

Lines Drawn

**The Importance of Public Space
for Practicing Democracy**

Ines Dobosic

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The Importance of Public Space for Practicing Democracy

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Ines Dobosic, BSc

Technische Universität Graz
Erzherzog-Johann-Universität
Fakultät für Architektur

Betreuer:

O.Univ.-Prof. Dipl.-Ing. Dr.techn. Architekt Jean Marie Corneille Meuwissen

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Synopsis

Waves of protests around the world have raised new political and urban questions regarding the ownership and use of public space. In recent decades, the social and political value of assemblies and protests has increased exponentially due to an escalating frequency coupled with higher visibility via global news and social media platforms. In democratic societies the right to assemble and protest is a basic urban right, but what happens when the city takes that right away? In New York City many public spaces are privately owned, in Berlin they are constantly contested, and in Cairo they are designed to limit community use. The public sphere is becoming increasingly virtual and physical public spaces are more often than not built or repurposed for commerce and tourism. This thesis investigates the importance of available public spaces for political and social use. To this end, the relationship between the public space and protest is observed through actual protests in public space, including protests for the preservation of public space itself.

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Introduction

From the United States to Western Europe and beyond, there has been a statistical increase of political protests, civil disobedience and occupation of public spaces. Increasing numbers of people feel that their governments do not adequately represent them, or worse, have failed them completely, stripping them of their dignity (Castells 2012). Public dissent unfolds in physical public space, however governments often control their usage. Free and open public spaces are essential for a healthy democratic society, but paradoxically, current research indicates that due to rampant privatization, mallization, social divides, or fear, public spaces for such activities, may be inaccessible, avoided, and/or diminishing.¹

But to be able to talk about the phenomena of these “diminishing public spaces,” some clarification of the term *public* is needed—ownership, rule of access, surveillance and regulated activities are just some facets that one needs to consider when defining the difference between public and private. I will discuss these intersecting elements in the coming chapter. While protestors will always find a space to protest, even if that means hijacking the city’s highways or private properties, open public spaces that foster political discourse should still always be provided. Otherwise how can political participation and democratic relations between people be encouraged in privately owned public spaces and surveilled shopping malls?

1. On the topic *diminishing public spaces* see: Besser 2014; Body-Gendrot 2006; Low 2006; Mitchell 1995; Parkinson 2012

The origins of public space and its relation to democratic activities can be traced back to the classical Greek *agora*, which was, as John Hartley describes, “the place of citizenship, an open space where public affairs and legal disputes were conducted. It was also a marketplace and a place of pleasurable jostling, where citizens’ bodies, words, actions, and produce were all literally on mutual display, and where judgments, decisions, and bargains were made” (Hartley 1992, 29-30). But even in this seemingly perfect direct democracy, not everyone was able to participate as not everyone was considered an equal citizen. Today, where, in theory, all members of society are considered equal and should have a democratic voice, the forum as a place of public discourse is diminishing.

This master thesis *Lines Drawn—The Importance of Public Space for Practicing Democracy*, explores the relationship between public space and protest with the assumption that public space is imperative to democratic practice. The paper is divided into three main parts: the first part, deals with the theory of what *public* and *public space* is. The second part, provides data on the global increase of protests. In this part I articulate how the democratic practice of protesting relates to physical space. In the third part, I present three case studies of protest or occupation in different geopolitical situations: The 2011 Egyptian revolution and its conquered space—Tahrir Square; The Occupy Wall Street movement located at the heart of Wall Street in Zuccotti Park, and the contested public spaces in Berlin—Spreeufer and Tempelhofer Feld.

As the world is being fired up with increasing civic dissent and protests, political participation in public spaces is becoming more visibly apparent. Even though in democratic societies the practice

of democracy is set up via voting and elections, some people feel the need to practice democracy “on the street,” either because they don’t trust the electoral process and/or because of the strong emotional power felt during the act of protest (Hobsbawm 2003).

Thinking about public space can often bring up more questions than answers. Urban sociologists, architectural theorists and geographers have contributed much to the discourse, however many of the discussions are “filled with contradictions and conundrums” (Robbins 2008, 140). Regardless, whether one is talking about a pro-democracy revolution or an anti-capitalist occupation, or even protests for the preservation of public space itself, a few similar questions arise: whose space is it, who gets to use it, and why?

Due to digital infrastructures, any local protest can become global almost instantly. There is much discussion about how protests have moved online, and indeed social media has contributed to new ways of spreading the word, and more importantly, spreading the images of the protest, but it is a far cry from replacing the physical space. In fact, the physical protest in a physical space is needed to ignite the fire, social media simply spreads the fire more quickly.

My main argument is not that protests need designed spaces, rather they need available space in which people can feel free to practice democracy. In democratic societies, theoretically governments do allow for protest as a right, but what if the city structure and regulations hinder this activity to happen? In today’s public realm, what form and function does public space take when it does (or does not) foster political participation?

Defining Public

In order to discuss public space which can foster political participation it is necessary to first understand what *public* is. For this thesis, the public sphere is a crucial element to understanding public space. In discourse regarding law, politics, social life, and thereby also urban planning and architecture, the terms *public* and *private* are fundamental and requisite, yet attempts to define those terms often incite argument and create confusion. Many spaces can appear to be public and private simultaneously, such as the museum; some spaces that seem public are in fact private, such as privately owned public spaces (POPS) in NYC; some spaces are actually public which seem private, such as the Parliament. Some define public as the state with everything else being private, others see private as the individual and everything else as the state (Minow, 2013) - this lack of strict definition is one of many reasons for the constant debate about the public-private relationship across disciplines.

The Public Sphere

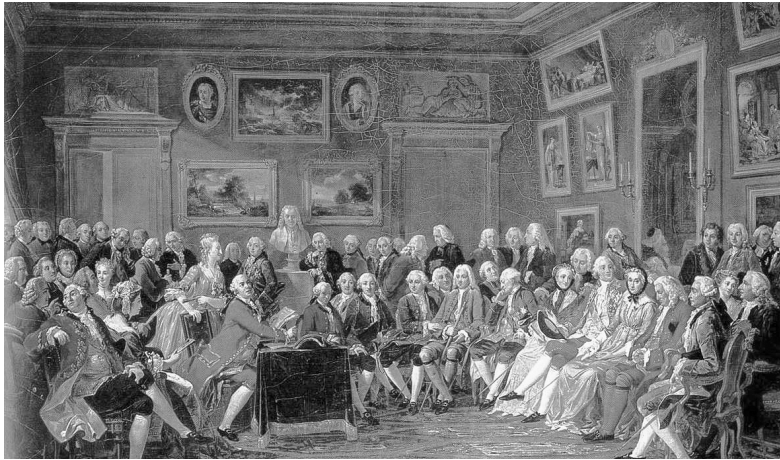


Fig. P. 13: Salon de Madame Geoffrin

“We call events and occasions ‘public’ when they are open to all, in contrast to closed or exclusive affairs”

Jürgen Habermas 1989, 1

Public Sphere theory, initially developed by Jürgen Habermas, has been very influential and has generated a great deal of literature. Today, the public sphere is a fundamental facet of democracy and it is impossible to understand contemporary issues surrounding public space without it. Habermas’ “The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere,” originally published in 1962, still has relevance today as he sees the public sphere as a discursive space where private people come together as a “public” to discuss matters of public concern. Historically, in traditional societies, with rare exceptions such as meetings of citizens in ancient Greek cities, matters of public concern were discussed and decided on only by the few. With the rise of bourgeois society in 18th Century Western Europe, this began to be challenged.

Habermas' public sphere is a conceptual idea and does not necessarily exist in any specific identifiable space. Coffee houses, salons and newspapers became the first institutions for the emerging public sphere as an arena for public debates or where issues of public concerns could be discussed. At this time, the public sphere was theoretically inclusive to all, but entry often depended on one's education and qualification as a property owner, limiting the number people who could be involved in discussions. That said, these public political debates were imperative for the early development of democracy.

“Public life in this period appears to have been wild, playful and sexy.”

Iris Marion Young 1990, 108

The term, “public,” generally relates to the community or population as a whole, but it is also inextricably related to its converse, the “private.” In ancient Greek times, “private” referred to the family and household, while today, ‘private’ is not restricted to the physical space or home--public and private spheres are often mixed.

With globalization and mass media, “mass society” was created which, in Habermas' opinion, negatively affected public discourse in the public sphere. But, Habermas was not the only one expressing his worries about this issue. Marcuse and Ellul have also written about how techniques of advertising, the development of public relations (PR), and propaganda have corrupted the public sphere. Public opinion began to be shaped by consumer oriented advertising. One could argue that because of this phenomenon as well as the earlier problems of exclusion of class and gender, the ideal public sphere never came to be.

By the time exclusions of class and gender were overcome, which gave the public sphere great opportunity to come to be, propaganda and consumerism had taken over. In this context, public opinion gets manipulated and the rational-critical debate which Hebermas was writing about is extinguished.

“Propaganda is needed in the exercise of power for the simple reason that the masses have come to participate in political affairs.”

Jacques Ellul 1973[1965], 121

Due to the immense influence of mass media and propaganda, the public sphere became de-institutionalized, that is, public discourse began taking place in this space as well, which included radio, television and newspapers. Ellul argues that propaganda is even more insidious in democratic societies than in authoritarian regimes because in democratic societies, people must be manipulated by more invisible means. While propaganda in authoritarian regimes is more immediate and clear in terms of what one is told to think and do, propaganda in democratic societies works more subversively over longer periods. In fact, he argues that the more educated one is in a democratic society, the more likely that person is to be taken in by clever propaganda because he or she assumes that their education and awareness makes them impervious to being manipulated. In reality, those pulling the strings do so in a way that makes it virtually impossible to be aware of what is happening behind the scenes. In Ellul's opinion, the powers that be in a democracy not only need propaganda to maintain power, but it is rather a natural outcome. It must be asked then if protests, or any other rebellious political action, might also be by extension, a form of propaganda, or at least in some way manipulated to serve the parties that benefit from their outcomes.

The Influence of Media on the Public Sphere

Both the public space and the public sphere relied heavily on group communication, with mass media being the main tool for communication. The advent of multimedia, especially social media, brought about a huge change in the global communication and news industries, and greatly influenced the public sphere. As the media developed, it created a great deal of new opportunities for communication and debate due to its accessibility - everybody, assuming they had internet access, could participate.



Fig. P. 16 (left): Mass Media



Fig. P. 16 (right): Social Media

Today the public sphere has evolved into an incredibly layered and complex imaginary space - social networks like Facebook, Twitter, etc., have become the most frequented spaces where people feel free and safe to connect, communicate, interact, and voice their personal opinions. However, due to internet anonymity and the amount of information disseminated, the quality of discussions happening in this space can become questionable. Habermas believed that the public must be well informed and able to discuss the issues that concern the public, but if everyone has a voice, and information is often not moderated or verifiable, what happens to the value of communication in the public sphere?

According to Hebermas, participation in this space, does not guarantee the quality debate that is needed for formation of public opinion. Additionally, the internet is a public space and is part of the public sphere - it is a public space when it is inhabited by a community of users and a public sphere when those users are engaged in discourse. But at the same time it is also a private space as it offers a semblance of anonymity, privacy, and trust - private people, from the security of their private spaces can engage freely in a public space. Therefore, the internet is simultaneously public and private, resulting in much confusion about the public-private relationship.

“Publicity was, according to its very idea, a principle of democracy not because anyone could in principle announce, with equal opportunity, his personal inclinations, wishes and convictions - opinions; it could only be realised in the measure that these personal opinions could evolve through the rational-critical debate of a public into public opinion.”

Jürgen Hebermas 1989, 219

Theorising Public Space

Unlike the imaginary public sphere, physical public space has a geographical place. In urban studies, public space is one of the most vital places located in the city. Public spaces span many social locations such as the street, the plaza, the square, the park, the shopping mall, the museum, the café, as well as institutions such as the United Nations and the Reichstag. All of these kinds of locales are sometimes owned, managed and controlled by either a public authority, a private entity, or in some cases, both.

