INTRODUCTION

Margaret Crawford

But we are unable to seize the human facts. We fail to see them where they are, namely in humble, familiar, everyday objects. Our search for the human takes us too far, too deep. We seek it in the clouds or in mysteries, whereas it is waiting for us, besieging us on all sides.

—Henri Lefebvre, *The Same and the Other*

What do we mean by everyday urbanism? These two words—one ordinary, the other obscure—together identify a new position in understanding and approaching the city. Rather than urban design, urban planning, urban studies, urban theory, or other specialized terms, urbanism identifies a broad discursive arena that combines all of these disciplines as well as others into a multidimensional consideration of the city. Cities are inexhaustible and contain so many overlapping and contradictory meanings—aesthetic, intellectual, physical, social, political, economic, and experiential—that they can never be reconciled into a single understanding. Urbanism is thus inherently a contested field. The term also carries with it important echoes of the sociologist Louis Wirth's famous essay title and characterization "Urbanism as a Way of Life."[1] This formulation emphasizes the primacy of human experience as the fundamental aspect of any definition of urbanism.

"Everyday" speaks to this element of ordinary human experience and itself conveys many complicated meanings. At a common-sense level, everyday describes the lived experience shared by urban residents, the banal and ordinary routines we know all too well—commuting, working, relaxing, moving through city streets and sidewalks, shopping, buying and eating food, running errands. Even in this descriptive incarnation, the everyday city has rarely been the focus of attention for architects or urban designers, despite the fact that an amazing number of social, spatial, and aesthetic meanings can be found in the repeated activities and conditions that constitute our daily, weekly, and yearly routines. The utterly ordinary reveals a fabric of space and time defined by a complex realm of social practices—a conjuncture of accident, desire, and habit.

The concept of everyday space delineates the physical domain of everyday public activity. Existing in between such defined and physically identifiable realms as the home, the workplace, and the institution, everyday urban space is the connective tissue that binds daily lives together. Everyday space stands in contrast to the carefully planned, officially designated, and often underused public spaces that can be found in most American cities. These monumental spaces only punctuate the larger and more diffuse landscape of everyday life, which tends to be banal and repetitive, everywhere and nowhere, obvious yet invisible. Ambiguous like all in-between spaces, the everyday represents a zone of social transition and possibility with the potential for new social arrangements and forms of imagination.[2]

1 "Urbanism as a Way of Life," first published in 1938, has been extensively reprinted. See Albert J. Reiss, ed., ON CITIES AND SOCIAL LIFE (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1938); and Richard Sennett, ed., CLASSIC ESSAYS ON THE CULTURE OF CITIES (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1969). For a discussion of other meanings of urbanism, see Nan Ellin, POSTMODERN URBANISM (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1996), 225.

2 For Victor Turner's concept of liminality, "betwixt and between," see THE FOREST OF SYMBOLS (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1967), 93–110. Also see Donald Weber on the related concept of "border," in "From Limen to Border: A Meditation on the Legacy of Victor Turner for American Cultural Studies," AMERICAN QUARTERLY 47 (September 1995): 525–37.

3 Henri Lefebvre, CRITIQUE OF EVERYDAY LIFE (London: Verso, 1991), 95.

4 Lefebvre, CRITIQUE OF EVERYDAY LIFE, 18.

5 Henri Lefebvre, EVERYDAY LIFE IN THE MODERN WORLD (New York: Harper, 1971), 25.

6 See, for example, Kristen Ross, FAST CARS AND CLEAN BODIES (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1995); Edward Soja, POSTMODERN GEOGRAPHIES (London: Verso, 1989), and THIRDSPACE: JOURNEYS TO LOS ANGELES AND OTHER REAL AND IMAGINED PLACES (New York: Blackwell, 1996); and Mark Gottdeiner, THE SOCIAL PRODUCTION OF URBAN SPACE (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1985).

BETWEEN PHILOSOPHY AND COMMON SENSE

Although the incoherence of everyday space might seem to defeat any conceptual or physical order, the concepts of everyday life as identified by Henri Lefebvre, Guy Debord, and Michel de Certeau serve as an introduction to this rich repository of urban meaning. These three French theorists, all of whom died in the last decade, were, respectively, a Marxist philosopher and sociologist, a filmmaker and would-be revolutionary, and an anthropologist and historian. Pioneers in investigating the completely ignored spheres of daily existence, their work identified the everyday as a crucial arena of modern culture and society. While acknowledging the oppression of daily life, each discovered its potential as a site of creative resistance and liberatory power. In contrast to the French theorists such as Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault, who dominated academic and architectural discourse over the last two decades, Lefebvre, Debord, and de Certeau insisted on the connection between theory and social practices, between thought and lived experience. Lefebvre pointed out that "when the philosopher turns back towards real life, general concepts which have been worked out by means of a highly specialized activity and abstracted from everyday life are not lost. On the contrary, they take on a new meaning for lived experience."[3] All of the authors included in this book share with these three philosophical predecessors similar assumptions about everyday life.

The belief that everyday life is important governs our work. Lefebvre was the first philosopher to insist that the apparently trivial everyday actually constitutes the basis of all social experience and the true realm of political contestation. Lefebvre described daily life as the "screen on which society projects its light and its shadow, its hollows and its planes, its power and its weakness."[4] In spite of this significance, Lefebvre warns, the everyday is difficult to decode due to its fundamental ambiguity. As the first step in analyzing this slippery concept, Lefebvre distinguished between two simultaneous realities that exist within everyday life: the *quotidian*, the timeless, humble, repetitive natural rhythms of life; and the *modern*, the always new and constantly changing habits that are shaped by technology and worldliness.[5] Lefebvre structured his analysis of everyday life around this duality, looking past potentially alienating aspects in an effort to unearth the deeply human elements that still exist within the everyday. While most urbanists influenced by Lefebvre have critiqued modernity's negative effects on the city,[6] we have tried optimistically to focus on the other side of the equation—the possibility of reclaiming elements of the quotidian that have been hidden in the nooks and crannies of the urban environment. We have discovered these qualities in overlooked, marginal places, from streets and sidewalks to vacant lots and parks, from suburbia to the inner city.

