Chapter 2
Public Space: Ideals, Predicaments, Practices

2.1 Public Space: Political and Civic Ideals

2.1.1 Public Space as Political Forum

In classic social theories, the concept of public space traces back to the Greek *agora* and the Roman *forum*. Ever since its birth, public space has acted as a central social and political arena in which free expressions of ideas and opinions are allowed and encouraged. In the *agoras* and *forums*, the citizens of Athens and Rome exchanged their opinions on the public matters of the city, making public space the primary locus of reason and rationality. According to Hartley (1992, pp. 29–30), the Greek agora is "a place of citizenship, an open space where public affairs and legal disputes were conducted", and "where words, actions, and produce were all literally on mutual display, and where judgments, bargains and decisions were made".

In the context of industrial modernity, Marshall Berman (1983) views the modern city as a key precondition for the emergence of a more inclusive urban public. In his seminal discussion on the Haussmannian Paris, Berman attributes the increased sociality and encounters between urban citizens to the construction of the *boulevards* which accorded new everyday routines and symbolic meanings to urban life. During that time, city spaces became more accessible to all the urban inhabitants and inter-class social interactions within a shared civic space also became possible. As a result, Berman was proud to proclaim, "Now after centuries of life as a cluster of isolated cells, Paris was becoming a unified physical and human space" (p. 151).

For Berman, the most important change brought about by the emergence of shared social spaces was that the increased visibility of previously isolated and hidden urban social groups, especially the urban poor who were now pushed to the forestage of the urban scenes along with the opening-up of the physical structure of the city. As ordinary citizens saw the others in open spaces, they were also continuously seen. As Berman puts it:

Haussmann, in tearing down the old medieval slums, inadvertently broke down the self-closed and hermetically sealed world of traditional poverty. (*ibid*, p. 153)

The increased visibility of class difference in the city streets enabled modern subjects to see the complexity of urban realities through mutual exposure. Now, the lovers' walking along the boulevards was not only a romantic encounter with the urban built environment, but interrupted from time to time by the presence of various social groups around. This urban scene thus turned into an arena of subtle politics—the politics of visibility and new social sensitivities. It echoes Richard Sennett (1971, 1977) argument that the politics of the public is to some extent about feeling the emotions, desires, intentions as well as the pains of other people.

But the politics of the public extends much beyond the domain of visibility. It is at the same time deeply situated in the configuration and transformation of modern public sphere. The idea(l) of public sphere is attributed mainly to the canonical writings of Hannah Arendt and Jürgen Habermas. An important aspect of their theorization is to link the collective power of public association to the broader formation of democratic political relations (also de Tocqueville 1969). To Arendt (1958, 1973), the public space is the sphere of action which is essential to democratic citizenship. It is a realm where citizens are free to participate in the collective deliberation for a common project (Goodsell 2003; Hansen 1993; D'Entreves 1994). In Arendt's political philosophy, the necessary dichotomy of public and private spheres results from the different functions of *expressive* action and *communicative* action (Benhabib 1996). While expressive action allows for the self-actualization of the person, communicative expression is oriented to reaching reciprocal understandings between social subjects. For Arendt, who also views expressive action as the *agonal* action, the realization of inter-subjective political understandings requires a public sphere in which expressive actions can *appear* to and ideas be shared with others. The concept of expressive action is also related to Arendt's phenomenological construction of the idea of "the space for appearance". A space where people can gather together and appear to each other is key to the formation of a public; and as she famously argues, action without a name, a 'who' attached to it, is meaningless.

The public space of appearance can be recreated anew whenever actors gather together politically for the purpose of deliberating on matters of public concern; and it disappears the moment these activities cease. The possibility of acting in concert for a common project incubates the power of the public sphere. Power is a product of action because it arises out of the concerted activities of a plurality of agents and it rests on the moment of persuasion because it is purposed to secure the consent of others through unfettered discussion and rational debate:

Power, then, lies at the basis of every political community and is the expression of a potential that is always available to actors. It is also the source of vitality and legitimacy of political and governmental institutions, the means whereby they are transformed and adapted to new circumstances and made to respond to the opinions and needs of the citizens. (D'Entreves 1993, p. 79)

