rapidly become a major cultural attraction, the vast proportion of those visiting from the city itself or its immediate hinterland. More concealed in its influence is the role marketing has in persuading the city's residents that the project was an essential part of the regeneration process – in effect, a 'natural' addition to the city's public spaces expressed through rhetoric that effectively depoliticizes the intervention. Through this argument an iconic tourist attraction is not only important to attracting tourists, but beneficial to the urban economy and, therefore, to its residents. At any rate, by comparison with earlier junctures in the city's harnessing of culture, opposition to the museum has been muted, in spite of the cost and the more hidden benefits of the project in the gentrification of the city.

Public Art in Local Neighbourhood Spaces

Iconic architecture might be considered as public art distinguished by scale and its aspiration to be a memorable (and attractive) visual statement. Though public art itself embraces different types of intervention and is not limited to being a visual

intervention, its renaissance is widely associated with the installation of artworks which not only aspire to engage with different audiences but also to be instrumental in the process of place-making. Typically, the installation of public art operates at a more modest scale than iconic architecture, though some public art has achieved iconic status, not just because of its scale or because of what it seeks to represent, but also because of its location. In the United Kingdom Anthony Gormley's *Angel of the North* (a major sculpture located on a hilltop alongside a major road welcoming visitors to the approaching Tyneside conurbation) has achieved international iconic status within a relatively short period of time. Nor are such examples limited to the present day (re)inscription of the city – earlier examples of monumental public art, Nelson's Column in London and its ill-fated counterpart in Dublin, Nelson's Pillar, demonstrate how such interventions can occupy key public spaces besides becoming, through habituation, integral parts of the everyday urban landscape (Whelan 2003).

The ubiquity of public art as part of the reaesthetization of the city is linked to its spread within the city beyond its central public spaces to more local spaces within the urban fabric. Here its emergence is found as decoration to public institutions, such as hospitals, to recapitalized spaces including waterfront regeneration, to gentrified spaces, to the mixed neighbourhoods associated commonly with urban regeneration and to a host of other spaces comprising the city. Its visual ubiquity has been the source of some opprobrium where it has even been described in terms of applying 'lipstick to the gorilla' (Evans and Shaw 2004). Such criticisms reflect not just the negative attitudes the product itself can engender – attitudes that are rooted in taste – but because of its apparent disjuncture with the local environment in which it has been placed and the imposition it represents. Invariably, public art is contentious, its meaning contested between different audiences, contestation which in some cases has – as in the case of Richard Serra's *Tilted Arc* in Federal Plaza, Manhattan (Senie 2002) – passed into the urban folklore surrounding its use.

What the *Tilted Arc* controversy highlighted was the relationship between the artist and the space in which (s)he was working and their responsibilities to the local publics. As Gablik (1995) argued

What the Tilted Arc controversy forced us to consider is whether art that is centred on notions of pure freedom and radical autonomy and subsequently inserted into the public sphere without any regard to the relationship it has to other people, to the community, or any consideration except the pursuit of art, can contribute to the common good. (quoted in Miles 1997: 90)

In realizing their project the artist – as no less the starchitect – needs to recognize the power their agency has to reinscribe public spaces and the tensions to which this can give rise.

The broader lesson pointed to by the controversy – and one in which there is growing evidence of it having been learnt in a wide range of cities – is that the processes through which public art reinscribes public space should be inclusive, drawing the local community into the process of production. Complementing the physical restatement of Barcelona as a world city centred on major developments such as the waterfront has been a less-publicized but widespread use of public art as part of the process of local neighbourhood regeneration. Though the claims made for how public art has been

drawn into local neighbourhood spaces in Barcelona has not proved uncontentious (Balibrea 2001), how art has been used to complement public spaces has sought to work with local populations rather than simply impose projects on them, developments that have become widespread practice in North American and European cities.

In its attempts to be more inclusive, public art has spread to urban neighbourhoods it has been a stranger to in the past, including in British cities, localities that are characterized by high levels of social deprivation. (See also Montgomery, Chapter 20, this volume). In Gateshead, sister city to Newcastle in the north-east of England, public art has been deliberately extended to deprived neighbourhoods as part of a wider project aimed at social inclusion (Sharp, Pollock and Paddison 2005). Similarly, in Glasgow public art has been installed in a variety of neighbourhood spaces, in estates at the edge of the city characterized by high levels of social deprivation and poverty as well as in inner city mixed neighbourhood regeneration. The use of participatory techniques represents an alternative interpretation of inclusion – by working with local communities, how public art is to be installed is less imposed than it is a more cooperative process between the artist and the local population.