To begin with, a distinction between public and private needs to be made. However, making this distinction can present more problems than answers because there is no strict definition what “public” or “private” is. Parkinson argues that there is no such thing as the public/private distinction, and that in fact it is a mistake to think there is a single substantive distinction that can be made on that account. Even so, one could say that that primary difference between the terms is that, “public” is something accessible and visible while “private” is restricted or protected. However, where the line between public and private is drawn depends on the context in which the terms are used. Tonkiss for example, sees an essential distinction between public and private space in that public space is granted by the state and it provides free and equal access (Tonkiss 2005,67). Tonkiss also argues that there are three ideal types of public space: the square, the café and the street. The cafe, which is privately owned and regulated, refers to social encounters representing social exchange. The square, representing collective belonging is provided for and protected by the state and is used collectively as public space; the square, as well as the piazza and the public park allows “equal and in principle free access to all users as citizens.” And finally, the street represents the informal encounters of everyday life. The street does not refer to a space of belonging, but rather to something we all share.

Robbins questions Tonkiss’ division of public space into three ideal types. The urban square, he points out, is often restricted or even in private ownership, therefore how could it represent collective belonging (Robbins 2008, 140)? The cafe, as Tonkiss herself points out is in fact a privately owned space, so how can it be the ideal type of public social exchange? Today, most informal encounters occur in malls and similar private spaces rather than in the streets, he argues.

Tonkiss through, is not alone in seeing the cafe as one of the ideal types of public space. Many urban commentators, such as Amanda Burden, see cafes as centers of social encounters. When she speaks about public spaces, which she helped to shape across New York City under the Bloomberg administration, she never fails to mention to importance of cafés to make sidewalks or squares more lively. In fact, she sees them as the most vital aspect in a public space. Robbins asks though, if cafe's are centers of public discourse, why are shopping malls not (Robbins 2008, 140)? It is an interesting question whether a surveilled, privatized, commercial mall could be considered a public space. Again, the question can't be answered without a followup question--what kind of public space are we talking about? If it is a space merely for social encounters as Tonkiss writes, the café is just a symbolic interpretation, and in that case, then the mall could also fall under this category.

Sassen sees two types of public space—parks and streets. Beautiful parks are public spaces for ritual and she says it “civilizes conduct.” Streets are controlled by no one, are easy to access, and offer easy, visible gathering space. In this case, both spaces are open, accessible and inclusive. But unlike Tonkiss' divide, both Sassen' public spaces can accommodate political protest.

Although Tonkiss points out ownership, it is not crucial for understanding public space. As Stevenson writes, it is important to broaden the conceptualization of public space beyond one of ownership and to understand it as shared urban space (Stevenson 2013). Space owned by a private entity, such as café can still be public. Or, for example, public buildings don't have to be accessible to all, all the time, to be public, and therefore “Public buildings” that simply house state institutions are public. The State is the public authority (Hebermans 1962,2).

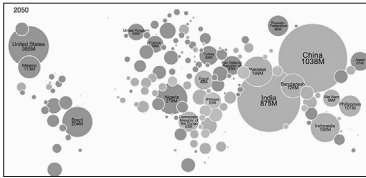
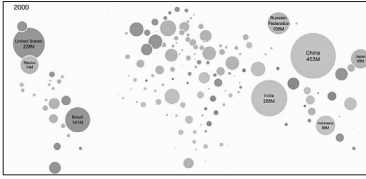
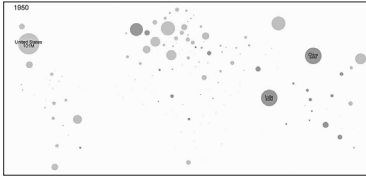


Fig. P.20: “An Urban World” (visualization of the world from 1950 -2050)

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The number of urban dwellers is rapidly growing and the city has never before been the focus of so much attention. In 2011, the global population reached 7 billion and it is projected to reach 9 billion by 2045. Today, 54 percent of the total global population is urban and it is projected to grow to 70 percent by 2050.

*“What is the city
but the people?”*

William Shakespeare, *Coriolanus*

Global flows of people, capital, goods, and information are all catalysts for the transformation of the city. Due to rapid urbanization, cities now face new challenges and demands and are put under pressure for new configurations and imaginations. As urbanization increases, public spaces where people can meet, hang out and interact, or protest, becomes more crucial.

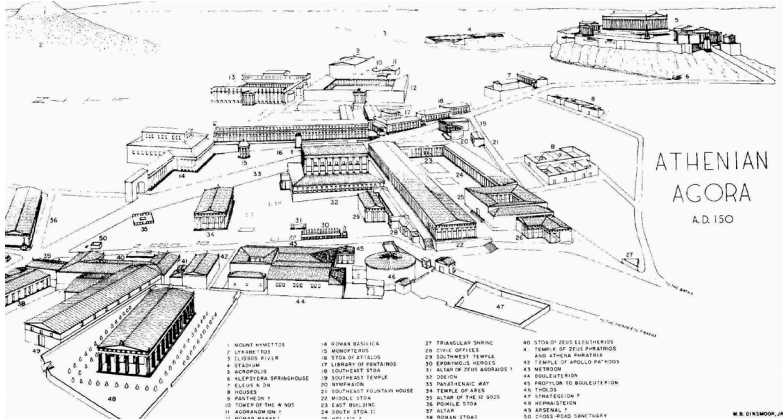


Fig. P. 21: Athenian Agora

Public space is an example of a democratic urban infrastructure and it occupies an important ideological position in democratic societies. The idea that cities are centers of public dissent and political discourse may be old as cities themselves. The notion of public urban space can be traced at least back to ancient Greece - the Athenian agora was the first public square in an urban landscape and it was a major focus for life in the city. Many activities occurred simultaneously in the agora-from commerce and religious rituals to “hanging out.” Hartley described its function as a “place of citizenship, an open space where public affairs and legal disputes were conducted...it was also a marketplace, a place of pleasurable jostling, where citizens’ bodies, words, actions, and produce were all literally on mutual display, and where judgments, decisions, and bargains were made” (Hartley 1992, 29-30).

The town square of Athens was where democratic practices were placed. Citizens were encouraged to “move beyond their personal concerns and acknowledge the presence and needs of other citizens” (Sennett 2013 [1995]).

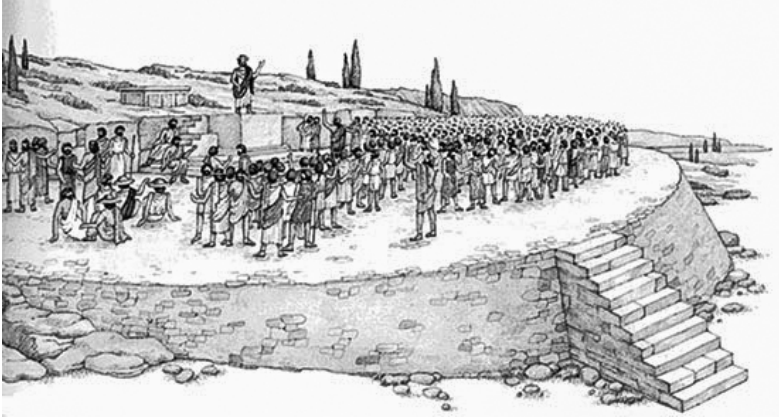


Fig. P. 22: Athenians gathered on the Pnyx

The spatial order of the Athenian agora, Sennett argues, made diverse male citizens interact in two ways: “First, the open space of the agora contained few visual barriers between events occurring at the same time - Athenians did not experience physical compartmentalization. Thus, coming to the town square to negotiate with a banker, one might observe a trial in the law court and even shout out one’s opinion about the proceedings. Second, the Agora established a space for stepping back from such engagement – the edge, just under the roof of the stoa; here was a fluid, liminal zone between private and public” (Ibid.)

The Pnyx was another space for practicing democracy in Athens. It was one of the first known places for assemblies. There, Athenians debated and decided on the city’s actions. Located on a small rocky hill, the Pnyx was an open-air theatre, a ten-minute walk from the city’s central square. Speakers stood on a flat stone platform, called a “bema,” so they could be seen and heard by all. Unlike the Agora, the Pnyx was a more formal space for democratic performance.

Sennett formed the difference between the Agora and Pnyx as the following: “The square prepares people for debate; the theatre disciplines their debate” (Ibid.).

In Greek democracy, an individual was recognized as a Citizen only if he fulfilled certain criteria. Although women, foreigners, and slaves (who were the majority of people living in Greece), were able to work in the agora, they were denied citizenship and were excluded from political discourse. Today, even if we don't model Greek democracy completely, we take from it the fact that a working democracy has a spatial component which requires a physical site.

Contemporary Spaces

Cities are complex but incomplete systems. They can be observed and possibly influenced by architecture and design, but since cities are essentially its culture and people, they cannot be entirely planned. As such the city is in a constant state of change, and thereby, public space is as well. Fokdal wrote that, “each time period has different conceptions of public space” (Fokdal 2008, 13). Both the city and public space needs to be able to change with every new generation - to dwell too long on what public space was, cannot answer what it is now. Society is changing, and it is exactly that factor which influences the narrative and physicality of public space. The public space needs to act as threshold between now and henceforth.

Public space in democratic societies should by default be democratic space, and yet, the connection between democracy and its spatiality is vague. Over the past years, probably as a consequence of increased protest, there has been an increased interest in

“designing for democracy.” Sennett warns of the risks that the designing and planning of the city’s public realm can bring: an “attempt to find a finished form is always self destructive,” he states because it limits space and makes it unable to adapt to new social changes. For him, the space that is overdetermined is undemocratic (Sennett, 2010). For public space to be democratic, it requires a certain unpredictability and disorder, as the system is messy and complicated - it is futile to try to simplify it. Hatuka writes that, “public spaces are the only place in which people feel truly, physically unified,” therefore they are at the core of healthy society (Hatuka 2013). However, people from all social groups have some sense of exclusion and restriction, because of the inequalities that that space provides. When people are denied access to various areas and are restricted in others, the feeling of exclusion becomes more evident - as that feeling of exclusion grows, people feel less a part of the city. Body-Gendrot argues that “cities are powerless to change inequalities and power structures, but can provide equity” (Body-Gendrot 2012, 167). The idea of equality in a capitalist society is quite complex, but equity is imaginable and very much needed. Equity in the city can help to promote a sense of inclusion such that people feel they are treated fairly and that they are part of the city.

Politicized

The public space in the contemporary city is an amalgam of different social relationships, and as a result it is an unquestionably contradictory space. As much as any other social relationships, politics is present and active in public space. Traditional political spaces in the urban realm are generally partially or completely surrounded by buildings of political importance such as a parliament building,



Fig. P. 25 (left): Martin Luther King Jr. at Lincoln Memorial



Fig. P. 25 (right): Aerial view of the Reichstag building

an embassy, or a court house. The space can be selected because it contains some historical importance or has previously been the site an important political protest or social movement. By way of example, one space which incorporates both political and historic importance is the Lincoln Memorial and its reflecting pool. Today, its proximity to White House makes it political public space. Historically, it was built to honor the President of the United States, Abraham Lincoln and that gives it its political importance, but its meaning also incorporates the 1963 civil rights demonstration. The site was not designed to host protests, but it was a successful place for it. Today, we cannot imagine it without envisioning the Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech. The the image of that protest has even supplanted the image of a monument originally designed in part to reunite the (white) North and South in the 1920s - that in itself a victory of the civil rights movement.

Another way buildings of political importance can influence how a public space surrounding it is perceived is the materiality of the building. Massive enclosed buildings that were built throughout history seem ominous and can reflect repression and fear. Such buildings also emphasize strict borders between private and public. The introduction of new material, such as steel and glass made it possible to smooth the transition between private and public, and these materials were sometimes specifically used for *public function buildings*. The Reichstagsgebäude, for example, used glass to symbolize the melting of public and private and represents a new transparent and democratic government. The glass dome on the top is accessible to the public (though there is tight security), and while walking on the dome, one can look inside the plenary chamber of the Deutscher Bundestag.

***“We shape our buildings, and
afterwards our buildings shape us”***

Winston Churchill, Commons debates 28.10.1943

Buildings, especially government buildings, mirrors society’s politics, but they can also influence its behavior. Many agree with Churchill, and one art historian went even so far as to claim that “Russian President Putin has become more dictatorial not because of his personal characteristics but because the building of the Kremlin [had] made him so” (Parkinson, 2012, 5). If a building can influence behavior, then, by extension, urban space can also influence behavior.