While Arendt's conceptualization of the public sphere rests mainly on a radical politics of appearing to others and gathering together, Habermas' development of the idea of public sphere focuses on a rational negotiation between the state and the civil society. Different from Arendt who emphasizes the importance of physical spaces which can act as the venues of gathering and expression, Habermas insists on the importance of discursive spaces built upon popular media such as newspapers (Habermas 1974; Benhabib 1996). For Habermas, the rise of the public sphere is fundamentally a modern phenomenon. It represents the modern bourgeoisie class's collective action based on shared interests to contest the state authority. The modern public sphere emerged in the late-seventeenth century, and found its seedbeds in the coffee houses of London and the salons of Paris. In Habermas' (1989) milestone book *The structural transformation of the public sphere*, the public sphere is a political intermediary between the state and the bourgeois civil society, and its reciprocal nature is based on rational-critical debates. The rise of the bourgeois public sphere is a process in which middle class individuals form political collectives which gave rise to public opinions based on shared interests and shared projects. Reason, which is the codification of rational principles, is the key to the discursive mutuality in the functioning of public sphere (Calhoun 1992; Laurier and Philo 2007): political negotiations are undertaken in accordance with rational deliberation, and consensus is expected to benefit all political parties (Habermas 1974). Habermas suggests that the bourgeoisie "became an effective interest group possessing the communication skills and manipulating the levers of power, thereby exercising power over the institutions of government" (Goheen 1998, p. 481). Similar to Arendt, Habermas also insists on the ideal that the access to public sphere should be guaranteed to all citizens, even though this promise has never been fully delivered[1] (Habermas 1974). As Habermas (1974) defines the concept of public sphere:

> Citizens behave as a public body when they confer in an unrestricted fashion – that is, with the guarantee of freedom of assembly and association and the free to express and publish their opinions – about matters of general interest (p. 49).

Benhabib (1996, p. 202) names Arendt's public sphere a radical-democratic public sphere, while Habermas's the liberal-representative public sphere. However, there are notable theoretical convergences between the two most important conceptualizations of public sphere. Both Arendt and Habermas emphasize the accessibility of the public sphere to all citizens and the important of private individuals gathering together to form public opinions and consensus through either physical spaces or discursive spaces.

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[1]Habermas' standpoint that the public sphere is accessible to all citizens is open to suspicion, since in *The structural transformation of public sphere*, the public sphere refers exclusively to a political body of the bourgeois urban class, while Habermas himself criticized the dissolution of the boundaries of public sphere to include other social groups (see Habermas 1989; 1974). For the critiques of Habermas' exclusive conceptualization of the public sphere, see Goheen (1998) and Fraser (1990) for a review.

The definition of the public sphere as the venue for political address resonates amongst more recent scholarly discussions on the socio-political realm which is named the "public". Notably, contemporary studies of the public sphere follow more frequently the Arendtian approach which is friendlier to a theory of plurality and diverse social identities than the Habermasian approach oriented towards bourgeoisie universalism. According to the Arendtian tradition, public space is the social and political setting in which collectivity recognizes itself and claims its interests and politics through a shared interpretive repertoire as well as the arena where the citizens engage in a public politics and "give reasons in public, to entertain others' point of view, to transform the dictates of self-interest into a common public goal" (Benhabib 2000, p. 168). Lynn Staeheli (2010, p. 70) defines the public in terms of "that group of people recognized as being legitimate participants in political discussion, deliberation, and governing" and the public sphere as "the *forum* for discussion and public address". Deutsche (1996), in recognizing the masculine domination of conventional public discursive spaces, points out that the public space should be regarded as inherently empty of substantive content in that its only source of legitimacy is liberated discourses itself.

In the meantime, the enactment of the public sphere for free address is always associated with the political meanings that space and place can bear. The emergence of the public sphere does not only have a history, but also a geography (Low and Smith 2006). The Speakers' Corner is the spirit of free speech concretized in its spatialized form. A lot of studies in geography have paid attention to the role that physical public spaces can play in staging collective claims against hegemonic regimes of power. Public demonstrations, protest and other forms of claim-making (Mitchell 2000; McCann 1999; Lee 2009; Salmenkari 2009) disrupt and shift relations of power by occupying and re-working important public space and by presenting particular groups' political claims to a wide audience (D'Arcus 2003, 2006; Mitchell and Staeheli 2005). If free speech is seen as a defining element of the modern liberal democracy, it is very often in material public spaces that we can envisage it being actually realized (Iveson 2007; Mitchell 2003a).

2.1.2 Public Space as Civic Humanism

Another normative ideal associated with public space spotlights its role in facilitating social interactions and contributing to the civic healthiness of city life. Theories in urban sociology and urban design have long been contending that public space is constructed and produced through bodily encounters and social interactions with strangers and differences. As Orum and Neal (2010) have argued, social life in public space is essential to the civic order of the city.