We believe that lived experience should be more important than physical form in defining the city. This perspective distinguishes us from many designers and critics who point to the visual incoherence of everyday space as exemplifying everything that is wrong with American cities. Like Lefebvre, Debord, and de Certeau, we understand urbanism to be a human and social discourse. The city is, above all, a social product, created out of the demands of everyday use and the social struggles of urban inhabitants. Design within everyday space must start with an understanding and acceptance of the life that takes place there. This goes against the grain of professional design discourse, which is based on abstract principles, whether quantitative, formal, spatial, or perceptual. Whatever the intention, professional abstractions inevitably produce spaces that have little to do with real

human impulses. We agree with Raymond Ledrut's conclusion "The problem today—which has nothing 'philosophical' about it—is that of the real life 'of' the city and 'in' the city. The true issue is not to make beautiful cities or well-managed cities, it is to make a work of life. The rest is a by-product."[7]

For us, the play of difference is the primary element in the "real life" of the city. Lefebvre observed that abstract urban spaces, primarily designed to be reproduced, "negated all differences, those that come from nature and history as well as those that come from the body, ages, sexes, and ethnicities."[8] This is visible everywhere in increasingly generic yet specialized spaces that parcel daily experience into separate domains. Though difference is progressively negated in urban space, however, it nonetheless remains the most salient fact of everyday life. Its burdens and pleasures are distributed unevenly, according to class, age, race, and gender. Lefebvre focused particular attention on the victims of everyday life, especially women sentenced to endless routines of housework and shopping. Lefebvre also identified immigrants, low-level employees, and teenagers as victims of everyday life, although "never in the same way, never at the same time, never all at once."[9]

To locate these differences physically in everyday lives is to map the social geography of the city. The city of the bus rider or pedestrian does not resemble that of the automobile owner. A shopping cart means very different things to a busy mother in a supermarket and a homeless person on the sidewalk. These differences separate the lives of urban inhabitants from one another, while their overlap constitutes the primary form of social exchange in the city. The intersections between an individual or defined group and the rest of the city are everyday space—the site of multiple social and economic transactions, where multiple experiences accumulate in a single location. These places where differences collide or interact are the most potent sites for everyday urbanism.

The goal of everyday urbanism is to orchestrate what the literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin called "dialogism." A mode of textual analysis, dialogism can easily be applied to design practices. Bakhtin defined dialogism as the characteristic epistemological mode of a world dominated by "heteroglossia"—the constant interaction between meanings, all of which can potentially influence the others. "Dialogization" occurs when a word, discourse, language, or culture becomes relativized, deprivileged, and aware of competing definitions for the same things. Undialogized language remains authoritarian or absolute.[10] To dialogize design in the city challenges the conceptual hierarchy under which most design professionals operate. Everyday life provides a good starting point for this shift because it is grounded in the commonplace rather than the canonical, the many rather than the few, and the repeated rather than the unique; and it is uniquely comprehensible to ordinary people.

Not surprisingly, since everyone is potentially an expert on everyday life, everyday life has never been of much interest to experts. Lefebvre pointed out that although experts and intellectuals are embedded in everyday life, they prefer to think of themselves as outside and elsewhere. Convinced that everyday life is trivial, they attempt to evade it. They use rhetoric and metalanguage as "permanent substitutes for experience, allowing them to ignore the mediocrity of their own condition."[11] Lefebvre also described the purpose of such distancing techniques: "Abstract culture places an almost opaque screen (if it were completely opaque the situation would be simpler) between cultivated [people] and everyday life. Abstract culture not only supplies them with words and ideas but also with an attitude which forces them to seek the 'meaning' of their lives and consciousness outside of themselves and their real relations with the world."[12]

7 Raymond Ledrut, "Speech and the Silence of the City," in THE CITY AND THE SIGN: AN INTRODUCTION TO URBAN SEMIOTICS, ed. Mark Gottdeiner and Alexandros Langopoulos (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 133.

8 Henri Lefebvre, "Space: Social Product and Use Value," in CRITICAL SOCIOLOGY: EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVES, ed. J. W. Freiberg (New York: Irvington, 1979), 289.

9 Lefebvre, CRITIQUE OF EVERYDAY LIFE, 127.

10 Mikhail Bakhtin, THE DIALOGIC IMAGINATION: FOUR ESSAYS, ed. Michael Holmquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 426-27.

11 Lefebvre, EVERYDAY LIFE IN THE MODERN WORLD, 92.

12 Lefebvre, CRITIQUE OF EVERYDAY LIFE, 238.

To avoid this breach with reality, everyday urbanism demands a radical repositioning of the designer, a shifting of power from the professional expert to the ordinary person. Widespread expertise in everyday life acts as a leveling agent, eliminating the distance between professionals and users, between specialized knowledge and daily experience. The designer is immersed within contemporary society rather than superior to and outside it, and is thus forced to address the contradictions of social life from close up.

TIME AND SPACE

Both Michel de Certeau and Henri Lefebvre argued that the temporal is as significant as the spatial in everyday life. De Certeau drew a distinction between two modes of operation: strategies, based on place, and tactics, based on time. Strategies represent the practices of those in power, postulating "a place that can be delimited as its own and serve as the base from which relations with an exteriority composed of targets or threats can be managed." Strategies establish a "proper" place, either spatial or institutional, such that place triumphs over time. Political, economic, and scientific rationalities are constructed on the strategic model. In contrast, a tactic is a way of operating without a proper place, and so depends on time. As a result, tactics lack the borders necessary for designation as visible totalities: "The place of a tactic belongs to the other." Tactics are the "art of the weak," incursions into the field of the powerful. Without a proper place, tactics rely on seized opportunities, on cleverly chosen moments, and on the rapidity of movements that can change the organization of a space. Tactics are a form of everyday creativity. Many of the urban activities we describe are tactical. By challenging the "proper" places of the city, this range of transitory, temporary, and ephemeral urban activities constitutes counterpractices to officially sanctioned urbanisms.

Lefebvre also identified another set of multiple temporalities composing urban life. Everyday time is located at the intersection of two contrasting but coexisting modes of repetition, the cyclical and the linear. The cyclical consists of the rhythms of nature: night and day, changing seasons, birth and death. Rational processes define linear patterns, time measured into quantifiable schedules of work and leisure with such units as timetables, fast food, coffee breaks, and prime time. Repeated across days, weeks, months, years, and lifetimes, these competing rhythms shape our lived experience. More important to Lefebvre than these predictable oscillations, however, is a third category of time, the discontinuous and spontaneous moments that punctuate daily experience—fleeting sensations of love, play, rest, knowledge. These instants of rupture and illumination, arising from everyone's daily existence, reveal the possibilities and limitations of life.[13] They highlight the distance between what life is and what it might be. Although these moments quickly pass into oblivion, they provide the key to the powers contained in the everyday and function as starting points for social change. Guy Debord saw them as potential revolutions in individual everyday life, springboards for the realization of the possible.[14] By recognizing and building on these understandings of time, we can explore new and barely acknowledged realms of urban experience.

13 Henri Lefebvre, LA SOMME ET LE RESTE, VOL. 2 (Paris: La Nef de Paris, 1959), discussed in David Harvey, "Afterword" in Henri Lefebvre, THE PRODUCTION OF SPACE (New York: Blackwell, 1991), 429.

14 Guy Debord, "Preliminary Problems in Constructing a Situation," in Ken Knabb, SITUATIONIST INTERNATIONAL ANTHOLOGY (Berkeley: Bureau of Public Secrets, 1981), 43-45.