Often, the political power of physical space is ignored or underestimated (Kimmelman, 2011), especially if the urban space is geographically far from political centers and not yet ritualized. Space can also be politicized even without buildings of political importance--for example, a space can gain political power and symbolism if it is used for political protest or occupation.

Surveilled and Controlled

Over the last decades planners worked under the paradigm that demographic growth, urbanization and the rapid the expansion of cities intensifies social polarization, crime and violence. In response, cities began using technological tools as a means to monitor and control public spaces, with the presumed aim reducing fear and anxiety among inhabitants.

Cartman: 'I use fear to manipulate people to do my bidding.'

Bart Simpson: 'Uh, isn't that like terrorism?'

Cartman: 'Dude, it's not like terrorism! It is terrorism!'²

South Park (2006)

Fear is a basic human emotion and one of the oldest tools used by politicians to manipulate and control the masses. Authoritarian regimes use fear tactics shamelessly, while in Western societies, such actions are not intellectually acceptable, though they are still used more subtly (or not). Fear representing global insecurities are reflected in everyday life (Body-Gendront 2012, Katz, 2006).

2. Quoted in: Svendsen, 2008 [1970], 102

In cities, fear of crime is an obvious one. In the hope of reducing crime and violence, most public spaces are surveilled and controlled. Risk, which is defined as potential danger, is in many cases enough of a justification for surveillance and control. When people are afraid, they will easily surrender their civil liberties in exchange for a feeling of safety. Thomas Hobbes, who writes extensively about fear in society and politics, sees fear as an emotion which makes people less likely to break the law. In police controlled states, monitoring is customary. In democratic society it is theoretically unacceptable, yet fear of crime justifies it - this begs the question of whether a surveilled society can be considered a free society. Liberals and others have criticized public surveillance and some have gone so far as to say that it is in the government's interest keep people afraid, so they can maintain power and continue monitoring.

Every mall, public building, and many urban spaces, are under some type of surveillance, and, if one is to take the *Smart City* as a model of the future city, the entirety of our lives will be monitored, connected, interconnected and controlled. The smart city brands itself as a sustainable safe city without violence. In Jacobs time, when modern technologies were not yet so integrated into the urban realm, safety measures were perceived differently--she suggested, for example, that a night lamp in a dark alley might reduce the risk of crime. Jacob also suggested creating lively sidewalks and employing a neighborhood watch. A space filled with people, she argued, would be safer, therefore designing ambiguous spaces which offer diverse programs, or at the very least benches and few trees under which one can sit, might suffice to attract more people. In the context of a modern sustainable smart city Sassen criticizes surveillance under the premise that it uses massive amounts of energy and resources.

The Smart City is also a segregated community based on smart technologies. Segregation can lower or isolate the risks of crime, but as a consequence, instead of creating opportunities for multi-modal interaction between groups and individuals, it divides people by their social status, race, and even age.³

Diminishing

Risk and fear also puts other functions of public space in question. Sassen for example, worries that opportunities to use streets for protest are rapidly disappearing. “A lot of barriers are built” around government buildings and embassies, she says. Furthermore, she sees a pernicious movement to privatize and control urban centers. “There is a real struggle for territory going on” (Erikson 2011).

In capitalist society, public space is the one of zero profit potential because it is not privately owned. However, in a market driven globalization process, many have been privatized because they are not otherwise financial sustainable. Marcuse argues that making the public space sustainable is a contradiction. “It would be ironic it seems to me if in the interest of rising money for the maintenance of the public space you give that public space a use that interferes with what you actually want it for. You are raising the money in the way that decreases the public use of the public space that you are rising the money for” (Marcuse 2013). The owner of a space, or the café on the site, is obviously more devoted towards the pursuit of profit then to the creation of quality *public*.

3. on the subject of segregation see: Teresa P.R. Caldeira 1999



Fig. P. 30: IBM Atrium, Manhattan

Other spaces are restricted due to safety issues. Public parks in New York for example, close at night, and privately owned public spaces that are open 24/7 are sometimes hidden or designed in a way that seem private. For example, the famous and beautiful atrium of the IBM Building, “although apparently open, it is ultimately at the sole disposal of that corporation” (Robbins 2008,143). The IBM atrium, which is obviously dedicated to profit, is located in a restricted area and invisible to the common person, and yet, due to its free access, is labeled as *public*.

Due to a declining public sector burdened by budget cuts, rampant commercialization and privatization of public spaces is getting ever more evident. Hain noted that, after the fall of the Iron Curtain, economic interests have whitewashed public spaces; it is, “everywhere, worldwide, always the same program, historical amnesia and the white noise of information instead of communication” (Hain 2011, 18).

Pursuit of economic goals has transformed democratic spaces into consume centers and spaces of capital flow. Although still the site of social encounters which could fit Tonkiss' type of an ideal public space--the café, which represents social exchange and, by way of another example, Alexanderplatz in Berlin, which was once a site for demonstrations, are now both almost strictly consume and capital oriented sites. With this kind of transformation of spaces, memories can be easily forgotten and symbols of representation very easily erased. Mallization of the city has slowly led towards the loosening of public from public space.

However, recent developments with the "Die in" protests showed that even a Mall could be the perfect place for their performance, precisely because it is forbidden.⁴ Moreover, occupying the Mall during Christmas season, when consumerism is at its peak, escalates the protest's mission because it engages and brings awareness to more people than it usually would. This example goes against the argument that Mallization has led towards the loss of public, however, it is presented as a specific reversal to shows that when people are in mass, they have the power to take over any space at any given time. In theory, people can change the meaning and symbols of any space, but taking over a Mall is only a momentary action, and cannot create new territory--the mall is completely planned entity and has no room for ambiguity or production of a space. Another way public spaces are commercialized, Parkinson suggests, is that public spaces are turned into tourist sites and, more often than not, they are more celebrated for their ability to host a tourist than they are for any political protest.

4. Ferguson, black male tragically shot by a policeman

The progressive economization of a space by private enterprises has not been interrupted by the current global economic crisis and the de-politization of the city has been on the rise. Particularly in the urban context, Swyngedouw believes that trend this will lead to a post-political, post-democratic situation, in which spaces of democratic engagement are swallowed up.



Fig. P.32: *Ferguson or Die-in* protest, 2014, St Louis Galleria Mall
© Robert Cohen

The Growth of Protest

In recent years, protests emerging across the world, from the Middle East, Asia, Europe and the Americas, initiated new political and urban questions. Especially since 2011, protests have become the subject of daily news, and the trend doesn't appear to be waning. The nature of each protest is quite different and culture-specific (the rise of the rent prices, plans to demolish a park, police abuse, financial crisis, the end of repression, war/peace, etc.), but they all share a dream of an equal, fair, and humane democratic society. Swyngedouw pointed out that we have never had more people who wanted change, yet have achieved so little (2014). In many cases, they failed to bring about any serious political changes, and in most cases, didn't influence the global finance system at all. Throughout history however, protests are nevertheless "widely used to influence the decisions of governments and other organizations," (Opp 2009) and they have been triggers for long-term political and social change, regardless of the momentarily outcome. Political outcomes aside, they also challenge the narrative of public spaces and their importance for a healthy society.



Fig. P.35: Screenshot of Animated Protest Map
 © John Beielser

“There are times when the amount of protests behaviour goes up and is higher than average. The past few years is actually one of those times.”

John Beielser, 2013

There are many indications that the number of protests are increasing around the world including a fascinating time-lapse visualization created by John Beielser, doctoral candidate at Penn State; it records every protest around the world since 1979 using data provided by The Global Database of Events Language and Tone which indicates that post 2010 protests around the world have in fact exploded. However, GDELT only tracks news reports, so one could surmise that now protests are simply more often reported. Etna, working with GDELT provides information on protest increases in the Americas from 2007 to 2013, but unlike GDELT, gives a social aspect to it. Besides GDELT, many other organizations confirm the same information. In Berlin alone for example, the number of demonstrations in the last 5 Years has grown over 54 percent.

Protest statistics for Americas:

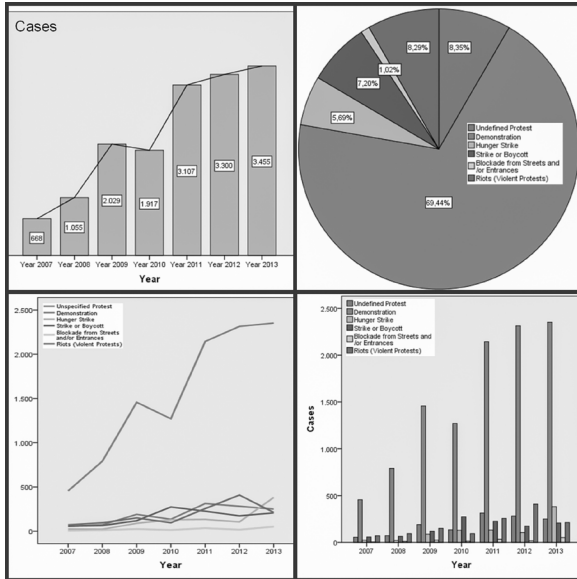


Fig. P. 36 (up):
Diagram by Pablo Campos Recalde, General Statistics, 2007-2013

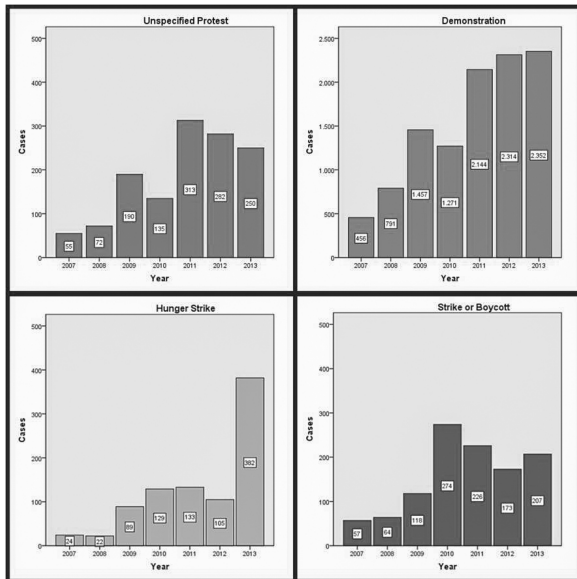


Fig. P. 36 (down):
Diagram by Pablo Campos Recalde, Category statistics for the period 2007-2013

The Act of Protest

“Next to sex, the activity combining bodily experience and intense emotion to the highest degree is the participation in a mass demonstration at a time of great public exaltation. Unlike sex, which is essentially individual, it is by its nature collective, and unlike the sexual climax, at any rate for men, it can be prolonged for hours. On the other hand, like sex it implies some physical action -- marching chanting slogans, singing -- through which the merger of the individual in the mass, which is the essence of the collective experience, finds expression.”

Eric Hobsbawm 2013, 73

Definitions of protest in literature suggest that protest refers to a behavior - but exactly what kind is not clear. Protest events can be passive or direct actions, but they are mainly politically animated. The most common direct action protests are demonstrations or street protests and demonstrations are likely to be connected to street rallies or marches. Strikes, Sit-ins, Boycotts, Lock-downs or occupations are examples of other forms that direct action events can take. The initiation or signing of a petition, the distribution of flyers, and holding up signs are passive action events. All of these events can be (but are usually not intended to be), violent. Karl-Dieter Opp writes on different kinds of protest events including non-traditional ones that he admits not everyone would consider to be protests: e.g. terrorist acts, complaints of a group of students about the syllabus of a professor, request to the government for a subsidy of a kindergarten, etc. (Opp 2009,33). He also gives examples of events which he says are clearly not protests: ordering a meal, making an appointment with a friend or jogging with a group of friends (Ibid).

These events refer to a behaviours which are already observed and commented on by psychologists and sociologists but still, with their activity in physical space, they are part of the urban realm and in this manner they become subject of observation for planners and architects too.