In the classic writings of Simmel ([1903]2002) and Wirth ([1938]1995), the city was portrayed as the place with such a diversity of people that our established personality was constantly challenged and destabilized. While Simmel's book on city life claims that the unbearable diversity of the city eventually motivates people

to avoid interpersonal contacts and retreat into the private sphere, Benjamin (1999) brings to our attention the sensational feelings and enjoyment that the phantasmagoria of urban life can engender. As Amin and Graham (2005) have argued, cities act as the centres of agglomeration and proximity. An ideal city is thus a meeting place designated for unfettered social contacts and interactions. Public urban spaces need to act as the shared social terrain on which strangers and multiple cultural identities mix and "rub shoulders" with each other (Jacobs 1961; Watson 2006).

In the first place, the civic order that public space breeds refers to the unfettered social interactions and encounters between strangers sharing and appropriating the same public landscape (Madanipour 2003). This vision of public space is associated with many great urban scholars such as Jane Jacobs, William Whyte, Ray Oldenburg, Jan Gehl, etc. For Jacobs (1961), urban public space should not be colonized by logics of capital accumulation and rational urban planning. In her depiction of social life in shared community spaces, active use of space and mutual interactions are viewed not only as the key to the ceaseless and spontaneous monitoring of street security, but also a mélange of mutual care, friendliness and tolerance. William Whyte (1980) and Ray Oldenburg (1989) also applauded the central role that public places can play in alleviating the psychological tensions between urban strangers and promoting civic healthiness of the city. Oldenburg (1989), for example, names those often unremarkable, unspectacular public spaces as the "third place" of the city—informal social spaces outside the ordinary routines of work and home—and argues that these spaces are designated for "regular, informal, and happily anticipated gatherings" which are salubrious to community order and capable of accommodating playful, convivial collective life outside the conventions of everyday life (also Carr et al. 1992). Such an image of public space is often conceived of as an integral dimension of the *civic humanism* of urban social life (Blomley 2011).

On the other hand, urban public space as the physical setting of unfettered social interactions and encounters between strangers also plays the central role in our negotiation of differences and diversities in the city. The city, as Jacobs and Fincher (1998) suggest, is the arena where social and cultural differences are gathered, negotiated and reproduced with a surprising intensity. Through the mutual contact and engagement between ideas and identities, social relations are constantly reasserted or subverted. Richard Sennett (1971, 1977, 1992) views as an integral element of humanity the ability to reflectively explore the self through one's exposure to otherness. For Sennett (1977), the public man is conceived of as one who is capable to orient his/her ways of thinking and acting for responding to the presence of strangers. In the public realm, social relations are constantly configured, destabilized and reconstructed. But people need to develop the ability to translate potential tensions emerging out of encounter and diversity into the ethical moments of coexistence and respect (Sennett 2004). Such ability cannot be developed with the intimacies of the private sphere and must be actively *learned* through mutual engagements in public social life. If public social life gives way to the confinement

of the private and the intimate, the rich possibilities for interpersonal relations will also be lost (Watson 2006; Sennett 1977, 1992).

As Watson (2006) argues, public space allows individuals to inscribe their values, claims and identities into a physical space through a dynamic of seeing and being seen, feeling and being felt. The construction of public space is highly embodied, and can be achieved only through grounded practices and active engagement with both space and people. A vibrant, diverse and meaningful public life is about tacit human responses to a situated multiplicity which arises from a state of thrown-togetherness (Massey 2005; Amin 2008) which is constituted of coexisting bodies, relations, representations and meanings.

Difference and diversity in public social life can only be negotiated via individuals' or social groups' opportunities to represent themselves in the spaces and places of the city (Watson 1999). Social interactions across the lines of difference help to create the possibility of a democratic citizenship (Young 1990). Thus, Walzer (1995) appeals for what he calls *open-minded* public space which is not built upon exclusive visions of homogeneity and order. In the ideal city, as Iris Young (1990) now canonical portrait of progressive urban life insightfully summarizes, strangers should be given the opportunities to mediate interpersonal or inter-group relations through intersecting networks of unconstrained associations and democratic negotiations:

> By "city life" I mean a form of social relations which I define as the being together of strangers. In the city persons and groups interact within spaces and institutions they all experience themselves as belonging to, but without those interactions and dissolving into unity or commonness… City dwellers frequently venture beyond such familiar enclaves, however, to the more open public of politics, commerce, and festival, where strangers meet and interact (cf. Lofland1973). City dwelling situates one's own identity and activity in relation to a horizon of a vast variety of activity affects the conditions of one's own. (pp. 237–238)