THE POLITICS OF EVERYDAY LIFE

Like these writers, we want to draw attention to the transformational possibilities of the everyday. Alice Kaplan and Kristen Ross have pointed out that the political is hidden within the contradictions and possibilities of lived experience.[15] The most banal and repetitive gestures of everyday life give rise to desires that cannot be satisfied there. If these desires could acquire a political language, they would make a new set of personal and collective demands on the social order. Therefore the practices of everyday urbanism should inevitably lead to social change, not via abstract political ideologies imposed from outside, but instead through specific concerns that arise from the lived experience of different individuals and groups in the city.

While acknowledging our debts to Lefebvre and Debord, the general position of writers included in this book is not identical to theirs. Both Lefebvre and Debord identified the urban environment as a unique site for contesting the alienation of modern capitalist society and believed that this alienation could be overcome, thus rendering individuals whole once again. They saw both the society they attacked and the future society they desired as totalities.[16] We instead acknowledge fragmentation and incompleteness as inevitable conditions of postmodern life. We do not seek overarching solutions. There is no universal everyday urbanism, only a multiplicity of responses to specific times and places. Our solutions are modest and small in scale—micro-utopias, perhaps, contained in a sidewalk, a bus bench, or a minipark. In a rare nontotalizing moment, Debord declared that "One day, we will construct cities for drifting . . . but, with light retouching, one can utilize certain zones which already exist. One can utilize certain persons who already exist."[17] One purpose of this book is to identify a few of those zones and a few of those persons.

TOWARD EVERYDAY URBANISM

The possibility that the concept of everyday urbanism might interest a broader audience first became apparent to the editors in 1994, when we organized a symposium as part of the Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art's "Urban Revisions" exhibition. From this symposium we began to assemble the book, which took shape slowly through heated but always stimulating discussions, our attempts to delineate the amorphous contours of everyday life. This project is the product of our friendship; each of us brought different interests, perspectives, and knowledge to this collaborative endeavor. We discovered around us other writers, photographers, and architects working with similar ideas. Though much of the work described here takes place in Los Angeles, we hope that the relevance of these ideas and activities extends into the general realm of the urban. We suspect that this book represents only a small glimpse at everyday urbanism, and that multiple versions already exist across the country, ripe for further examination.[18]

The book is divided into two sections, "Looking at the City" and "Making the City." The first group of essays examines a range of existing activities and places around Los Angeles and New York. Sanctioned yet unofficial, highly visible but hidden, these underexplored places have important things to say. Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett observes street activities in New York City, from parades to children at play, and argues that such vernacular performances constitute a type of architecture because they give form to urban space. In new kinds of public spaces that are produced by such everyday activities as garage sales and street vending in Los Angeles, I see multiple publics asserting

15 Alice Kaplan and Kristen Ross, introduction to "Everyday Life" issue of YALE FRENCH STUDIES 73 (Fall 1987): 4.

16 For further discussions of the concept of totality see Martin Jay, MARXISM AND TOTALITY: THE ADVENTURES OF A CONCEPT FROM LUKAS TO HABERMAS (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 276-99; and Peter Wollen, "Bitter Victory: The Art and Politics of the Situationist International," in ON THE PASSAGE OF A FEW PEOPLE THROUGH A BRIEF MOMENT IN TIME, ed. Elizabeth Sussman (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1989).

17 Guy Debord, "La Théorie de la dérive," in LES LEVRES NUES 9 (November 1956): 10.

18 See, for example, Deborah Berke and Steven Harris, eds., ARCHITECTURE OF THE EVERYDAY (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1997).

their identities and delineating new urban arenas for political action. Mona Houghton describes a very different social context in Los Angeles, the bohemian enclave of Laurel Canyon, where Ernest Rosenthal, scavenger and recycler, tends his continuously evolving garden. Too sophisticated to be an outsider but more obsessed than the typical home gardener, Rosenthal challenges distinctions between high and low. Dennis Keeley's photo essay reveals the beauty and humor of Rosenthal's garden. John Chase focuses on his own Southern California neighborhood, Venice, to analyze trash as a mode of urban information and communication, a medium through which urban residents understand and attempt to control their environment. Finally, Camilo José Vergara's portfolio of photographs surveys economic activities in South Central Los Angeles, documenting the ways in which Hispanic immigrants transform their public environment, visible on streets and fences as well as in garages and yards.

The second half of the book looks at design activities, professionals collaborating in building the everyday city. John Kaliski provides theoretical context by tracing the history of everyday urbanism within the postmodern discourse of urban design. Urban designers, argues Kaliski, have consistently evaded the realities of existing urban life, by attempting either to recover the past or to control the future. He proposes everyday urbanism as an alternative to the failure of the abstract modernist city. In the next two essays, John Chase and Phoebe Wall Wilson present small-scale projects that respond practically to daily life in two very different Los Angeles municipalities, West Hollywood and Pasadena. Both projects retrofit single-use environments with multiple functions and amenities to encourage spontaneous social interaction. Both projects, conceived within existing planning and regulatory frameworks, are very likely to be implemented. Norman Millar describes the satisfactions and frustrations of his ongoing work with Central American street vendors in MacArthur Park. The relationship between the professional designers, the vendors, and the city is intermittent and rarely conclusive, challenging existing modes of architectural practice. Walter Hood uses an improvisatory method to re-create conceptually a minipark and its surrounding streets in West Oakland. Hood imagines responses to the multiple needs of the entire neighborhood, redesigning the park to accommodate beer drinkers, recyclers, and prostitutes as well as gardeners and children.

In spite of its detailed discussion of theoretical influences, this book was written not as a scholarly or critical work but primarily as a call to action. Unifying the ideas and practices of everyday urbanism presented here is the hope that all might serve as entry points for an understanding of everyday space and as incentives for rethinking the ways in which designers can operate there. Proposing alternatives to the limited scope and methods of contemporary urban design, these essays attempt to reconnect design to human, social, and political concerns without repeating the narrow, deterministic approaches of the social and advocacy architecture movements of the 1960s. Instead, everyday urbanism seeks to release the powers of creativity and imagination already present within daily life as the means of transforming urban experience and the city.

THE CURRENT STATE OF EVERYDAY URBANISM

Margaret Crawford

Much has happened in the ten years since we finished the manuscript for the first edition of *Everyday Urbanism*. The concept originally emerged from a specific context, our own daily experience of the endlessly fascinating urban landscape of Los Angeles. Continually being re-inhabited in new ways and reinvented by its residents, the city challenged us, as design professionals and academics, to engage with it in a productive way. The liveliness of the urban life around us heightened our dissatisfaction with the limits of prevailing urban design discourse. Whether engaged in normative professional practice or avant-garde speculation, urban designers often seemed unable to appreciate the city around them and displayed little interest in the people who lived in it. Instead, they approached the city in primarily abstract and normative terms. We conceived of Everyday Urbanism as an alternative urban design concept, a new way to reconnect urban research and design with ordinary human and social meanings. Borrowing selectively from the concepts of everyday life provided by Henri Lefebvre, Michel de Certeau, and Mikhail Bakhtin, we proposed a new set of urban design values. These put urban residents and their daily experiences at the center of the enterprise, encouraged a more ethnographic mode of urban research, and emphasized specificity and material reality. Depicting and designing for an almost infinite variety of everyday lives demanded a broad range of representations, leading us to explore various genres of writing and to encourage contributors to experiment with new types of expressive drawing and hyper-realistic model making and photo collage.