A demonstration is “any temporary occupation by number of people of an open space, public or private, which directly or indirectly includes the expression of political opinions”(Fillieule 2012[1997], 2)

Political demonstrations provide a dialog between the state and individuals and are at the core of modern democratic society. A political demonstration can sometimes even turn into a social movement. Protests are even sometimes observed in social movement literature and in many cases are to be found in the same category. In this thesis however, I concentrate on direct action protest events. Unlike social movements, since protest events or demonstrations mostly last only one day, they don't get as much spotlight in history unless if they are frequent and global.

Protest and assembly are part of social life and, as such, they can overcome loneliness and isolation - urban space allows many grievances to overlap. They are also a way for people to make and share political ideas among themselves - with collective action, they address shared concerns and they create a sense of togetherness that is centered around common grievances and shared experiences.⁵ Hobsbawm writes that as an expression of the collective experience, protesting is far more emotionally powerful than voting in even the most democratic election and the feeling from being surrounded by hundreds of thousands of other people who share similar beliefs makes participation more likely.

5. on *sociology of protest*, see Klandermans 1995



Fig. P. 39 (up):Protestors chant slogans and hold banners during demonstration, Cairo
© Ahmed el Hussini



Fig. P. 39 (down):A participant in Occupy Wall Street protest is arrested by police during a rally to mark the one year anniversary of the movement on September 17, 2012, New York
© Emmanuel Dunand



Fig. P. 40 (up): Protesters engaging in the 'human microphone,' 2011, Zucotti Park



Fig. P. 40(down): Protesters with banner saying "Together against injustice," 2011, Tahrir Square

Violence



Fig. P. 41: Black Block

Most demonstrations start out as non violent, but when systematically repressed by military and police (in the form of tear gas, tanks, rubber bullets etc.), the result is usually violent. On the other hand, some demonstrators set out to wreak havoc, such as Black Block. Black Block is a collection of people who are usually (but not necessarily) affiliated with anarchists and who organize themselves for a protest. Individuals wear black clothing, sunglasses, scarves, ski masks and other face-concealing items in order to conceal their identity and thereby cripple criminal litigation against their actions which include: rioting, street-fighting, tagging buildings with graffiti, demonstrating without a permit, and vandalism on retail properties, banks etc.. BB is a more a strategy for protestors and not a specific group of people. Tactics used by Black Block originate from Europe from around 1980s, but they received the most attention during the anti-WTO (The World Trade Organization)demonstration in Seattle in 1999 where they damaged a significant amount of retail properties. In either case, whether violence is instigated by protestors or police, it is the most negative outcome of any protest - the life and death of demonstrations depends on how that violence is handled.



Fig. P. 42 (up): WTO protests in Seattle, 1999



Fig. P. 42 (down): Protesters clash with anti riot-police during a demonstration, 2013, Rome
© Filippo Monteforte

The Protester

In 2011, TIME magazine selected “the protester” as its person of the year - extrapolating forward, one could safely say that the protester could be the person of the decade.

“The Protester,” tends to be middle-class males, between 20 and 40 years old, who do not have professional political affiliations - often he or she feels economically and politically disempowered and stripped of their dignity. In a fight of the powerless against the powerful, the powerless can try to effect change through the persistence and power of the collective. Harvey describes collective power one of the most affective tools of a protest. Individuals can, at the very least, be heard or possibly even defeat the powers that be on any issue when they create a group.

***“Democracy is the government
of the people, by the people, for
the people”***

Abraham Lincoln

Democratic Practice

Throughout this thesis I argue that the predicates of constitutional democracy are a free people who are equal and who can participate in democracy. Freedom and democracy are not synonymous, but they are used interchangeably as democracy requires free people to participate in it, and, democracy itself creates freedom in society in many levels. In history, not all people were free, and it was necessary to distinguish between who was and was not. Today, where in theory all people are free - that is, in western democracies - all people can participate.

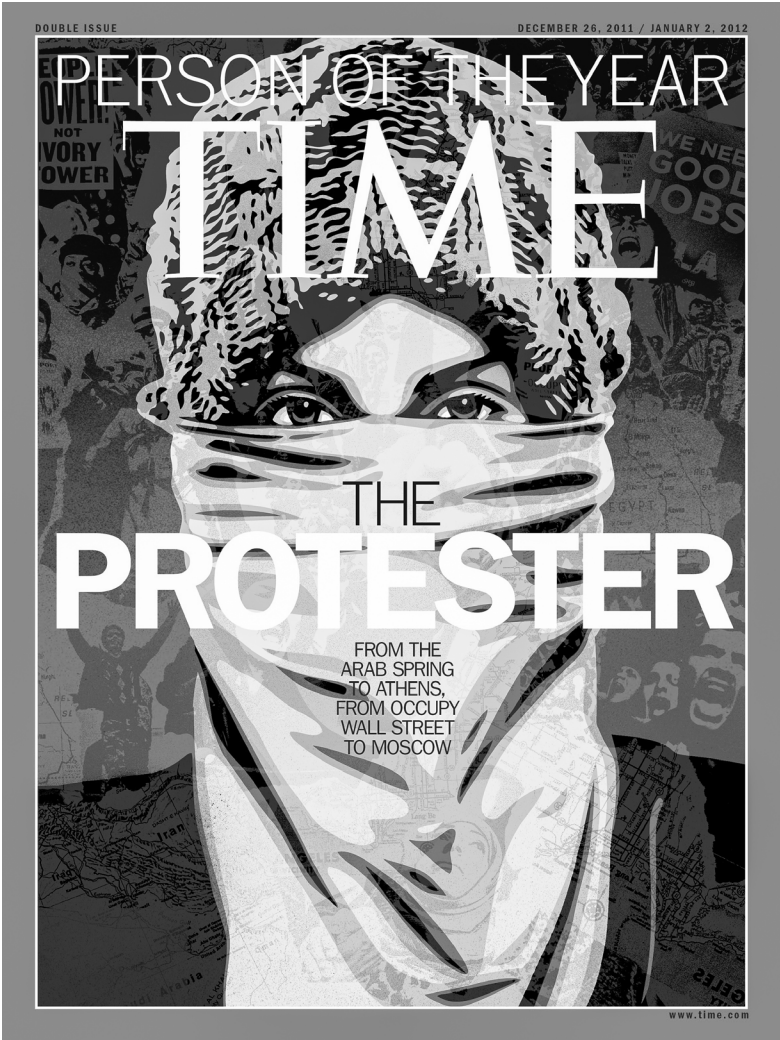


Fig. P.44: Cover of TIME magazine, 2011
© Shepard Fairey

In ancient Greece, citizens (free people) would gather in an assembly to listen, participate and sometimes vote. In the direct democracy of Greece, one didn't have to be elected to be a member of an assembly. Today, in modern democracy, elected officials govern people in the form of representative democracy or a republic. People select their representatives through elections - in this all citizens can participate equally. However, some don't feel like they are being adequately represented and call for direct democracy, forming an assembly in urban space in order for their demands to be heard, bypassing their state legislature. In Berlin, for example citizen initiatives are part of the city heritage and are most often used as citizens respond to transformations in the city, it is a tool for influencing decision making process. If the initiative is successful, a proposal could end up on a referendum on which then all citizens can vote. Referendums can be used, for example, even for the highest decisions in the country, such as on a decision to join or exit the EU. Initiatives and referendums have shown to be very popular, especially for the city level decision making process. In a representative democracy, citizen's initiatives and referendums are the closest things to direct democracy - all citizens can actively participate in the decision making process which gives them a sense of power - democracy, close to Lincoln's vision, "government of the people, by the people, for the people." However, some issues still cannot be solved through initiatives and referendums. Additionally, many young people have lost faith in the electoral process and do not participate because of a general feeling that politicians are either corrupt or ineffective at best. Many do not identify with any of the candidates running for office and therefore do not support them or the system by which they are elected (Swyngedouw 2011). In the end, they see protest as the only way to achieve change. Protest, citizen initiatives and assemblies in public space

help to form public opinion, institutionalize the practice of citizenship, and influence political power and policy.

Spatiality

“Politics, the critical activity of raising issues and deciding how institutional and social relations should be organized, crucially depends on the existence of spaces and forums to which everyone has access. In such public spaces people encounter other people, meanings, expressions, issues, which they may not understand or with which they do not identify. The force of public demonstrations, for example, often consists in bringing to people who pass through public spaces those issues, demands, and people they might otherwise avoid. As a normative ideal city life provides public places and forums where anyone can speak and anyone can listen.”

Iris Marion Young 1990, 240

The point Young is making, that democracy requires random interaction between disparate people who are engaged in public discourse, is vital. Conversely stated, not providing public space for political discourse might lead to physical and ideological segregation. The clashing of ideologies in political public space does not guarantee consensus, but it provides a platform for its possibility. When the negation of space is considered, whereby there is little or no political or socio-economic overlaps, it is more difficult to humanize the “other.”

Public space plays an important role in the political life of cities and protests are the most obvious ways to see democracy enacted in physical space. Democracy needs physical space - the street or any other public space is the ultimate arena to communicate discontent and protestors usually choose a central public space to

meet and interact so they can transmit their ideas and problems to the greater public. If a space is non-existent, a protest has the power to take it, and as shown in recent developments with protests over the world, they can and will appropriate space for their own use (some democratic performances such as a simple assembly, however, might be too weak to conquer a space and reclaim it as theirs). By claiming space in the public, that is, by creating public space, protestors themselves become public (Mitchell, 2013[1961],129).

Digital Infrastructure

Society is quickly adapting to the rampant growth of technology. In 1991, there were approximately 16 million subscribers of wireless devices in the world. In 2013 the number grew to close to 7 billion (in a planet of 7.2 billion human beings) and it is estimated that by 2018 the number will grow to 10.2 billion subscribers. In year 2013 there were 2.5 billion Internet users (with China accounting for the largest number of Internet users). Humankind is now almost entirely connected.

With the rise of modern means of mass communication, there now exists a multitude of new spaces where public debates can take place - the internet provides ubiquitous capacity of multi-modal, interactive communication, in one's chosen time and in transcending space, which makes it very attractive (Castells 2014).

In 2009, online media researcher, Anders Colding-Jørgensen of the University of Copenhagen set up an experiment on viral communication, slacktivism, and social media. He created a Facebook group that implied - but never said so explicitly - that the historic Stork Fountain in the Danish capital is facing demolition. In only

one week, ten thousand people joined, and after two weeks, the group had 27,000 members/supporters (Naim 2014). The cause was fictitious, there was never a plan to demolish the fountain, and the fountain is in fact a listed monument. The intent of the experiment was to show how easy it was to rally a large group around a cause using social media.



Fig. P.48: Social Media icons

What makes internet networks attractive for protest is that people can be continually connected without the need for definable communications center, enabling them to remain mobile and anonymous. Castells argues that “internet networks [reduce] the movement on ability of repression but also protects the movement against itself” (Castells 2014). The effects of beurlaubratization, manipulation by leadership, paralyzing debates, or disruptive persons, are lessened in an internet network (as opposed to a group communicating in a physical space).

With the involvement of the internet, political protests are often a hybrid - they are in cyber and physical space, they are both global and local. But while demonstrations and protests in the internet age often start in the internet sphere, they become feasible when it moves to occupy physical space - it is a critical moment in which protest go “from outrage to hope.” In that moment the protest relates to society at large.

Communication is crucial for demonstrations to succeed. Pre-internet communication was conducted in churches and mosques, through radio and television, and importantly, through the spreading of rumors - the modes of communication of course depends predominantly on the technologies that are available at the time. Modern society, though heavily reliant on communicating in the internet sphere, still operates both online and off.

In Tahrir Square, personal and family social networks were extremely important as well as the religious networks which met spontaneously on Fridays outside the mosque. The occupation of Tahrir Square was one of the first big protests in which the digital infrastructure played major role. Some media even called it the “twitter revolution” as it provided major logistic support. People from Tahrir Square shared images and emotions with the whole world which got the support they needed globally.

One night in the middle of the occupation of Tahrir Square, the government cut off the internet, mobile phone networks, and home phone networks, making protestors more angry and resulting in even more people going out to occupy. The reason why Twitter, Youtube, Facebook and Instagram were so important for the youth revolution was that national television, radio and newspapers were controlled by the state. Young people felt that the public news was not telling their side of story (for example, one regime controlled news report claimed that protestors were there for the free wings from Kentucky Fried Chicken). Social Media empowered the protestors to tell their own story.