Young's discussion of urban life connects public social life to both a politics of difference and the question of democratic citizenship. As this chapter will show later, in recent studies many scholars' lament over the "loss", "end", or even "death" of public space very often speaks to the annihilation of difference and diversity in public social life. Indeed, the politics of visibility and the possibility of negotiation across the lines of difference lie at the centre of the question about whether a public space can be employed for socially and politically progressive purposes. Only through daily practices or politics in public realm can one expose to others his/her social and cultural identities: to occupy a physical public space is also to inhabit a cultural space of meanings and constructed difference (Watson 1999). Thereby physical space is transformed into a social territory fraught with discourses, intentions and desires (Karrholm 2007). In order to express and play out our identities (either in a vocal or bodily manner), we need to find an audience; and this audience is to be found in the public (Iveson 2007). As Mitchell (2005) argues:

The nature of public space is in part defines the nature of citizenship. It shapes modes of engagement, the visibility of alternative politics, and the possibility for unscripted (that is involuntary) interactions. It provides a space of engagement within which the public comes to recognize themselves. (p. 85)

2.2   The End of Public Space?

2.2.1   The Decline of Collective Social Life

Ideals, of course, can rarely live up to the full actualization. In fact, since the 1980s a significant part of the literature in public space studies can be simply named the "end-of-public-space" literature (Sorkin 1992a). A widely shared viewpoint in this body of literature suggests that in the modern and postmodern Western cities it is increasingly difficult for public space to fulfil its role as the heart of democratic civic life. In this chapter I will identify three major strands of arguments which support, or at least echo, the thesis of the end of public space—the decline of collective social life, the intensifying privatization of the public realm, and the increasingly stringent regulation of public space.

In the first place, a number of social and urban theorists have contended that in the modern West, there has been a major decline of ordinary citizens' participation in the public sphere and collective social life. In the second part of his thesis on the public sphere, Habermas (1989) argues that the rise of the mass society of the welfare state has fundamentally sabotaged the previously clear demarcation between the state and the civil society. In a welfare mass society, state power is involved directly in the care for social members' private interests, which transforms the relationship between the state and the society from one of rational negotiation to one of structural dependency. On the other hand, the rise of mass media and consumer culture also eroded the traditional discursive spaces in the service of the communicative public sphere. Habermas's argument echoes with Frankfurt School's classic viewpoint that in a mass society of consumerist culture, social members are reduced to passive consumers of prefabricated, mass circulated cultural meanings and symbols (Adorno 1991). Public media are colonized by trivial texts, images and symbols instead of being inhabited by rational political debates. In the meantime, the civil society is also compartmentalized into political parties which compete for particularistic agendas while largely ignoring the principle of universalism which is one of the cornerstones of bourgeoisie public sphere.

In *The fall of public man*, Richard Sennett (1977) approaches the decline of the public sphere from a different perspective. For Sennett, public life before the 19th century was a stage-like arena saturated with rich interpersonal relations and meanings. Encounters with strangers in public settings motivated social members to adopt various positions and present the self in a performative manner. The public man, as Sennett proposes, was an actor-like figure who constructed complex emotional ties with others and gave genuine expressions for orienting the exchanges

of meanings. In this way, social members learned the ways to respond to and negotiate with the intentions, emotions and personalities of others. As Sennett (1977) describes the man as actor:

> [U]nder a system of expression as the presentation of emotion, the man in public has an identity as an actor – an enactor, if you like – and this identity involves him and others in a social bond. Expression as a presentation of emotion is the actor's job – if for the moment we take that word in a very broad sense; his identity is based on making expression as presentation work. (p. 108)

For Sennett, this vibrant public sphere of mutual expression went into a decline in the 19th century when people were increasingly obsessed with more intimate social relations in an enclosed private sphere. Streets and public spaces were deprived of the rich possibilities of meaning-making, and strangers in the public became taken-for-granted manifestations of disorder as well as sources of fear (Sennett 1971, 1992). Nowadays people are much more inclined to indulging themselves in exclusive and individualistic pleasures disconnected from civic responsibilities. On the other hand, in a comparable vein to Debord (1994) critique of the society of the spectacle, Sennett (1977) contends that the emergence of the *flâneur* way of urban life privileged seeing over other sensuous engagements, which reduced active public actors into passive spectators. In an analysis of Rousseau's *Letter to M. d'Alembert on the Theatre*, Margaret Kohn (2008) also argues against the disturbing nature of passivity in modern social life. For Kohn, the fantasy of romantic togetherness and inert juxtaposition of diverse elements often marks the fundamental absence of any real interactions facilitating mutual identification amongst social members.