One of the most satisfying aspects of publishing *Everyday Urbanism* has been the on-going enthusiastic reception from like-minded people and groups. In retrospect, it seems clear that rather than inventing a new idea, *Everyday Urbanism* actually encapsulated a widespread but not yet fully articulated attitude toward urban design. It turned out that many architects, planners, and students around the world were already paying keen attention to the existing city, reading Lefebvre and de Certeau, and adjusting their design approaches accordingly. Doug Kelbaugh's recognition of Everyday Urbanism as one of the three dominant paradigms of contemporary urbanism reflects this widespread resonance.[1] By giving this collection of influences, sympathies, and interest a name, Everyday Urbanism provided a concept to which, it turned out, a surprising number of people could relate. Their responses acknowledged our aspiration to make EU an "open work," an umbrella concept that could shelter many different activities, rather than an exclusive or regulated enterprise. The book itself mirrors this in its selection of varied and even contradictory essays and projects. Everyday Urbanism embraces the diversity of life, in contrast to other schools of urban design that target a

1
See Doug Kelbaugh's introduction to EVERYDAY URBANISM: MARGARET CRAWFORD VS. MICHAEL SPEAKS in the series Michigan Debates on Urbanism (Ann Arbor: A. Alfred Taubman College of Architecture and Urban Planning, 2005).

particular ethos and then create an approach to further this worldview. If upper case Everyday Urbanism still designates a design approach, lower case everyday urbanism has become an accepted term to positively describe ordinary urban places and activities.

We want to acknowledge this broader field by mentioning some of the individuals and groups that we feel share at least some of our interests or whose work overlaps with ours in some way. During the 1990s, while EU ideas were percolating, Los Angeles inspired a number of parallel projects, including those of Robert Mangurian and Mary Ann Ray, our then-colleagues at SCI-Arc. At the same time, a new discourse of Latino Urbanism in Southern California was emerging with the work of Teddy Cruz, ADOBE LA and, more recently James Rojas. The Forum for Architecture and Urban Design provided an important venue for presenting these ideas as they emerged. Jack Burnett-Stuart introduced us to Jurgen Patzak-Poor and Anjie Buckholz, who continue to do interesting work with Building Initiative in London and Belfast. German-speaking countries have produced their own distinctive contribution to the everyday discourse. Philipp Oswalt's Urban Catalyst project brought scholars from all over Europe together to investigate urban development through temporary uses. In Vienna, Robert Temel and Florian Haydn's book *Temporary Urban Spaces* explored a broad range of temporally based art and design projects. In Berlin, Kenny Cupers and Marcus Meissen's study of informal urban spaces theorized their significance as public spaces. In Essen, Francesca Ferguson's comprehensive exhibition and catalog *Talking Cities: The Micropolitics of Urban Space* collected a large number of related projects including the work of Stalker in Italy, Atelier Bow-Wow in Tokyo, and Bernd Kniess and Leonhard Lago's "Cartographies of Everyday Life" in the Ruhr.

As teachers and as practitioners, we have met and interacted with a number of people, generating influences in both directions. These include former students such as Dan Adams and Interboro, (Tobias Armborst, Georgeen Theodore, and Dan D'Oca) who are now in practice. Although EU focused on urban design, its ideas can easily shade into both art practice and community activism. Artists such as Elke Kkrasner in Vienna and the haha group in Chicago and Cambridge (Wendy Jacob, Laurie Palmer) share many of our concerns. Dan Pitera and his colleagues at the Detroit Collaborative Design Center, Public Architecture in San Francisco, and the Center for Urban Pedagogy are all restructuring professional models to offer new perspectives in specific urban setting.

Although EU focused our local experiences, readers in places as remote as India and China not only opened up a global community but also suggested a broader applicability than we had imagined. In very different urban contexts Urban Thinktank in Caracas and Rahul Mehotra in Bombay have worked productively in informal situations to work with rather than against what Mehotra has called "the kinetic city." We also want to emphasize our commonalities with Crimson, the Dutch architectural history office. In the Everyday Urbanism debate at the University of Michigan, architectural theorist Michael Speaks emphasizes the differences between Crimson and everyday urbanism. We have instead found a considerable amount of overlap. Crimson's unusual office structure, provocative writing, long-term projects in Hoogvliet, and inclusive collegiality have produced real-world outcomes that we can only dream about.

Not all of the attention we have received has been positive, however. In fact, critics from a broad spectrum of architectural and academic positions have attacked everyday urbanism for a wide variety of perceived failures. Some of these disagreements are predictable, and, in fact, stake out the

existing positions in current urban debates. The critic Herbert Muschamp walked out of one of our earliest presentations, underlining his lack of interest in non-authored design. It was no surprise that New Urbanists, invested in idealized urban environments created through design and regulation, would find our acceptance of ordinary places distasteful. Andreas Duany derided its products as inevitably "ugly," saying that Everyday Urbanism was his most disliked approach to urban design. Similarly the planner Emily Talen decried our lack of interest in normative aesthetic and social goals.[2] Other planners and urban design practitioners, accustomed to working with large-scale projects and master plans, find EU's incremental and small-scale approach ineffectual. The Italian urbanist Bernardo Secchi dismissed it as inadequate to address the real issues facing cities.[3] Harvard professor and urban designer Alex Krieger mistook our interest in ordinary places and people for a new form of advocacy planning. A number of design professionals have interpreted its emphasis on blurring professional boundaries as a challenge to their specialized expertise. Historians and theorists have also attacked what they perceive as the book's theoretical and rhetorical weaknesses. Among other shortcomings, Michael Speaks saw *Everyday Urbanism* as excessively dependent on a linguistic and interpretive approach, reading the city as a text rather than proposing design interventions. Architectural historian Dell Upton developed this critique further, finding EU's theoretical basis vague, binary, and rhetorical rather than concrete.[4] As a result, he argued, it could produce only embarrassingly literal and decorative projects. Although we do not necessarily accept their critiques, our critics have helped us to clarify the key elements driving Everyday Urbanism.