Youtube, as one example, had been crucial for the mobilization of global protests as a distributor of moving images. As Mehrabian



Fig. P. 50: “Revolution will not be televised, it will be tweeted”

demonstrated that 93 percent of communication is nonverbal, the single or moving image can carry with it an immense power; what is seen, whether factual or not, has an notable effect on public opinion, especially if goes viral. Virality has become one of the most important characteristics new movements as messages, images and videos can replicate exponentially, and almost instantly, around the globe. But not only can media go viral, physical demonstrations can as well. They start in one city and in no time, demonstrations are suddenly happening in other cities. In January 2011, the first protestors in Egypt gathered outside the Supreme Court holding signs that read, “Tunisia is the Solution.” The same thing suddenly happened in Syria - they decided to emulate what was was happening on the ground in Egypt, but only after being mobilized via Facebook, Twitter and mobile phones.

The most important aspect of the occupation of an urban space is that it creates togetherness. Castells argues that what protests create, even in occupations, is not a community, but simply togetherness. Togetherness is fundamental, playing on a human instinct; the need for togetherness during such times comes out of the most potent emotion in human life - fear. Fear can be considered the basis of all human civilization. Societies are based on fear and on repression, which is only overwhelmed by togetherness. The internet helps demonstrators connect globally, and though protests occur in different social contexts and have different agendas, they share as common ground an indignation about corruption, violence, or simply being fed up with the status quo. But, unlike in cyberspace, demonstrators in physical space must reveal themselves to each other physically and in real time - it unfolds that they, as real individuals, not avatars or profiles, are not alone with their problems, that there are many others like them that share their burdens. Public space becomes their common ground.

Occupying

Occupation is one form of direct protest action. Occupying is something quite different than demonstrating (Sassen 2014). The biggest difference between occupying and demonstrating is that occupations are longer than demonstrations - from a few days to few months - and therefore the effort that is put into occupying (including creative organization of the space and its adaption for longer term) is significantly greater. In order to survive, maintenance of peaceful relations is one of the biggest factors. Disparate individuals who had little or no previous association must suddenly live together in a less than ideal environment. Occupying creates new territory, and territory is not an innocent thing, she

adds. Tharir Square and Occupy Wall Street proved that it is possible to make a novel territory which is simultaneously physical and conceptual. Occupiers made a new kind of territory with its own imbedded logics of reclamation, justice, and in the case of OWS, a new territory within the area of global finance, i.e. Wall Street. In that sense, territory is a successful strategy in the practice of occupation.



Fig. P. 52: Occupy camp, 2011, Zuccotti Park

Territory is the space which is used by the powerful to rule the powerless. Thus, with the occupation of the territory by the powerless, the meaning of the territory changes. Many scholars tried to define the differences between the place and space and determine which of these has a mutable meaning. De Certeau distinguishes between space and place in the manner that place is a geometrical space in which two things can't exist at the same place at the same time (De Certeau 2011[1980], 117). It is a physical, geographically situated setting of social activity and thereby local, while space is not dependent place; it is an abstract definition of place that is not linked to any specific location. Thus a street is a place that a walker transforms into an active space (Ibid.). He argues that space and place work together. That space is situated in the context of place and that becomes meaningful only through social practice. Thus, a place has a geographical location, and space is a "practiced place," a place that is created by social practice.

De Certeau talks about the power of the individual who makes space meaningful. In that sense, people have the power to change the meaning of a space throughout time, according to their needs, and regardless of the original purpose. Through their practices and subjectiveness, users of the space can make various types of publicness (Sassen 2006, 49).

Space, according to Henri Lefebvre as noted in "The Production of Space," shows the interconnection between mental and physical space by connecting it to politics and ideology; it is not merely the arena of social relations and actions, rather it is operative in the "assembly" of these. Lefebvre's interpretation of space has a three dimensional conceptualization: the perceived, the conceived, and the lived (Lefebvre 1991[1974],220). According to Lefebvre, space is

a process of continuous production, not an end product. Space is what users perceive (reality), what they conceive (imagination), and how they perform accordingly (lived space). The Egyptian Revolution is a perfect example of this - revolution changed the way people perceived, conceived and lived in public space. People filled formerly empty streets which were monitored by the State with new life and public spaces that were restricted were shared by all.

The Right (and Space) to Assemble

In every democratic society, be it a representative democracy such as in the United States, or parliamentary democracy such as in Germany, people have the right to gather in public spaces in the city. In societies where the democracy is weak or non-existent, public spaces do exist, but they are not truly public, nor democratic. Public squares in authoritarian societies are not free and do not serve for practicing freedom of speech as that freedom is non-existent. Even more problematic is within democratic societies where public opinion and freedom of speech is protected by the law. In these societies, it should be axiomatic that public space for freedom of expression and political protest is available. Talking about public space as a political space, or as a “First Amendment Space,” Marcuse points out a paradox in the relationship between public space and democracy: “public space is useful for democracy but its usefulness depends on whether there is democracy or not”(2013). Such space - political public space - is the space where democracy can be furthered through political use via assemblies, petitioning, expressing grievances and demonstrations.

This kind of space is very much needed as, Marcuse argues, these kinds of spaces can overcome segregation and create democratic relationships between people. Public space and democracy work together. By extension of this idea, it is possible to imagine that the creation of public space might be a springboard for democracy in authoritarian societies. Could the public space that was created in Tahir Square, for example, become a precursor to the creation of democratic society?

The Bill of Rights, United States of America

Amendment 1: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances."

from: *National Archives and Record Administration*

Grundgesetz für die Bundesrepublik Deutschland

I. Die Grundrechte: Art 8, (1) Alle Deutschen haben das Recht, sich ohne Anmeldung oder Erlaubnis friedlich und ohne Waffen zu versammeln. (2) Für Versammlungen unter freiem Himmel kann dieses Recht durch Gesetz oder auf Grund eines Gesetzes beschränkt werden.

from: *Deutscher Bundestag*

Burning Man



Fig. P. 56: Aerial image of a *Burning Man Festival*

Occupations such as Tahrir Square and Zuccotti Park is reminiscent of festivals which are classified as “temporary cities.” Every summer, during the Burning Man festival, tens of thousands people gather in Nevada to create Black Rock City through occupation. It is not a political occupation, but there are similarities. This temporary city has to be quasi self-sustainable - they see their settlement as participatory self-governance and as an example of how free-thinking people can build a better society if they pool resources and work communally (Vossoughian). In Black Rock City people are encouraged to share, not to promote anyone or anything, or to use formal currency. As far as food goes, all participants are expected to provide their own food and clean water. This temporary city fulfils all the functions of a real city, including an airport. Burning Man is a private, for-profit event (tickets cost as much as three hundred american dollars) and it is a brand (Ibid.). It is a paradox that the festival is purportedly anti-capitalist, yet it is fully profit orientated. ,

Many criticize Wall Street Occupiers as “lazy party people,” and that prompted me to write a about Burning Man Project, as it has similar label from the outsiders, but also because it uses the same principles of a “free temporary city.” Citizens of these occupations are responsible for themselves, creating a sense of togetherness, and creates interaction between people who would not usually interact. That said, the biggest difference is that the festival doesn’t create permanent new territory; the Tahrir and OWS camps are gone, but they have reshaped the space they occupied symbolically.

The Right to Protest in the Park



Fig. P. 57: Areal view of Central Park, New York

There was something that caught my eye while reading about the 2004 Republican National Convention “Anit-Bush” protests. In New York City, The United for Peace and Justice coalition requested a permit to protest in Central Park. At the time, New Yorks’ Republican Major Michael Bloomberg denied the permit on the grounds that it would harm the grass. Considering that the lawn was restored seven years prior, at a cost of \$18 million, it might have been a valid reason. Furthermore, city officials argued that the security for such a massive rally inside the park could not be ensured. Given the legitimate (or not) concerns of city officials, one must also consider the concerns of the citizens, that is, the right to public spaces. According to a Poll released by Quinnipiac University, most New Yorkers supported the protests. A poll that surveyed 822 New York City registered voters found that 71% of the city’s registered voters thought that protesters should be allowed to demonstrate in Central Park during the Republican National Convention, and 11% planned on going to a demonstration themselves. Most New Yorkers, 81% of them, approved of lawful demonstrations during the convention, and 68% approved of nonviolent civil disobedience.⁴ New Yorkers said yes, but the city still said no. This is only one of the cases of struggle over protest-space in NYC where the discussion over real estate gets heated up. There are four parties to this conflict—the protestors, the city, New York residents, and all those who make use of the park for recreation. The forth party could also claim their rights: e.g. reading a book, playing frisbee or chess, relaxing with the family, or simply getting away from the office; one could argue that an enormous mass of people protesting would violate their rights. That might seem trivial, or legitimate if it happened frequently.

6. “New Yorkers Overwhelmingly Approve of Protests.” In *Troutout*

City parks, especially for a city like NYC, are of enormous importance, as they are often the only peaceful green areas where one can relax and enjoy “the green,” but as Parkinson (2012,180) points out on the other hand, they are “surprisingly ambiguous places in cities.” Central Park is a large green area, the lungs of the city, it is a recreation park, it is a tourist destination, it has cafe’s and holds a central position in Manhattan. Choosing Central Park for mass demonstrations makes sense as it is a lively place that can host large numbers of people. Its geographical position is perfect as it is located in the city center and many people cross through the park to get across town, meaning protestors would have the possibility of attracting random people. It is possible, but remains to be seen, whether, if the city provided public space adequate for large demonstrations, protestors would still choose the park for these reasons.

“Cities have the capability of providing something for everybody, only because, and only when, they are created by everybody.”

Jane Jacobs 1992[1961], 238

Contested Spaces

Tahrir Square

The Arab Spring democratic uprising originated in Tunisia in December 2010, and by 2011 had spread to Egypt, Libya, Syria, Yemen, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and Jordan. The revolutionaries were ultimately struggling for democratic freedom, but as was demonstrated in Tahrir Square, they were also fighting for a free public square.

Tahrir Square is one of the oldest squares in modern Cairo. It came into existence as an open space in 1865 under Egypt's Khedive Ismail whose intention was to modernize Cairo (Al Sayyad, 2011). Ismail was inspired by his visit to Paris at the time of its remaking by Napoleon III and Baron Georges-Eugene Haussmann - he was particularly impressed with the straight and large boulevards whose purpose, at least in part, was to make potential demonstrations more controllable than on winding streets which were cramped and chaotic. With Tahrir Square, Ismail set out to emulate Charles de Gaulle Square in Paris, calling it, "Paris on the Nile". Originally, Tahrir Square was an open green space which housed cultivated fields and was named "Ismail Square." Although the original Paris plan can be recognised, the vision was never completely implemented. In fact, Tahrir Square became an unplanned political centre.



Fig. P. 63: Tahrir Square and its relationship with L'Étoile in Paris

“Tahrir Square was not planned as a central square in the city: It grew out of the accumulation of leftover spaces that coalesced over time to form its huge trapezoidal contours”(Rabbat 2011, 184). Tahrir Square enjoyed a long history as a significant space but it was never an obvious space for protest. Generally, squares where revolutions tend to happen are of some historical importance and are imbued with meaning, symbolism and power. Historically, public spaces in Middle Eastern cities are in front of the mosques, but unlike other squares, Tahrir Square represents a long history of colonialism, foreign capitalism, and authoritative Egyptian regimes. It connects downtown Cairo and the historical part of Cairo. What gives the “Square” political power are the numerous buildings of political, cultural and academic character that surround it--the headquarters of the League of Arab States, Mubarak’s National Democratic Party, the Hilton, and the Omar Makram Mosque are some of the most significant ones. As such, it was an almost a perfect place for political protest, or in this case, an occupation, as it is an open ground with maximum visibility. Because it was a transit hub for cars, metro and buses, with twenty-three streets and two bridges leading to different parts of the city, it was also very difficult to block off.

The name, “Tahrir Square,” literally means liberation square in Arabic, and one could say after January 25, 2011 when the revolution started, that it finally earned its name. Although in my paper I mainly refer to the Egyptian Revolution of 2011, it is important to note that Tahrir Square had been the site of political protest many times throughout its history, a primary reason why protestors were attracted to this central point of Cairo in 2011. In 1952, after

which the name of the space was officially changed to Tahrir Square - by this time it became a symbol of Egypt's liberation from British (ALSayyad 2011). In 1967, another large protest took place when President Gemal Abdel Nasser stepped down from power and another large protest was held in 1977 as thousands took to the street against rising food prices.