As Christine Boyer (1996) argues, in contemporary cities the public is often considered to be negative, while the private life is both emotionally comforting and morally superior. The obsession with private life poses threats to both communal solidarity and the civic order of the city. Robert Putnam (2000), for example, warns that in the United States community-based political agency is being jeopardized due to the dissolution of traditional social associations. In another work, Putnam (1993) advocates that strong civic engagement is essential to both the good performance of governments and the formation of democratic political relations.

More recently, Don Mitchell and others have called for attention to a different crisis associated with the participatory possibilities of public sphere. In a series of works, Mitchell (1996, 2003a, b) has examined the public forum doctrine institutionalized in the US legal regime and how this legal principle works to delineate the boundary between public spaces in which public address is allowed and the rest of the public realm where free speech is considered to be inappropriate and infringing to private property interests. With the focus of social control shifting from what is said to *where* it is said, Mitchell (2003b) argues that the legal regime collaborates with the increasingly stringent monitoring and regulation of public speech and protest. In other cases, specific zones of protest are demarcated such that public speech would not conflict with other interests, especially those of the state authority and business development (Benton-Short 2007; Herbert 2007). I will come back to

this issue later in my review of the regulation of public space, but here I would like to juxtapose the curtailment of free speech and the discussions from the above-mentioned social theorists on the decline of public participation to present a more holistic picture of the shrinking of the ideal public sphere.

2.2.2 The Privatization of Public Space

The second issue related to the thesis of the end of public space concerns the privatized use of (nominally) public urban spaces. Two types of spaces, namely the shopping mall and the gated community, will be the foci of my discussion here. The shopping mall is perhaps the principle example of the growing private spaces which have recently replaced the bustling street life of cities. First emerging in the United States in the early 20th century, the shopping mall played a significant role in shaping the suburban lifestyle of the American middle class. Designed primarily as a private space which accommodates urban citizens' demands for commodity consumption, the shopping mall allows the white, middle-class shoppers to realize a consumerist identity without unwanted encounters and potential conflicts with members from other social strata and races. The most important characteristics of a shopping mall is that it creates a pleasurable and comfortable shopping environment, while in the same time turning the shoppers into passive viewers without any experiences of the bargaining, vocal communication and idea exchange in a traditional street or market (Sorkin 1992a, b; Crawford 1992; Kohn 2004; Jackson 1998; Banerjee 2001). Often blending fantasy-like interior landscaping to simulate the vibrant cultural atmospheres of traditional towns and plazas, the shopping mall is nonetheless considered by many authors a unitary and pale world dominated by the culture of consumption (Hopkins 1990). As Goss (1993, p. 22) observes, the design of the shopping mall often shows "a modernist nostalgia for authentic community, perceived to exist only in past and distant places, and have promoted the conceit of the shopping mall centre as an alternative focus for modern community life" (also Goss 1999).

Public life in the shopping mall, however, is highly restricted. In fact, one of the most important reasons for which the shopping mall is so enthusiastically embraced by the white, middle class urbanites is that it provides a safe, privatized and highly controlled space free from disturbing encounters with the poor, the homeless, the black and the working class—in other words, the shopping mall is a secured and purified space without the painful interactions with the unwanted (McLaughlin and Muncie 1999). As Kohn (2004) points out, the shopping mall is attractive because it combines an imaginary cultural atmosphere of old time public life *and* a sense of intimacy and safety which only private spaces can provide. Fantasy, fear and safety are interwoven elements in the cultural construction of the postmodern shopping space (Van Melik et al. 2007). The wrong elements from the outside world are totally locked out so as not to divert shoppers from their identity as consumers (Mattson 1999). In most cases, the privatized space of the shopping mall is not

allowed for expressive acts such as panhandling, leafleting or public addressing (Kohn 2004; Mattson 1999). Transgressive behaviours are also tightly regulated, and minority social groups who are considered not in accordance with the logics of social order and profit-making, such as the beggars, the young people, the homeless, etc., are intentionally excluded (Goss 1993; Kohn 2004).

The shopping mall has also evolved into other forms of urban spaces.[2] Its most famous cousins, arguably, are the Disney theme parks which reduce the complex social realities into a fantasy of nowhere (Sorkin 1992a; Banerjee 2001). For Sorkin (1992a), the Disneyland is an extreme case of treating the city as the spectacle for passive viewing and visual consumption. Similar philosophies of constructing utopias of consumerist culture can be also found in the development of historical shopping centres, enclosed pedestrian bridges and underground walking tunnels (Boddy 1992; Goss 1996; Boyer 1992). More recently, cities in the United States have also witnessed the booming of Business Improvement Districts (BIDs). Designed to reverse the desperate economic decline of many North American downtowns, a stereotypical BID usually combines the functions of consumption, employment, tourism and residence. These new enclaves of middle class consumption are usually managerially closed by private governing bodies which provide packaged services of sanitation, security and landscaping (Kohn 2004). Unsurprisingly, control of the access to and the uses of these spaces is also strict (Briffault 1999; Low 2006a).