In practice, the inclusion of public participation as the means by which the dedication of art can enhance local public spaces raises its own problems and conflicts. In common with the problems of public participation elsewhere in urban development, its practice may be more tokenistic than real. Similarly, the mechanics of how participation is undertaken is problematic, as (for example) in ensuring that the multiple publics constituting local residential populations are represented effectively in the process as well as their preferences reflected in the final installations. Nor does local participation resolve the tensions that can arise between local community aspirations and the autonomy of the artist. Added to these problems are continuing uncertainties professed by some as to the purpose of public art, the value of it, and where it is being used in mixed neighbourhood regeneration who is benefiting from it. These difficulties may not be resolvable, yet there is sufficient case practice to indicate that, however problematic, working with local populations is potentially productive in that it is able to generate public art that is able to enhance local public spaces. Even if as a conclusion it needs qualifying to take account of contingency, it begins to provide support for Mitchell's argument introduced earlier, distinguishing between public spaces made by, rather than for, us.

Conclusions: The Entanglement of Production and Consumption

Democratic public space is fragile, its imprint in the city consistently being challenged. The restructuring of cities in the interests of capital and of local elites, the impress of professionalism operating through city planners and others, the emergence of new technologies – the motor car and surveillance – and their spatial ramifications, each has had erosive effects on the maintenance of democratic public spaces. Yet, simultaneously public space plays a key role in giving meaning to urban life, materially and symbolically. Public spaces are the fora in which social interaction is played out, in

which the diversity of the city is encountered. Materially public space is fundamental to meeting everyday needs and, more symbolically, to contributing to identities, both of the self and collectively. Its centrality to the cultural as well as the economic and social life of the city gives added meaning to its vulnerability arising from its ability to be appropriated by particular (and powerful) interests.

Contemporary trends to re-aestheticize the city as part of the wider project of creating cities that are attractive and able to compete with other cities in the global marketplace are linked to processes that are eroding democratic public spaces (Harvey 1989). Privatized spaces, and the spread of gentrification are achieved through neoliberal policies in which the reconfiguration of public spaces is produced through the efforts of local development agencies. Integral to these processes has been the re-recognition of the power of architecture and of public art in reinscribing place, contributing to the creation of attractive and liveable cities in projects that are targeted particularly at external audiences. The dystopian view is that the arts and the mobilization of spectacles – including iconic architecture – are being mobilized in the interests of capital and of specific class fractions, the middle classes in particular.

Such a view has been challenged, centring around the ways in which art can be used to critique hegemonic power and furnish the basis for resistance. In her analysis of cultural capitals Johnson (2009), following the lead provided by Jacobs (1998), argues that ‘the activation of creativity in the form of cultural capital can and does have material effects on cities which may trouble dominant views of that city ... and offer alternative representations’ (Johnson 2009: 43). Art, then, can challenge dominant representations. Thus, in London the Docklands Community Poster Project interposed local community narratives showing aspects of local history and identity otherwise airbrushed out by the reimagining projected by the development agency. Further, the practice of installing public art, as has been discussed earlier, has sought to be more inclusive of the multiple voices comprising local communities, linking the production, reinscribing, of public spaces through art in ways which aim to be more inclusive of local preferences. The premise common to these developments is that both production and consumption *should* become entangled in the reinscribing of public space.

Such a premise is not intended as a panacea, nor could it be, given the examples introduced in this discussion. The impromptu dancing on the Guangzhou waterfront with which the chapter began – though endorsing a different artistic form from the visual intervention – demonstrated how local communities can appropriate a space for its own ends. How a space becomes consumed can result in alternative uses to those that had been originally intended. How public art is read can be contrary to the reasoning attached to its production; participatory practices drawing in local opinion as to what public art is to be installed are necessarily selective in who becomes consulted and when it takes place. Yet, much public art is more enduring, communicating with citizens that were not involved in its production and with subsequent generations. Even where public art is imposed by elites into urban public spaces, habituation to its presence may result in its acceptance as a ‘natural’ component of a public space; when it was proposed to replace the monuments in a major public space in Glasgow the proposal met considerable opposition and was abandoned, even though the edifices represented elite members important to the city and Scottish nation from the nineteenth century.

Nor does the production-consumption process necessarily unfold linearly – that is in ways the premise would predict – suggesting that other explanations need to be sought in explaining how the hegemonic appropriation of public spaces, the imposition of iconic architecture may not be resisted, but rather be appreciated more consensually. In a critique of the recent changes in Barcelona, the physical regeneration of the waterfront and inner city neighbourhoods, Balibrea (2001) cautioned that the absence of any significant dissent to the flagship projects may not necessarily be read as support for change, but rather that through the marketing of change development agencies have been able to generate a sense of false consciousness in which it has been possible to convince even potential critics that their interests are equivalent to those of the dominant economic classes. Yet, the spaces Balibrea is referring to, as also the new museum in Glasgow, are all at the city rather than the neighbourhood scale. It is in the more local spaces that (re)aestheticization has been the more inclusive, those spaces in which it is more likely that there is a sense of ownership.

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