In the time of Mubarak, the first large protest happened in 2000 in sympathy with Palestinian Intifada (uprising), and in 2003, Tahrir Square saw its first occupation by protestors condemning Mubarak for his support of the US invasion of Iraq. In 2004, from a grassroots coalition that included over 300 public figures and intellectuals with a wide range of political orientations, the Egyptian Movement for Change, also known as Kefya! (Enough!), was formed. In 2006, a protest took place in solidarity with Lebanon which was at war with Israel, and in 2008, in solidarity with textile workers in Mahalia (Kamel 2012,37). None of the demonstrations held for long - they often ended in violent dispersal with many dead and injured.

After the revolution in 1952, Egypt experienced a shift towards socialism, which redefined the meaning of the space. Under the Nationalization Program, most of the public spaces were acquired by the Egyptian government which redefined boundaries between public and private. While the concept of 'privatization of public space' is widely discussed in other societies, Cairo at the time experienced quite the opposite thing. Public space in Cairo which was owned by enterprises and had limited access only to certain social elites, was now owned by the government. Removal of feudal system was celebrated and people of any social class could now enjoy "public space" (Hussam Hussein 2013, 130).

As a result, the notion of public space by most Egyptians was perceived as the space owned and controlled by the government. In fact, for centuries, Egyptians were made to believe that “public” equals “governmental.” Since the formation of public space was governmental, political discourse within it was not permitted. As Egypt evolved politically, with an economy that was shifting towards capitalism, the notion of public space had not changed with it. The only thing that had changed was that some public spaces were now sold to small investors and entrepreneurs. In fact, since Mubarak came to power, public space had become even more restricted. Any social or political activity within the public realm had been denied to the people. Unlike in democratic societies such as Germany and United States, assembly of more than five people in a public space could be considered a protest, and, if so, people could get arrested under the premise that it was a threat to public safety. The means of minimizing public gatherings in public spaces amounted to changing their land use or fencing them in - in one case, the small green plaza in front of Egyptian museum use to be popular meeting place, but it was enclosed with a fence as a means of subduing the space and preventing assembly (Franck and Huang 2013). Street sidewalks, mosques plazas and markets were allowed as places of social interaction, however people were not permitted to engage in political discourse in such places - monitoring by secret police ensured the rules were kept.

Civil dissent and protest is nothing new for Egypt, however over the years, localities have changed. Historian Juan Cole argues that 100 years ago, we wouldn't have seen the protests on Tahrir Square. Instead, demonstrators in colonial times would have gathered in what he calls the “market-mosque complex,” where large numbers of Muslims would meet after Friday prayers. “When people

were upset with the ruler’s policies, you’d have a large number of people suddenly coming out [of the mosques]. And since the market was historically nearby, it was easy to organize people,” says Cole. Today, besides digital infrastructures, protestors use a traditional call for mobilization after Friday prayers, however, “demonstrations have moved toward newer, nationalist spaces that were initially built with heavy European influence.” (Sanburn, 2011).

In January 25, 2011 thousands of people gathered at Tahrir Square to protest the current regime of the President Hosni Mubarak. Unlike any other demonstrations, protestors occupied the space until February 11 when Mubarak resigned. In 18 days of occupation, there was between fifty and three-hundred thousand protesters occupying the space, many of them living on the site. Despite the risk of injury and death, occupiers were persistent about staying. In order to protect themselves from the police and military, but also to maintain order and peace on the site, they barricaded streets to the square and employed their own security systems—inspecting identification cards and checking for weapons. Women were checked by women and men by men. Since the Mubarak stepped down, the site continued to “host” political protests.



Fig. P. 67 (left): Graffiti, Cairo



Fig. P. 67 (right): Anti-Mubarak slogans are hung on a makeshift wall, 2011, Tahrir Square



Fig. P. 68: Tahrir Square camp during the revolution, 2011

A Temporary City within a City

During the time of the Tahrir occupation numerous elements such as camping areas, gateways, medical facilities, food distribution centers, water points, kindergartens, stages, projection screens, praying areas, small impromptu businesses, newspaper booths, media rooms, art exhibits, and other forms of public infrastructure emerged in the square (The Arab Awakening 2011). The bird's-eye view of Tahrir Square became one of the most iconic images of 2011, and today, the Egyptian revolution became synonymous with Tahrir Square. The camp symbolized resistance, freedom and liberation.

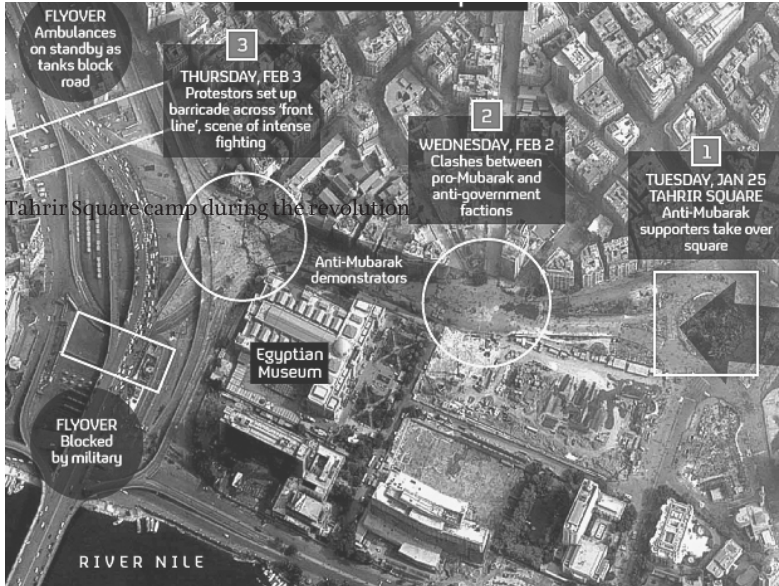


Fig. P. 69 (up): Map showing the Tahrir Square clashes



Fig. P. 69 (down): Morning on Tahrir Square



Fig. P. 70: Internet search for “Tahrir Square” yields mostly images of Egyptian Revolution

After the government shut down the internet and mobile communications, having an open public physical spaces was crucial. In fact, shutting down the virtual space encouraged people even more to take to the streets. Tahrir Square became a political public space where people could exchange and discuss their opinions. It also became a market with souvenirs of the revolution, such as flags, T-shirts and badges, as well as stalls selling coffee, tea and lemonade. They created diverse workshops and exhibitions. The new economic activities on Tahrir Square provided all that was necessary or useful, even during the hardest times of the revolution (Visser 2012). Sustainable and ephemeral infrastructures such as DIY sanitation systems, communal kitchens and educational spaces created such a lively atmosphere that even a wedding took place there. The occupation challenged not only physical barriers, but also social and symbolic barriers. It created a new setting for the Cairene community--for the first time, social class differences didn't matter, as they all unified for a cause (The Arab Awakening 2011). The Tahrir Square occupiers were able to keep the campground peaceful and habitable for many months.



Fig. P. 71: Foodstand on Tahrir Square



Fig. P. 72: Egyptians “welcoming freedom”

As the country is under a harsh regime and most is mostly owned or at least controlled by the state, it is hard to create publicness. Public discourse in public space is non-existent. With the Egyptian Revolution on January 25, 2011, the “public” in public space was tested. Public space, more than any other urban component reflects social relationships, and it often mirrors society. The occupation of Tahrir Square as well as the other public spaces across the country was a symbol of reclamation of the city and peoples’ right to the public realm. Occupiers symbolically rejected the state’s domination and their effort was to change the society in which they lived in. The occupied space became a physical place that enabled private people to meet and create public - a public space in which they could discuss matters of mutual interest, current political issues, and in the end, overthrow the government.

Usually, when talking about the importance of public space, the discussion usually begins and ends with democratic societies, as public space originated from Greece and took hold in the West. But now, public space is also playing an increasingly important role for Arab world. Spaces are being diversely used: from protest to celebration to, grimly, public execution.

Throughout the Arab world, post 2011, the revolution changed people's perception of public space. People, which are crucial to creation of truly public space, have themselves changed the narrative. In the case of Tahrir Square, they have occupied the space illegally, they have spoken about politics, also illegally, but as a result, they forced their "ruler" to step down. With their actions, they gave the place new meaning and created a new representational space. They put into practice the theory that public space is not only a place that people can functionally use, it is a place that can have transformative meaning. For the first time, Cairenes enabled the narrative of the public space to change and for "public" to be rethought and redefined. Although still struggling for the creation of democratic system in the country, in so many ways, they created a democratic space.

Zuccotti Park

Bloomberg claimed that the Occupation was technically illegal as the law protects freedom of speech and not the use of tents and sleeping in public parks (Spencer 2011). But when the occupation of a space with tents becomes form of political expression, is it still the same merely as sleeping in a public park (it is not the same issue regarding homelessness), or can we perceive it differently?

My interest in the Occupy Wall Street protest is closely connected with its location in New York City. What made OWS so important in urban and architecture discourse was the fact that the camp was set up in a privately owned space--Zuccotti Park. In my observation, OWS did two things: First, it created “public” as a public forum where political discourse can happen, and second, it challenged the whole notion of how POPS can be used and by whom.

New York Bonus Plazas

In New York, privately owned public spaces (POPS), have been for many years now part of Manhattan's public realm and they play a significant role in the urban life of New York City. POPS can be found almost every few blocks; they are dispersed throughout the most dense parts of Manhattan - the "hidden jewels" of the city. However, after interviewing several New Yorkers (who are not architects or urbanist), I learned that most of them didn't even realize that parks like Zuccotti Park are privately owned since they are open spaces and available to anybody at any time.

"The history of privately owned public space is inextricably linked to the history of zoning in New York City."

Jerold S. Kayden 2000, 7

In the late 1800s, New York witnessed the emergence of massive skyscrapers and developers raced to build the tallest buildings downtown in the Financial District. As the City got more dense, space, light and even clean air vanished from the city streets. With the introduction of steel frame construction techniques, buildings grew higher and higher and after the 42-story Equitable Building was erected in Lower Manhattan in 1915, the need for regulations became evident. The major function of the New York City 1916 Zoning Resolution would be to regulate and limit the height of buildings and determine the area of yards, courts and other open spaces. Zoning would create sense of openness, also known as "light and air" (Kayden 2000, 7). Architects and building owners were not very happy about the shrinking floors resulting from the required setbacks of the buildings.

The birth of the privately owned public space came 45 years after the original zoning resolution, with the inauguration of the program in 1961. The 1961 Zoning Resolution inaugurated the incentive zoning program which would encourage private developers to provide indoor or outdoor spaces for the public. By giving one square foot of ground level space to the public, a private developer would get 10 square feet of bonus floor area to rent or sell tax free, and they would also be allowed to build past the zoning regulation height. They didn't have to accept the bonus plaza deal, but the agreement was so sweet they could resist. By the year 2000, "the City of New York [had] granted over 20 million square feet of floor area bonuses and other regulatory concessions to private developers in return for their provision of 503 plazas, arcades, parks and indoor spaces." The program gifted the public sector with more than 82 acres of privately owned public spaces—the equivalent of 10 percent of Central Park. (Kayden 2000, 43-44). The only hard rule was that the space must stay open 24 hours, 7 days a week and any other rules that the owner made just had to be "reasonable." Since no mention was made as to how the spaces should be designed to accommodate the public, e.g. trees and benches, the first 14 years produced many unfriendly and uninviting empty lots.

Not until 1975 were amendments to the Zoning Regulation made. Depending on the character of the POPS, requirements could differ, but some of the requirements were seating possibilities, planting trees, installation of lighting, and maintenance of the urban open space (Whyte 1988, 343). Changes made in 1970s and 1980s were influenced by the writings of Whyte on public space, who

analyzed human behavior in urban settings, and Jacobs, who, after publishing *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* in 1961, became an urban hero. Jacobs loved public space and she believed that it was an essential element to a good city. According to Jacobs, streets are safety assets if there is a clear differentiation between private and public, if it has proper lighting, and most importantly if it produces life - e.g. if it is open 24/7, has an adequate density of activities (and subsequently people - “eyes on the street”), and has a mix of functional uses.