Another widely critiqued case of the privatization of urban space is the construction of gated communities. Enclosed, walled, and sometimes fortified, the gated communities are viewed as the middle class' new enclaves of privilege (Duncan and Duncan 2004; Davis 1990, 1992; Low 2006a, b; Caldeira 1996). Mike Davis (1992) argues that the fortified gated communities emerged from the white middle class' hysteria-like fear for crime and disorder which were believed to be brought about by the poor and the ethnic minorities. As a result, residential communities must be fortified to achieve a greater internal homogeneity and more importantly to keep the unwanted away. As Kohn (2004) argues, the gated community is a space that allows no voice from the counter-publics. The marketing of gated communities, in the meantime, is based on the selling of fantasies: the gated community provides the opportunity to imagine social life thoroughly free of the irreversible social antagonisms, and makes it possible to avoid unbearable encounters with the strangers.

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[2]The mutated forms of the shopping mall are limited to the cases I will describe, of course. For example, the rising popularity of waterfront development also speaks to the postmodern nostalgia for the past and for the elsewhere. As Goss (1996, p. 223) critiques in his remarks on waterfront development: the city is "constructed as an object of bourgeois desire, in which is realized the dream of social solidarity among a community of strangers in an authentic public realm; of social interaction and transaction in a free market(place), of imaginative and spontaneous "acting out" of individual and cultural identity in the practices of street theatre and festival; and of social liminality on the waterfront where past and present, nature and civilization, and self and Other meet" (see also Boyer 1993).

Similar processes to the gating of residential communities have happened during the uproars of gentrification and urban redevelopment. For Neil Smith (1992, 1996), such processes are the spatial expressions of the neoliberal state revenging the working class, the urban poor, the homeless people and other "undesirable" social groups. Employing the discourses of fear and disorder, urban neoliberal development evicts the subordinated social groups through the powerful mechanisms of criminalization and stigmatization. When the downtown neighbourhoods become the new frontiers of capital accumulation, the parks, the streets and the plazas which have sheltered the livelihood of subordinate social groups are now quickly subjected to the hegemonic ideology of capitalist consumption and increasingly subject to strict state regulation.

The privatization of urban public space is situated in a broader context of neoliberalization and a global wave of city image-making. With a transition to neoliberal and entrepreneurial models of urban governance, the public goods distribution approach of public space provision is increasingly replaced by an economic competitiveness approach (Mandeli 2010). The underlying logic is that production of (allegedly) public space must fit with the privileged initiatives of capital accumulation and commodity consumption. Shopping malls, gated communities and BIDs are all vivid manifestation of this new social-spatial dialectic (Soja 1980). On the other hand, the privatization of urban spaces is also a passive response to the intensifying social conflicts around the axes of class, ethnicity and race. Through the privatization of urban space, capital has taken advantage of the geographies of insecurity and fear to launch unprecedented crusades of spatially unjust urban redevelopment: social tensions are managed and contained through the relocation of, rather than the care for, marginal social groups.

Fortification of urban space has its detrimental effects. For example, Low (2006a) points out that the development of gated communities and biased zoning laws can jointly lead to public funds spent on service facilities whose use is nonetheless limited to a small group of citizens. It is a process in which public goods are transformed into semi-public or even private goods (Mattson 1999). Besides, the working of Homeowner Associations under the banner of Common Interest Housing (CIH) often results in private government regimes which contribute to the fragmentation of public government (McKenzie 1994; Low 2006b). But the most negative of all those effects is perhaps that the philosophy underlying the creation of gated communities and other exclusive urban spaces turns the "city of connection" into "city of disconnection" (Amin and Graham 2005) where mutual encounters between citizens from different social groups and the negotiations across lines of difference are rendered impossible. As Sennett (1971) suggests, the construction of the barriers for interactions is a process in which some groups build up social and mental "walls" around themselves to achieve the exclusion of others who are "not the same". The consequence is that difference is firmly rejected in favour of sameness. As Allen (2005) has commented, the gatedness of urban life is in a disturbing contrast to what an ideal city is supposed to be:

> At one level, the idea of spatial separation explicit in this form of purity can be understood as a reaction to the extraordinary mix of city life, that is, as an inability to deal with the 'strangeness' of others. (p. 81)