Over the past few years, we have learned from both our friends and our critics but even more from our efforts in putting Everyday Urbanism into practice. For example, the introduction to the first edition of this book devoted a lot of attention to its theoretical provenance. We now understand that Everyday Urbanism functions more as an attitude or a sensibility about the city. In practice we have moved away from developing or following a body of theory to embodying an approach that can be applied to many different situations and activities. Although ideas provided by Lefebvre, de Certeau, and Bakhtin initially enabled us to engage with everyday life, once that engagement begins, responding to the demands of specific urban situations ensures that the project immediately takes on a life of its own. Rather than a singular formal product, this can result in any number of different outcomes. Radically empirical rather than normative and generalizable, Everyday Urbanism constitutes a flexible collection of ideas and practices that can be reconfigured according to particular circumstances.

Multiple and heterogeneous, Everyday Urbanism was never intended to be an over-arching approach to design. Since it does not seek to transform the world or even the built environment, Everyday Urbanists can work partially in many different situations. Unlike most urban design techniques, it can maneuver in the nooks and crannies of existing urban environments. An accretional approach, it makes small changes that accumulate to transform larger urban situations. As a practice, it is appropriate for certain circumstances but perhaps not for others. It is not intended to replace other urban design practices but to work along with, on top of, or after them. Similarly, depending on the situation, Everyday Urbanists can step in and out of professional roles if they discover other ways of accomplishing their goals. Although frustrating to critics, this shape-shifting quality provides Everyday Urbanism with a flexibility noticeably absent in other urban design approaches and is, we would argue, fundamental to operating in a world of constant changes.

2
Emily Talen, NEW URBANISM AND AMERICAN PLANNING (New York: Routledge, 2005), 11013.

3
Bernardo Secchi, PRIMA LEZIONE DI URBANISTICA (Bari: Laterza, 2000), 45.

4
Dell Upton, "Architecture in Everyday Life," NEW LITERARY HISTORY 33 (Autumn 2002): 707-20.

Everyday Urbanists take advantage of their lack of affiliation to think about ordinary places in new ways. Although understanding existing urban situations is our starting point, the essence of Everyday Urbanism is to reinterpret and re-imagine them. Finding unforeseen possibilities in ordinary places requires invention and creativity. Thus, Everyday Urbanism needs to work both from the bottom up (in terms of subject and sympathy) and from the top down (utilizing sophisticated knowledge and techniques). In de Certeau's terms, this means being both tactical (unofficial action that is not authorized by government or any official power structure) and strategic (plans formed on a top down basis by those with power). By trying to produce "ordinary magic" out of circumstances that most designers would find unpromising, Everyday Urbanism may in fact have more visionary and transformative goals than any other form of contemporary urbanism.

Finally, our work with residents, city governments, and local organizations on real projects has pointed to another important dimension of everyday urban practice: the many aspects of urban life that are deeply embedded in the daily workings of city government and its regulation and enforcement functions. This realization challenged some of our theoretical assumptions. Lefebvre, de Certeau, and Bakhtin all depicted and dismissed the state as monolithic, reactionary, and at odds with everyday life. Our experience with local politicians, city agencies, and officials suggests a far more complex and contradictory reality. Boundaries between local governments and citizens are often blurry. Many people occupy multiple roles, moving between identities as citizen, bureaucrat, professional, or advocate. Elected politicians and city officials can be both obstructive and supportive of innovative solutions. We have also gained a new appreciation for the crucial role that middle class public opinion plays in the micro-public sphere of neighborhood and urban politics. Public meetings, the local press, vocal individuals, and organized pressure groups all come together to shape both public opinion and public action. This has led us to emphasize representation and communication as one of our key contributions to political discourse and action, giving us a stronger voice in these ongoing debates. We have also realized that even if we don't prevail, by visualizing and communicating alternatives, our visions of transforming everyday urban life can still play a powerful role in shaping municipal debates and policy initiatives. The ongoing struggles of urban politics highlight another ordinary but important temporal dimension we neglected in the first edition of *Everyday Urbanism*—the slow pace and ongoing commitment necessary to realize projects in a democratic context.

The additions to the book reflect the continuing development of both the urban research and the practice-and-project-based elements of Everyday Urbanism. John Chase and James Rojas's survey of Latino signs in Los Angeles and John Kaliski's mini-mall survey expand on the first edition's focus on the constantly changing vernacular landscape of Los Angeles. Michelle Provoost of Crimson Architectural Historians adds an international dimension with a survey of projects in Hoogvliet in the Netherlands. My article situates EU in a pedagogical context but with real-world outcomes. Having moved to the Boston area as a professor at Harvard, I faced the challenge of adapting EU to a dramatically different urban context. John Kaliski devotes his attention to an important theme that is alluded to but not developed in the first edition, citizen participation and democracy. Already realized or well on their way toward realization, these projects not only illustrate the multiple settings, scales and temporalities that everyday design can take, but also demonstrate its increased presence in the world. In both of these senses, everyday urbanism is still a work in progress.

BLURRING THE BOUNDARIES: PUBLIC SPACE AND PRIVATE LIFE

Margaret Crawford

This investigation originated in my dissatisfaction with a critical position that emerged in architectural discourse a few years ago. Critics and historians began to see multiple versions of the theme park in the increasingly spectacular and centralized zones of leisure and consumption—gentrified shopping streets, massive shopping malls, festival marketplaces. According to Michael Sorkin, one of the primary theorists in this arena, these ersatz and privatized pieces of the city—pseudopublic places—were distinguished by consumption, surveillance, control, and endless simulation. I include my own work among this body of criticism; I contributed a chapter concluding that the entire world had become a gigantic shopping mall to Sorkin's book *Variations on a Theme Park: The New American City and the End of Public Space.*[1]

What concerned me more than the emerging theme-park sensibility as depicted in these studies was part of the book's subtitle, "The End of Public Space." This summarizes a fear repeated by many other critics, urbanists, and architects; in his essay in Sorkin's book, Mike Davis expresses alarm at the "destruction of any truly democratic urban spaces."[2] It is easy to find evidence to support this argument. Los Angeles, for example, is often cited as an extreme demonstration of the decline of public space. The few remaining slices of traditional public space (for example, Pershing Square, historically the focus of the downtown business district, which was recently redesigned by Ricardo Legorreta) are usually deserted, while Citywalk, the simulated cityscape, shopping, and entertainment center collaged from different urban elements by MCA and Universal Studio, is always jammed with people.

1
Michael Sorkin, ed., VARIATIONS ON A THEME PARK: THE NEW AMERICAN CITY AND THE END OF PUBLIC SPACE (New York: Hill and Wang, 1990)

2
Mike Davis, "Fortress Los Angeles: The Militarization of Urban Space," in Sorkin, VARIATIONS ON A THEME PARK, 155.

The existence and popularity of these commercial public places is used to frame a pervasive narrative of loss that contrasts the current debasement of public space with golden ages and golden sites—the Greek agora, the coffeehouses of early modern Paris and London, the Italian piazza, the town square. The narrative nostalgically posits these as once vital sites of democracy where, allegedly, cohesive public discourse thrived, and inevitably culminates in the contemporary crisis of public life and public space, a crisis that puts at risk the very ideas and institutions of democracy itself.