Zuccotti Park

Built in 1968, formally called Liberty Park is located in the Financial District between Broadway, Liberty Street, Cedar Street and Trinity Place. What makes this privately owned public space special is that it is open to the streets from all four sides and has no building directly attached to the park. The reason for such a setup was the size of the One Liberty Plaza building, which was much larger than anything that would be permitted under the zoning in this area. So, the owner at the time, U.S. Steel, made a special deal with the city - if granted permission to build the proposed massive structure, U.S. Steel would create a public park covering one whole city block across the street from the building. As this is the most densely built area of Manhattan, it was an offer that city couldn't refuse. The park suffered severe damages during the 9/11 terrorist attack and the site was renamed upon its renovation in 2006 after John E. Zuccotti, chairman of Brookfield Office Properties, a commercial real estate corporation working with high-end assets. Due to the generosity of John E. Zuccotti, who wanted to make the Park especially liveable, it is considered to be one of the most successful POPS in Manhattan - it is airy and open, offering benches and trees, even public art installations.



Fig. P. 80(left): Occupy Wall Street Encampment at Zuccotti Park seen is empty of demonstrators, 2011

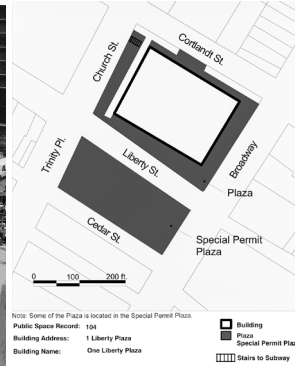


Fig. P. 80 (right): Zuccotti Park Map

“This city-block-size downtown plaza with a few trees and concrete benches was put on the map by few hundred people with ponchos and sleeping bags during its occupation.”

Kimmelman 2011, NY Times

Occupy Wall Street

OWS was originally planned on the privately owned public space, One Chase Manhattan Plaza, but after decades being open to public, it suddenly shut down. As the plaza owner JPMorgan Chase did not issue a statement about closing the site, some have connected it to OWS’ intentions to set up demonstrations on the site which brought about a lot of criticism. But that didn’t discourage demonstrators - they found an alternate location only two blocks away (Moynihan 2012).

Zuccotti Park was planned until the last detail. Even the amount of seating in plaza was established by a precise mathematical ratio, however, whether one could lie down on the benches, or set up a tent was not considered (Smithsimon, 2012:34). That loophole made it possible for OWS to happen in the plaza and, since it was classified as a “bonus plaza” and only a two minute walk from Wall Street and the New York Stock Exchange, it was an ideal location for the political movement of OWS.

“We are the 99 percent. We have the majority and this majority can, must and shall prevail. Since all other channels of expression are closed to us by money power, we have no other option except of occupy the parks, shares and streets of our cities until our opinions are heard and our needs attended to.”

David Harvey 2012, 162

Occupy Wall Street’s rallying cry was “We are the 99%.” It is a reference to the statistic that the richest 1% of the entire U.S. population controls 43 percent of the country’s wealth (Dunn 2012), and, by extension, the power and control, money being a way power can be measured (Sassen 2012). A primary aspect of this power is the ability to control the flow of money, thus to control economic, but also social sectors (Ibid). Protestors “made a big noise about the evils of capitalism” (Sennett 2012). They wanted to signal to the large population, the 99 percent, that something was fundamentally wrong, and that the problem was systemic, not the fault of any single individual.

Since many of those the issues brought up by OWS were in fact systemic and had evolved slowly, the OWS movement couldn't hope to affect a complete change by simply by occupying the financial district for a month. However, even if OWS didn't accomplish much else, they raised awareness about Wall Street bailouts, income gaps, issues of inequality, poverty, student loans, and the job market.

“We’ve been chanting and marching since 60ties..now we lay down and occupy”

Occupation Nation, 2013

But because OWS didn't set clear goals like the Egyptian Revolution of 2011 for example, they were seen an immature movement. However similar to the Egyptians, they didn't want to specify any one person to lead the movement, not necessarily because they were unorganized, but because they thought that would be contradictory to their philosophy--an equal voice to all. The Occupy movement wanted to create what was in their vision, a “real democracy.” Castells sees this as a fundamental feature of the movement (Castells 2012). They created a forum for discourse rather than setting clear goals to tackle. Many opposing the movement tried to brand it as a ragtag group of lazy and entitled moochers without any real definable goals except to whine about inequality or bash the wealthy - it appeared that the group suddenly jumped on a political bandwagon where they were not remotely interested in politics before. But, when the “movement” spread to over 100 states across U.S. and to almost 100 countries around the world, it could no longer simply be trivialized as simply that. An important byproduct of the Occupation was that it transferred a physical space into a public common and created a needed platform where one could not only express one's opinion, but also educate themselves on and discuss matters of public good.



Fig. P. 83: Internet search for “Zuccotti Park” yields mostly images of OWS



Fig. P. 84(up): OWS camp while raining



Fig. P. 84 (middle): Demonstration signs, 2011, Zuccotti Park
© Brendan McDermid

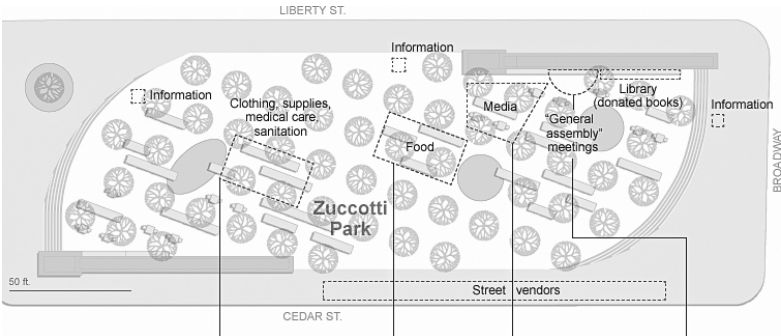


Fig. P. 84 (down): Map of Zuccotti Park during occupation.

Occupying the financial district was much more than First Amendment right. They were not there to participate in democratic governance (Marcuse 2012). At the moment of the occupation, Zuccotti Park was not just an occupied plaza in the financial district, but it created forum where political participation was made possible.

“It’s like the old game of telephone, and it is painstakingly slow.”

Michael Kimmelman 2011

The Wall Street Camp

The protesters set up a kitchen for serving food, a legal desk, a library of donated books, an area where the general assembly met, a medical station, a media center where people could recharge their laptops using portable generators, and even a general store called the comfort center, stocked with donated clothing, bedding, toothpaste and deodorant - all free for the taking. But unlike on Tahrir Square, portable toilets on the site were not allowed, so, until November 4th, protestors relied on nearby restaurants. Later, toilets were donated and installed at a private loading dock four blocks away (Franck and Huang 2012,11).

New York City requires a permit for amplified sound in public and since OWS didn’t have a permit, police banded loudspeakers and battery-powered bullhorns. Protesters came up with an alternative. Mic-checks “became the consensus method of circulating announcements, spread through the crowd by people repeating, phrase by phrase, what a speaker had said to others around them, compelling everyone, as it were, to speak in one voice” (Kimmelman 2011).

As Zuccotti Park is surrounded with heavily trafficked sidewalks (full of life, like the ones Jacobs was describing in 1961), people walking by would stop by, sometimes to make a sign or to take interest in the movement and engage in the discourse.



Fig. P. 86: Multi-media desk, 2011, Zuccotti Park

People have the right to peacefully assemble in public space, but cities can take away rights which the government grants. In the case of super dense New York City (specifically, Manhattan), one needs a permit from the city if more than twenty people gather in a park, or more than fifty bicyclists parade on a street, or if any speaker uses amplified sound.

“The Party of Wall Street has one universal principle of rule: that there shall be no serious challenge to the absolute power of money to rule absolutely.”

David Harvey 2012, 159

In Zuccotti Park, the only activities that were originally forbidden were skateboarding, rollerblading and bicycling; technically, setting up tents and other activities were permitted by law. Since it was private property, the police’s hands were tied - the specific laws of the site were not broken and the owner had no grounds to kick them out. The occupiers used various “weapons,” such as sleeping bags and tents to test each city’s limits on freedom of assembly (Sennett 2012). An occupation is much more difficult to pull off than a street protest because the idea of a protest is that protestors pass through the space and do not dwell in it (Ibid.). In October, the owner of Zuccotti made some changes as to what is allowed to do in the park--the city granted the changes and they were made affective shortly after. New regulations prohibited, among other things, “lying down,” “placement of sleeping bags,” “placement of personal property on the ground” and many other restrictions (Hayden 2011). Obviously, the intent of these regulations, which were successful, was to end to the sustained occupation by demonstrators of Zuccotti Park.



Fig. P. 88 (up): Sign in front of Zuccotti Park: Left before OWS, right after the OWS

POPS Today

Today, there are altogether 525 privately owned private spaces in New York City, and according to Jerold S. Kayden’s study in 2000, 40 percent of them “are practically useless, with austere designs, no amenities and little or no direct sunlight. Roughly half of the buildings surveyed had spaces that were illegally closed or otherwise privatized” (Kayden 2011).⁶



Fig. P. 88 (down): Protesters are arrested during ‘Occupy Wall Street’ demonstrations, 2011, New York

6. In 2000, Jerold S. Kayden and the Department of City Planning and the Municipal Art Society conducted a study on POPS.

But developments are still happening in privately owned public spaces. Amanda Burden, the New York City Planning Commissioner from 2002 to 2013 played an essential role in developing public spaces in New York. According to Kayden and others, she did a respectable job. At the beginning of her career, her mentor was William Whyte, with whom she worked on his Project for Public Space. She then worked under the Bloomberg administration which has been criticized for doing nothing less than what Robert Moses did in 1960s (Harvey 2007). Nevertheless, in her lectures, writings and interviews, she never fails to mention Jane Jacobs, who became famous for opposing Moses, as her role-model.

Recently, Mayor de Blasio announced a \$130,000,000 Investment project oriented towards the upgrading of neighborhoods through improving public space and most would agree that New York has plenty of lively recreational and social public spaces. Indeed public spaces are becoming more lively, but they are not necessarily becoming more diverse. Marcuse's critique on New York's public realm is not that there are not enough public spaces or that they should look differently, but that the city is failing to provide spaces where public participation could be made possible.

“We need public spaces as part of a democracy or public participation plan, one which look at the spaces and the facilities needed to make a healthy democracy thrive.”

Peter Marcuse 2012,267

Urban Rights

When talking about the right to the city, whose right to whose space is being talked about? - that might be the biggest question in contemporary Berlin (from the right to housing to the uses of public spaces). Harvey frames the right to the city as “one of the most precious yet most neglected of our human rights” (Harvey 2012). The right to the city is the social right of a collective to participate in remaking of the city and thereby remaking themselves in that city.

“The right to the city cannot be conceived of as a simple visiting right or as a return to traditional cities. It can only be formulated as a transformed and renewed right to urban life.”

Henri Lefebvre 1996 [1968], 158

Contested Public Spaces

The battle for Berlin is ongoing process that can be traced back at least to 1970s. Berlin has a long history of being a contested territory and has developed a “very lively, diverse culture of protest” (Holm for Unscube Magazine). According to the data from the Berlin police, in 2013, there were 4,487 assemblies, marches or demonstrations, and as with other cities across the world, protests in Berlin are growing in number. With an average of 12,4 protest a day, however, protests can become banal and achieve nothing, but the spirit of voicing opinions in political public space is healthy and vital in Berlin.

Berlin hasn't had comparatively massive political demonstrations or occupations. Berlin is a city where demonstrations are almost literally a daily occurrence and the struggle for their right to the public space has become part of its culture. In the fastest changing city in Europe, the main topics of demonstrations, occupations and petitioning in Berlin are typically rising rents, gentrification, displacement of the poor, rapid privatization of public spaces, and mallization of the city.