For many commentators, the prevalence of privatized spaces such as the shopping malls, the pedestrian bridges, Disneylands, and the historical shopping centres is turning the modern citizens from active participants in public affairs into passive viewers in an alienating world of commodity: the city life becomes a spectacle to be consumed via a *flâneur* lifestyle, rather than the stimulant to a mature political sensibility (Sennett 1977). Kohn (2008) argues that when a state of inertia and an obsession with spectatorship become the essence of social life, the progressive political potential of urban social life will be fundamentally impaired. As has been discussed earlier, the importance of public life and public space lies in the fact that it represents the views, values and identities of diverse social groups (Kohn 2004). The expressions of identities and claims are not always vocal, but often depend on the bodily encounters between strangers in the public (Watson 2006). The privatization of urban space, on the contrary, hinders these encounters as it confines social members within separated social worlds.

2.2.3 Regulation, Surveillance and Control of Public Space

The last strand of research focuses on the increasingly stringent control of urban public spaces. Practices of regulation and control are based on established social norms concerning who and what kinds of behaviours can be accepted in public spaces. In this line of research, the urban society in the present time is less a world of free encounters and exchanges than a world of CCTV cameras and security patrols (Crang 1996; Mclaughlin and Munice 1999; Fyfe and Bannister 1996, 1998). As Iveson (2010a) points out, the cutting-edge technologies of our time are increasingly being applied in the surveillance and regulation of disorder and deviancy, making the city more or less akin to a battlefield (Graham 2010). In these studies, it is through defining differentiated access to public spaces that the hegemonic visions of normativity, social order and civility are enacted. Those who are considered the uncivilized and disorderly others are discursively distinguished from the more "respectable" parts of the society and excluded from the use of public space (Flusty 2001; Atkinson 2003; Bannister et al. 2006).

As I have touched upon earlier, the first social group which is likely to be excluded from the streets, the parks and other urban public spaces is constituted by political activists and dissenters who challenge hegemonic political orders and thus often confront the relentless oppression from the dominant social group. One common weapon used by the dominant group is to banish the activists from the public space and thus make them invisible. The urban public space has thus become a new terrain of urban management in order to subsume the expression of public opinions under an overarching framework of social order (Mitchell and Staeheli

2005). As Mitchell and Staeheli (2005) has noted, a new spatial politics of public dissent management has recently emerged in the United States, featured by the new regulatory mechanisms of "protest-zoning" (Herbert 2007). Public demonstrations and assemblies now must be permitted by the police prior to taking place in physical spaces. In this way, public address is carefully regulated by the state in conformity to the principles of right "time, place and manner"—the liberal principle of free speech has now submitted itself to a new regulatory regime demarcating the "boundaries of dissent" (D'Arcus 2006). The policing and regulation of public demonstrations during major political events such as the APEC Summit and IMF/World Bank Summit, for example, has given rise to new tensions between the liberal democratic creed of free speech and actually existing state power (e.g. Epstein and Iveson 2007; Martin 2011). In the meantime, the state's passion for regulating public protest has expanded into other domains of public governance as law makers legitimize the bubble laws to restrict the access of expressive acts, for example panhandling and leafleting, to the targeted audience (Mitchell 2003b, 2005). This new model of social interaction, which is called by Mitchell (2005) the "S.U.V model of citizenship", is the consequence of a long-standing fear of, and hostility towards, publicly expressed miseries, needs, attitudes and identities. The emphasis on rational and orderly public speech has in fact turned public space from an arena of free expression to one of "managed speech" (Mitchell 2003b).

Other social groups who are often likely to become the victims of the control of public space include the homeless (Kohn 2004; Mitchell 2003a; Daly 1999; Berti 2010; Johnsen and Fitzpatrick 2010), the street panhandlers (Collins and Blomley 2003) and other marginalized social groups who are believed to be both threatening and uncivilized (Lees 1998). The exclusion of these social groups who are claimed to be socially disturbing is enmeshed in the powerful discourses of crimes, fear and public insecurity.[3] In many contemporary cities, a whole set of security infrastructures is being established for the monitoring of those "threatening elements" (Németh 2010; Németh and Holland 2010). In this process the law, as the normativized discursive space which delineates the boundaries between the right and the wrong, plays a central role in criminalizing "deviant" social groups. Laws and rules act as legal representations used against those who are supposed to have crossed the widely accepted spatial boundaries and social norms (Berti 2010).