It is hard to argue with the symptoms these writers describe, but I disagree with the conclusions they draw. This perception of loss originates in extremely narrow and normative definitions of both "public" and "space" that derive from insistence on unity, desire for fixed categories of time and space, and rigidly conceived notions of private and public. Seeking a single, all-inclusive public space, these critics mistake monumental public spaces for the totality of public space. In this respect, critics of public space closely echo the conclusions of social theorists such as Jürgen Habermas and Richard Sennett, whose descriptions of the public sphere share many of the same assumptions.[3] Habermas describes the public sphere as overwhelmed by consumerism, the media, and the state, while Sennett laments in his book's very title "the fall of public man." The word "man" highlights another key assumption of this position: an inability to conceive of identity in any but universalizing terms. Whether as universal man, citizen, consumer, or tourist, the identified subjects posit a normative condition of experience.

Not surprisingly, the political implications that follow from the overwhelmingly negative assessments of the narrative of loss are equally negative. Implicit is a form of historical determinism that suggests the impossibility of political struggle against what Mike Davis calls "inexorable forces."[4] The universal consumer becomes the universal victim, helpless and passive against the forces of capitalism, consumerism, and simulation. This tyranny is compounded by the lack of a clear link between public space and democracy. The two are assumed to be closely connected, but exact affinities are never specified, which makes it even more difficult to imagine political opposition to the mall or theme park.

This universalization, pessimism, and ambiguity led me to seek an alternative framework—a new way of conceptualizing public space and a new way of reading Los Angeles. This essay represents an account of my attempts to rethink our conceptions of "public," "space," and "identity." The investigation revealed to me a multiplicity of simultaneous public activities in Los Angeles that are continually redefining both "public" and "space" through lived experience. In vacant lots, sidewalks, parks, and parking lots, these activities are

3
See Jürgen Habermas, THE STRUCTURAL TRANSFORMATION OF THE PUBLIC SPHERE: AN INQUIRY INTO A CATEGORY OF BOURGEOIS SOCIETY (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1989); and Richard Sennett, THE FALL OF PUBLIC MAN (New York: Vintage Books, 1974).

4
Davis, "Fortress Los Angeles," 154–80.

restructuring urban space, opening new political arenas, and producing new forms of insurgent citizenship.

RETHINKING "PUBLIC"

Nancy Fraser's article "Rethinking the Public Sphere" provided an important starting point for my quest.[5] Her central arguments clarify the significant theoretical and political limitations of prevailing formulations of "public." Fraser acknowledges the importance of Jürgen Habermas's characterization of the public sphere as an arena of discursive relations conceptually independent of both the state and the economy, but she questions many of his assumptions about the universal, rational, and noncontentious public arena.

Habermas links the emergence of the "liberal model of the bourgeois public sphere" in early modern Europe with the development of nation-states in which democracy was represented by collectively accepted universal rights and achieved via electoral politics. This version of the public sphere emphasizes unity and equality as ideal conditions. The public sphere is depicted as a "space of democracy" that all citizens have the right to inhabit. In this arena, social and economic inequalities are temporarily put aside in the interest of determining a common good. Matters of common interest are discussed through rational, disinterested, and virtuous public debate. Like the frequently cited ideal of Athenian democracy, however, this model is structured around significant exclusions. In Athens, participation was theoretically open to all citizens, but in practice the majority of the population—women and slaves—were excluded; they were not "citizens." The modern bourgeois public sphere also began by excluding women and workers: women's interests were presumed to be private and therefore part of the domestic sphere, while workers' concerns were presumed to be merely economic and therefore self-interested. Middle-class and masculine modes of public speech and behavior, through the required rational deliberation and rhetoric of disinterest, were privileged and defined as universal.

Recent revisionist histories, notes Fraser, contradict this idealized account, demonstrating that nonliberal, nonbourgeois public spheres also existed, producing their own definitions and public activities in a multiplicity of arenas.[6] For example, in nineteenth- and twentieth-century America, middle-class women organized themselves into a variety of exclusively female volunteer groups for the purposes of philanthropy and reform based on private ideals of domesticity and motherhood. Less affluent women found access to public life through the workplace and through associations including unions, lodges, and political organizations such as Tammany Hall. Broadening the definition of public to encompass

5 Nancy Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy," in THE PHANTOM PUBLIC SPHERE, ed. Bruce Robbins (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993).

6 Joan Landes, WOMEN AND THE PUBLIC SPHERE IN THE AGE OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1988); Mary P. Ryan, WOMEN IN PUBLIC: BETWEEN BANNERS AND BALLOTS, 1825-1880 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990).

these "counterpublics" produces a very different picture of the public sphere, one founded on contestation rather than unity and created through competing interests and violent demands as much as reasoned debate. Demonstrations, strikes, riots, and struggles over such issues as temperance and suffrage reveal a range of discursive sites characterized by multiple publics and varied struggles between contentious concerns.

In the bourgeois public sphere, citizenship is primarily defined in relation to the state, framed within clear categories of discourse, and addressed through political debate and electoral politics. This liberal notion of citizenship is based on abstract universal liberties, with democracy guaranteed by the state's electoral and juridical institutions. Fraser argues instead that democracy is a complex and contested concept that can assume a multiplicity of meanings and forms that often violate the strict lines between private and public on which the liberal bourgeois public sphere depends. In the United States, counterpublics of women, workers, and immigrants have historically defended established civil rights but also demanded new rights based on their specific roles in the domestic or economic spheres. Always changing, these demands continually redefine democracy and redraw boundaries between private and public.

Fraser's description of multiple publics, contestation, and the redefinition of public and private can be extended to the physical realm of public space. First, these ideas suggest that no single physical environment can represent a completely inclusive space of democracy. Like Habermas's idealized bourgeois public sphere, the physical spaces often idealized by architects—the agora, the forum, the piazza—were constituted by exclusion. Where these single publics are construed as occupying an exemplary public space, the multiple counterpublics that Fraser identifies necessarily require and produce multiple sites of public expression. These spaces are partial and selective in response to the limited segments of the population they serve from among the many public roles that individuals play in urban society.

REDEFINING "SPACE"

In order to locate these multiple sites of public expression, we need to redefine our understanding of "space." Just as Nancy Fraser looked beyond the officially designated public to discover the previously hidden counterpublics of women and workers, we can identify another type of space by looking beyond the culturally defined physical realms of home, workplace, and institution. I call this new construction "everyday space." Everyday space is the connective tissue that binds daily lives together, amorphous and so persuasive that it

is difficult even to perceive. In spite of its ubiquity, everyday space is nearly invisible in the professional discourses of the city. Everyday space is like everyday life, the "screen on which society projects its light and its shadow, its hollows and its planes, its power and its weakness."[7]

In the vast expanses of Los Angeles, monumental, highly ordered, and carefully designed public spaces like Pershing Square or Citywalk punctuate the larger and more diffuse space of everyday life. Southern California's banal, incoherent, and repetitive landscape of roads is lined with endless strip malls, supermarkets, auto-repair facilities, fast-food outlets, and vacant lots that defeat any conceptual or physical order. According to Lefebvre, these spaces are like everyday life: "trivial, obvious but invisible, everywhere and nowhere." For most Angelenos, such spaces constitute an everyday reality of infinitely recurring commuting routes and trips to the supermarket, dry cleaner, or video store. The sites for multiple social and economic transactions, these mundane places serve as primary intersections between the individual and the city.