Fig. P. 94: Berlin under construction

In his work, Henri Lefebvre writes about the dichotomy of the modern city: on the one hand it is a space for opportunity and liberation, but on the other hand it is a space for power and repression. Contemporary Berlin offers very clear examples of this. Since the reunification of Berlin, the city has been investment oriented based on the notion that the city is poor. After the fall of the Wall, the city experienced massive political, economic, social and urban change—Wandel (Göttlich/Winter 2004, 81-105). Since the 1990s, Berlin was one of the biggest construction sites in Europe, with Potsdamer Platz as the most prominent image of these developments (Ibid.). At the time land was sold inexpensively to foreign investors who have had an influence on the new image of the city.

Mediaspree Versenken!

The investment project Mediaspree, which was to develop new hotels and offices over the neighbourhood's popular free spaces along the river Spree, was stopped by the citizens initiative, *Mediaspree Versenken* (Sink Mediaspree).

The planned area was situated only a few kilometers away from the center of Berlin, in the city district Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg. During the Cold War, the Spree was the border between east-Friedrichshain, and west-Kreuzberg. Since the reunification of Berlin, the area was a hotspot for future development. The development was challenged since its beginning in the mid 1990s. Many believed that the creation of a complex of luxury hotels, offices and housing didn't speak to the reality of the neighbourhood which was predominantly inhabited by people with low incomes living in old buildings. The area is known for squats, street art and young people who took advantage of the green areas around the spree. Rapidly rising rent prices and an ongoing gentrification process in other city parts created concerns among inhabitants of the area that the giant Mediaspree project (several kilometers long with surface area of 180 hectares) would majorly affect living conditions in the area (Dohnke 2013, 262).

“Poor but sexy”

Klaus Wowereit, 2004

Another issue which might have affected the larger population was the proposed privatization of public spaces along the river Spree. Users of the area at the time holding “temporary usage permits,” had created a culture scene with clubs, project spaces and

open public spaces that over the years attracted large numbers of young people from, and outside the district. Small projects by young creative people had created a vibrant and very attractive area which was open to everyone and offered free access to the Spree and green spaces alongside it. For many young Berliners and tourists, it was the city hotspot. Giant investors moving there with Mediaspree project would in most cases hamper the access to the water partially or completely as they would become privately owned.



Fig. P.96: Mediaspree Versenken logo



Fig. P. 97 :Graffiti on a building located by the rivier Spree, 2013, Berlin

The citizen initiative was mobilized under the notion that the Spreeufer should be open and available to all. The aim of the left-wing alternative scene that founded Mediaspree Versinken was to hinder the development, which, in their eyes, was not at all directed towards the neighborhood needs and desires. The initiative was launched in summer of 2007 with the intent to inform and mobilize people who in the end voiced their positions.

On the referendum in 2008, 87 percent of the people rejected the project and project as such was stopped, but not completely. Even if referendum was successful, land use and zoning plans were altered in many areas. One example is a luxury hotel housing block which is being developed by the East Side Gallery. To enable the access to the site, part of the historic Berlin Wall had to be removed. The Wall is of historic importance but also it is part of contemporary Berlin culture as it features graffiti of prominent street artists. This action sparked a new set of demonstrations which were largely ignored. Hundreds of people gathered to protest the demolition of the wall; they dispersed thinking they had saved it

only to find that overnight bulldozers had finished the job. The East Side Gallery and Alexanderplatz development contracts were signed in 1990s, which was why this development couldn't be completely stopped. That said, the referendum may not have achieved all its goals, but they saved much of the area from unwanted development.



Fig. P. 98: People demonstrating demolition of East Side Gallery, 2014, Berlin

100% Tempelhofer Feld

Another recent citizens initiative was *100% Tempelhofer Feld*. The citizen's campaign collected over 185,000 signatures - 13,000 more than is needed to trigger a *Volksentscheid* (referendum). Referendum results showed that 63 percent of the citizens of Berlin did not want anything to be built on the old airport site.



Fig. P. 99: People protest for Tempelhofer Feld, Berlin

Blocking the developments on the “abandoned” former airport was more than about blocking the new building developments - the votes had symbolic meaning. The process of creating this project was not transparent and the citizens claimed the right to participate in the decision process, especially if the decision was a public matter. The people fighting for Tempelhofer Feld demanded to be involved in its planning - the referendum gave the

people an opportunity to participate. Besides luxury housing blocks, the site had plans for a social housing block; the problem, as the inhabitants around the Tempelhofer Feld saw it, was that their starting price was too expensive and they would get even more expensive over time. With the development of the new city library which was also planned on the site, the area would gain more popularity with young people. Though a positive benefit, the neighbors saw this as a danger because that would drive up prices around the whole neighborhood. As could be expected for a newly developed area, it would attract higher income people and influence the housing market.

Compared to other major cities in Europe, Berlin, with more than 2,500 public green spaces is considered “green.” Over six percent of the city area is covered by water, eighteen percent by woodland, almost twelve percent is devoted to recreational space and more than four percent is used for agriculture. In Berlin, people are known to be very protective of their open public spaces as they hold a high value for them.



Fig. P. 100: Flyer for referendum

With current developments across the city, community activism became an essential part of the city planning process in Berlin. In the case of Tempelhofer Feld, it was a fight for 4,000,000 m² of public space. People fighting for Tempelhofer Feld fought for the free use of the space which they saw as their urban right. They wished to be part of the city planning decision making process in order to secure their local interests.

“The city is man’s most consistent and, on the whole, his most successful attempt to remake the world he lives in, more after his heart’s desire. The city is the world which man created; it is the world in which he is therefore condemned to live. Thus indirectly, without a clear sense of the nature of his task, in remaking the city, man has remade himself.”

Robert E. Park 1967,3

Harvey writes that according to Park’s idea of a city, the question of what kind of city we want is inseparable from the questions about what kind of people we wanna be, what kind of social relations we seek, what relations to nature we cherish, what style of daily life we desire, what kinds of technologies we deem appropriate, and what aesthetic values we hold. And that is why citizen participation is important - when people understand that that is their right, they will fight for the city they want. If Park was correct, with the transformation of the city, the people will also transform. The referendum in Berlin was a test for a new form of public participation in city policy making. Numerous small initiatives by tenants, citizens, local residents and users make the city public. And public is no less than the essence of the city.



Fig. P.102 (up): Mediaspree Project

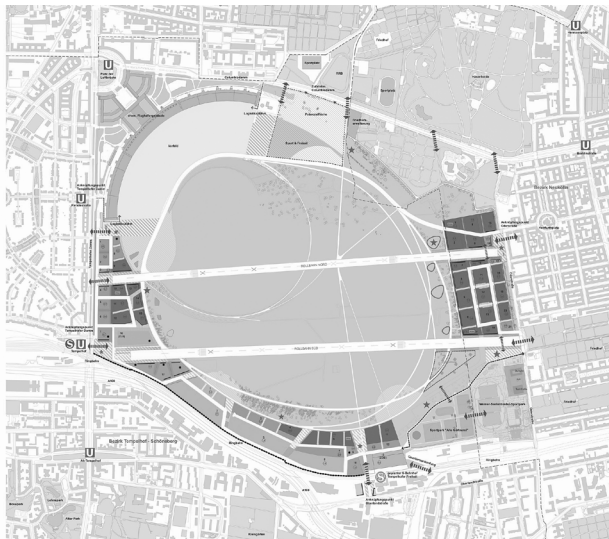


Fig. P.102 (down): Masterplan for Templehofer Feld



Fig. P. 103 (up): City gardening, Tempelhofer Feld, Berlin



Fig. P. 103 (down): Grill, Tempelhofer Feld, Berlin



Fig. P.104 (up): Activist promoting referendum on the street, Berlin



Fig. P.104 (down): Sunday, Tempelhofer Feld, Berlin

Conclusion

I started my research with the idea that architects and urbanists could and in fact should design specific public spaces for protests. I based this idea on the observation that protests were increasing around the world while spaces available for them were diminishing. However, the cases studies I used for my research suggested a different tack - that in fact, protests can be even more powerful and effective when people appropriate existing public spaces. Whether they do so out of necessity, because there are no other spaces available, or because they prefer to give meaning to a historic site, or because a site is in proximity to a locale important to their agenda, being able to determine the location and use of public space empowers a group's right to the city, creating discourse in the proper context and setting and giving the people the ability to impact the meaning of a space.

For this research I focused on three main case studies in which democracy was practiced in a public space: The 2011 Egyptian Revolution, The Occupy Wall Street Movement, and the citizens initiatives Mediaspree Versenken and 100% Tempelhofer Feld in Berlin.

The Egyptian Revolution with its occupation of Tahrir Square in Cairo offered the most interesting contradictions. It is not a democracy, nor does it have a *public* space. Therefore the understanding of *public* in this case didn't depend on ownership — the square is owned and governed by the state. With the pro-democracy protests and occupation of Tahrir Square, Cairenes changed the narrative of the public space. Cairene protestors did not have available to them a “perfect” space for protest, however, they created a democratic space which resisted an authoritarian regime simply by occupying it. In fact, Max Page argues that under authoritarian governments protests can be successful only if they defy the regime by occupying the space that is usually denied or if they occupy it in a way that transforms the place's meaning. For me, this case also begged the question of whether the establishment of democratic space by people under authoritarian regimes could be spark a future democracy.

The Occupy Wall Street (OWS) movement, with its occupation of Zuccotti Park in New York City, brought discourse about privately owned public spaces (POPS) into the public space realm. Zuccotti Park is a POPS and OWS raised questions about its ownership, management, purpose, use, and access. It made the most sense for OWS to create a new territory in the Financial District and in this case I was surprised to learn that the only/best place for a political protest to happen in a democratic country - in NYC no less - was on a privately owned public space.

Berlin was my third case study. Throughout its history, Berlin's public spaces have been fought over and its citizens to this day remain politically engaged. Moreover, with an ever changing economy and a fast gentrification process, Berlin's public spaces are still

being fought over. In general, Berlin has many public spaces which are given to the people to use freely or which people have taken for personal gain (even if, after appropriating the space for their own uses, they might be taken away). The *Mediaspree Versinken!* and *100% Tempelhofer Feld* citizens initiative instigated wide protests and citizens initiatives which eventually led to a referendum where Berliners could voice their disapproval of these projects. Their success stalled or stopped these developments and they currently use most of those spaces as they wish. How long these victories will last remains to be seen, but people successfully influenced the decision making process at the city level.

The history of public space rests on Greek ideology and is synonymous with democratic practice but it seems every generation re-interprets it. In addition, urbanization, modern technologies, globalization and a market economy (among other things), have changed cities fundamentally and therefore have also changed the concept of its public spaces.

Seeking to fix a definition of public space often led to confusion because ideas about it are often too varied or abstract. Though in the end I found her to be too reductive, some initial clarity was found in the work of Fran Tonkiss because she offered concrete examples of what public spaces were. Her approach is what I believe to be the closest to the layman's perception of what public space is and I would agree with Edward Robbins who wrote that Tonkiss' divide of public space brings more about more questions than answers.

Looking at other normative definitions of what *public space* and the *public sphere* is, I came to the conclusion that a too strict or universal definition of public space was problematic. The Public, in a democratic society, is dependent on the people. Thus, as Fokdal surmised, a space's conception is naturally always in flux. Because of this, the definition has to be flexible and it is the people who should have the ability to redefine it as necessary. It is not necessary then, as I first thought, for a space to be designed for protest as a space's ambiguity is what allows people to project their vision on to it. In fact ambiguity was a recurring theme in the texts i have presented.

Indeed, with a marked rise in protests all over the world, the existence of a public spaces as places where democratic practice can be furthered has become more crucial. Even though it might be argued that virtual space and digital infrastructures have challenged the importance of physical space for political discourse and protest, people still affect the most awareness and change by occupying the city's most vital physical spaces--their public spaces. As history shows, when the city limits, either by denying public space or by imposing rules restricting what can be done on it, they in effect take away the right to freely and peacefully assemble. I hold that it is a democratic imperative that unrestricted public spaces be available for practicing democracy and that these spaces do not need to be specifically placed or designed. In fact the ambiguous and flexible quality of public space is what gives it infinite potential, as Henri Lefehvre and Jane Jacobs wrote over half a century ago.

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A tall, lattice-structured tower, possibly a radio tower or antenna, extends diagonally from the bottom right towards the top center of the frame. The background is a light, overcast sky with a faint contrail or light streak running parallel to the tower's path.

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