Created to be seen and approached from moving vehicles, this generic landscape exists to accommodate the automobile, which has produced the city's sprawling form. Connected by an expansive network of streets and freeways, Los Angeles spreads out in all directions with few differences of density or form. Experienced through the automobile, the bus, or even the shopping cart, this environment takes mobility as its defining element. Everyday life is organized by time as much as by space, structured around daily itineraries, with rhythms imposed by patterns of work and leisure, week and weekend, and the repetitious gestures of commuting and consumption.

In contrast to the fluidity of its urban fabric, the social fabric of Los Angeles is fragmented; it is not a single city but a collection of microcities defined by visible and invisible boundaries of class, race, ethnicity, and religion. This multiplicity of identities produces an

7
Henri Lefebvre, CRITIQUE OF EVERYDAY LIFE (London: Verso, 1991).

Above: Pershing Square at noon on a weekday
Left: Everyday space in Los Angeles, through the windshield

intricate social landscape in which cultures consolidate and separate, reacting and interacting in complex and unpredictable ways. Spatial and cultural differences exist even within these groups. "Latino," for example, describes the now dominant ethnic group but hides the significant differences between Mexicans and Cubans, for example, or even between recent immigrants and second- or third-generation Chicanos. Mobility prevails here too. When new immigrants arrive from Central America, they tend to move into African American neighborhoods. Both African Americans and Latinos shop in Korean and Vietnamese shops. Other areas of the city, once completely white, then primarily Latino, are now mostly Asian.

These generally distinct groups came together—intensified and politicized—in the urban disturbances of 1992. According to Nancy Fraser's redefinition of the public sphere, these events can be seen as a form of public expression that produces an alternative discourse of "public" and "space." Both the direct causes of the riots and their expression of the riots were embedded in everyday life. For Rodney King, a drive on the freeway ended in a savage beating that shocked the world. The ordinary act of purchasing a bottle of juice in a convenience market after school resulted in Latasha Harlin's death. The verdicts in the Harlin and King trials unleashed a complex outpouring of public concern. Multiple and competing demands (some highly specific, others barely articulated), a spontaneous and undefined moment of public expression, exploded on the streets and sidewalks of Los Angeles. African Americans, many of whom called the uprising the "justice riots," attacked the criminal-justice system. Concepts of universally defined civil rights failed to ameliorate or condemn the visible racism of the Los Angeles Police Department and the court system, which to many constituted a denial of the fundamental rights of citizenship.

The riots dramatized economic issues: poverty, unemployment, and the difficulty of financial self-determination, all exacerbated by recession and long-term effects of deindustrialization. The disturbances also revealed the city's tangled racial dynamics: 51 percent of those arrested were Hispanic (and of that group, most were recent immigrants) while only 34 percent were African American. Immigrants were pitted against one another, and stores owned by Koreans were the focus of much of the burning and looting.

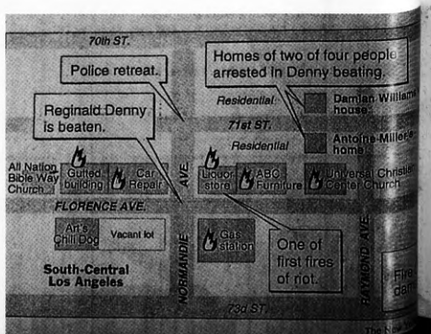
The automobile played a prominent role in the rioting, from the initial act of pulling Reginald Denny from his truck to the rapid expansion of looters who moved across the city by car. Spaces formerly devoted to the automobile—streets, parking lots, swap meets, and strip malls—were temporarily transformed into sites of protest and rage, into new zones of public expression.

EVERYDAY PUBLIC SPACES

The riots underlined the potent ability of everyday spaces to become, however briefly, places where lived experience and political expression come together. This realm of public life lies outside the domain of electoral politics or professional design, representing a bottom-up rather than top-down restructuring of urban space. Unlike normative public spaces, which produce the existing ideology, these spaces help to overturn the status quo. In different areas of the city, generic spaces become specific and serve as public arenas where debates and struggles over economic participation, democracy, and the public assertion of identity take place. Without claiming to represent the totality of public space, these multiple and simultaneous activities construct and reveal an alternative logic of public space.

Woven into the patterns of everyday life, it is difficult even to discern these places as public space. Trivial and commonplace, vacant lots, sidewalks, front yards, parks, and parking lots are being claimed for new uses and meanings by the poor, the recently immigrated, the homeless, and even the middle class. These spaces exist physically somewhere in the junctures between private, commercial, and domestic. Ambiguous and unstable, they blur our established understandings of these categories in often paradoxical ways. They contain multiple and constantly shifting meanings rather than clarity of function. In the absence of a distinct identity of their own, these spaces can be shaped and redefined by the transitory activities they accommodate. Unrestricted by the dictates of built form, they become venues for the expression of new meanings through the individuals and groups who appropriate

The 1992 urban unrest as reported in the LOS ANGELES TIMES



the spaces for their own purposes. Apparently empty of meaning, they acquire constantly changing meanings—social, aesthetic, political, economic—as users reorganize and reinterpret them.

Temporally, everyday spaces exist in between past and future uses, often with a no-longer-but-not-yet-their-own status, in a holding pattern of real-estate values that might one day rise. The temporary activities that take place there also follow distinct temporal patterns. Without fixed schedules, they produce their own cycles, appearing, reappearing, or disappearing within the rhythms of everyday life. Use and activity vary according to the seasons, vanishing in winter, born again in spring. They are subject to changes in the weather, days of the week, and even time of day. Since they are usually perceived in states of distraction, their meanings are not immediately evident but unfold through the repetitious acts of everyday life.

Conceptually, these spaces can be identified as what Edward Soja, following Henri Lefebvre, called the "thirdspace," a category that is neither the material space that we experience nor a representation of space.[8] Thirdspace is instead a space of representation, a space bearing the possibility of new meanings, a space activated through social action and the social imagination. Multiple public activities are currently transforming Los Angeles everyday spaces, among them the garage sale and street vending.

8
Edward Soja, THIRDSPACE: JOURNEYS TO LOS ANGELES AND OTHER REAL AND IMAGINED PLACES (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1996).

THE GARAGE SALE

An unexpected outcome of the recession of the 1980s and the collapse of the real-estate market in Southern California was the proliferation of garage sales, even in the city's wealthiest areas. As an increasing number of people found themselves un- or underemployed, the struggle for supplemental income turned garage sales into semipermanent events, especially on the west side of Los Angeles. Cities such as Beverly Hills have passed ordinances limiting the number of garage sales per household to two per year. The front yard, an already ambiguous territory, serves as a buffer between residential privacy and the public street. Primarily an honorific space, the lawn is activated as the garage sale turns the house inside out, displaying the interior on the exterior. Presenting worn-out possessions, recently the contents of closets and drawers, for public viewing and purchase transforms the usually empty lawn into a site of representation. Unwanted furniture, knickknacks, and clothes are suddenly accessible to anyone passing by, melding the public and the extremely private. The same economic forces that caused the proliferation of garage sales also produced their

mobile clientele, shoppers who drive through the city in search of sales or who discover them accidentally on the way to somewhere else.

In the Mexican American barrio East Los Angeles, with its less affluent population of homeowners and low real-estate values, commerce and domesticity have coexisted for a long time. A more permanent physical restructuring has already taken place, generated by a distinct set of social and economic needs: the front yard is marked by a fence, delineating an enclosure. The fence structures a more complex relationship between home and street. Different configurations of house, yard, and fence offer flexible spaces that can easily be adapted for commercial purposes. The fence itself becomes a display for ads or goods. Paving the lawn, a widespread practice, creates an outdoor shop. For Latino women who don't work outside the house, the garage sale has become a permanent business. Many move beyond recycling used items to buying and reselling clothes from nearby garment factories. Garages are simultaneously closets and shops, further linking the commercial and the domestic and producing a public place for neighborhood women. Men use the paved yards differently, as spaces for auto repair or car customizing. This attracts other neighborhood men, establishing a gathering place that is similarly domestic and commercial.

STREET VENDORS

All over the city, informal vendors appropriate marginal and overlooked sites chosen for their accessibility to passing motorists and pedestrians: street corners, sidewalks, and parking lots and vacant lots that are often surrounded by chain-link fences. Through the types of goods they sell, vendors bring to these urban spaces the qualities of domestic life. Used dresses from innumerable closets form a mural of female identity. Cheap rugs cover the harshness of chain link, overlaying the fence with the soft textures and bright patterns of the interior, defining a collective urban living room and evoking a multiplicity of dwelling places, an analogue for the diversity of the city. The delicate patterning of lace, flowers, and pillows, the softness of T-shirts and stuffed animals—all invoke the intimacy of the interior rather than the no-man's-land of the street. In public places, familiar items such as tables, chairs, and tablecloths, usually seen inside the home, transform neglected and underused space into islands of human occupation. Exchange both commercial and social, including that of the messages transmitted by T-shirts and posters, takes place. The vendors' temporary use hijacks these spaces, changing their meaning. Publicly owned spaces are briefly inhabited by citizens; private spaces undergo an ephemeral decommodification. Temporarily removed from the marketplace, these spaces now represent more than potential real-estate value.

Left and below: Garage sale in Mid-City

Orange seller's wares on median, Venice Boulevard

Vending display at curbside, La Brea Avenue, Baldwin Hills

Chain-link display, Sixth Street, MacArthur Park

Vendor, La Brea Avenue, Baldwin Hills

Driveway/commercial space, East Los Angeles

Vendor, Alvarado Street

Vending is a complex and diverse economy of microcommerce, recycling, and household production. Like the garage sale, vending supplements income rather than constituting an occupation—or, more likely, supports only the most marginal of existences. The varieties of vending visible across the city publicly articulate its multiple economic and social narratives. In neighborhoods populated by Central American immigrants, women prepare or package food or craft items in the home for sale on the sidewalk, extending the domestic economy into urban space. The social dramas of migration to Los Angeles are played out daily on the streets. The ubiquitous orange sellers, found on street dividers all over the city, are recent and undocumented arrivals who work to pay off the *coyote* who brought them across the border. Other immigrants vend for economic mobility, an alternative to sweatshop labor, that may eventually lead to a stall at a swap meet or to a small shop. Both sellers and goods can be read as local messages, attesting to the economic necessities and cultural values of a neighborhood.

Vending on public property, streets, and sidewalks is illegal in both the city and county of Los Angeles. When enough vendors congregate in a single place regularly enough, however, they can muster the political power to change the nature of urban space. Chanting "We are vendors, not criminals," Central American vendors demonstrated at the Rampart police station, demanding the right to pursue their economic activities without police harassment. Since many of the vendors are undocumented, this makes them doubly illegal. Central American vendors have organized themselves, acquired legal representation, and pressured the city to change its laws to permit limited vending. Through the defense of their livelihood, vendors are becoming a political and economic force in the city.

DEMOCRACY AND PUBLIC SPACE

This brings us back to the question that started this investigation: how can public space be connected with democracy? Individual garage sales might not in themselves generate a new urban politics, but the juxtapositions, combinations, and collisions of people, places, and activities that I've described create a new condition of social fluidity that begins to break down the separate, specialized, and hierarchical structures of everyday life in Los Angeles. Local yet also directed to anyone driving or passing by, these unexpected intersections may possess the liberatory potential that Henri Lefebvre attributes to urban life. As chance encounters multiply and proliferate, activities of everyday space may begin to dissolve some of the predictable boundaries of race and class, revealing previously

hidden social possibilities that suggest how the trivial and marginal might be transformed into a kind of micropolitics.

In some specific circumstances, as I've suggested, the intersection of publics, spaces, and identities can begin to delineate a new urban arena for democratic action that challenges normative definitions of how democracy works. Specifically constituted counterpublics organized around a site or activity create what anthropologist James Holston calls "spaces of insurgent citizenship."[9] These emergent sites accompany the changes that are transforming cities such as Los Angeles. Global and local processes, migration, industrial restructuring, and other economic shifts produce social reterritorialization at all levels. Residents with new histories, cultures, and demands appear in the city and disrupt the given categories of social life and urban space. Expressed through the specific needs of everyday life, their urban experiences increasingly become the focus of their struggle to redefine the conditions belonging to society. Once mobilized, social identities become political demands, spaces and sites for political transformation, with the potential to reshape cities.

The public sites where these struggles occur serve as evidence of an emerging but not yet fully comprehensible spatial and political order. In everyday space, differences between the domestic and the economic, the private and the public, and the economic and the political are blurring. Rather than constituting the failure of public space, change, multiplicity, and contestation may in fact constitute its very nature. In Los Angeles, the materialization of these new public spaces and activities, shaped by lived experience rather than built space, raises complex political questions about the meaning of economic participation and citizenship. By recognizing these struggles as the germ of an alternative development of democracy, we can begin to frame a new discourse of public space, one no longer preoccupied with loss but instead filled with possibility.

9
James Holston, "Spaces of Insurgent Citizenship," PLANNING THEORY 13 (summer 1996): 30-50.