The widely critiqued "broken window theory" (Wilson and Kelling 1982; Kelling and Coles 1998) and Robert Ellickson (1996) notorious proposition to establish homeless-free zones in the city to reduce the threats posed by deviant homeless people are just two examples of this socio-mental ecology of fear. As Kohn (2004) comments on the hostile attitude recently surging in North American

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[3]Exclusive politics of public space is often justified with the discourse of fear and safety. The 9/11 attack in New York has pushed this ecology of fear onto its summit (see Benton-Short 2007). To exclude marginalized social groups from using public spaces, dominant discourses intentionally stigmatize the poor, the homeless, etc. into rude and uncivil criminals who are responsible for the rising insecurity of urban life. The regulation of public space is thus a situation in which, as Ellin (1996) calls, form follows fear (see also Hannigan 1998; England and Simon 2010).

cities towards homeless people, much of this aversion is attributed to the fact that homeless people have to do in the public many activities of social reproduction which are commonly believed to be essentially private (sleeping, eating, washing, having sex, urinating, defecating, etc.). However, what the predominant policy orientations have frequently ignored is that everything that is done has to be done *somewhere*. Since the homeless people occupy no private space, they have to perform their body functions in the public—the public space is the only place which they can access for the fulfilment of their humanity (Waldron, 1991).[4] In this sense, to deny the homeless people's right to the city is also to deny their citizenship and their existence as a whole.

It is now a standard academic discourse that the toughening of public space regulation can be associated with the intensifying competition between cities for attracting footloose capital in a global age (Harvey 1989a). In advanced capitalist societies, urban redevelopment agendas nowadays are largely oriented towards creating a safe and pleasant environment for achieving the spatial fix of fluid capital (Mitchell 2003a). This entrepreneurial philosophy of urban governance regards public security as a key element in the attractiveness of the urban environment which is expected to eventually reverse the decline in the economic profitability of the urban spaces (Bannister et al. 2006). The new regulatory regime, as Mitchell (2003a) argues, is closely related to the rise of this neoliberal political economy—a political economy which must be understood in relation to the "annihilation of space by time" in the post-Fordist global economy (Harvey 1989b).

However, the exclusion of public space through the annihilation of difference is not always concerned with the tension between the (neo)liberal state and assumedly dangerous sections of the society. It is invoked also in moments when identities of different social groups collide and contest with each other. To understand these conflicts is to acknowledge that social life in the city is always about meeting and rubbing shoulder with strangers with different social positions and cultural orientations. Negotiating difference with others provides the opportunities to transcend the social categories and cultural positionalities in which we are initially placed (Sennett 1992). But in reality the situation is often less optimistic than the romantic ideal which Sennett advocates. Rather than actively engage ourselves in the encounters with difference, we often prefer a politics of disengagement: we surrender to the forces that create a disjunction between the inner self and external social life and withdraw into isolated worlds of uncontaminated selves (Sennett 1992; Watson 2006). Encountering difference in public space is interpreted as a disturbing experience, and to reduce the social and cultural diversity in the public, dominant norms and codes are often enacted to define who and what behaviours are acceptable in particular spaces. Those who do not fit with these norms and codes are from time to time regulated and excluded.

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[4]The revanchist regulation of the homeless people reached a peak as several cities in the US decided that even giving food to the homeless people for free or at a low price is not acceptable—in other words, the intervention from the civil society in alleviating the suffering of the homeless people is also subject to criminalization; see Mitchell and Heynen (2009).

A politics of difference is always entangled with the structures of social power. In most cases, it is the socially and politically more powerful who possess the privileged position to deify their own rules and moral standards as naturalized and absolute norms. Exclusions as the results of the pursuit of homogeneity are around all the axes of race, nationalities, cultural traditions, sexual orientation, gender and other forms of cultural identities. Groups and cultural practices victimized by the exclusive politics of public space also include young people (Collins and Kearns 2001; Jeffs and Smith 1996; Lucas 1998; Weszkalnys 2007, 2008); youth culture, in particular parkouring, skating and skateboarding (Ameel and Tani 2012; Malone 2002; Nolan 2003; Carr 2010; Vivoni 2009; Chiu 2009); women (Bondi 1998; Fraser 1990; Duncan 1996); sexual minorities, sex workers and sexual expressions (Hubbard 2001, 2004; Papayanis 2000; Kirby and Hay 1997; Iveson 2007; Bell et al. 1994); people in the informal sector of economy, in particular street vendors (Donovan 2008; Hunt 2009; Crossa 2009); drug dealers and users (England 2008) and even children (Valentine 1996, 1997; Young 2003). Certainly, the exclusion of marginal cultural identities is very often intertwined with the ambition of constructing urban attractiveness for corporate interests and capital accumulation. But in the meantime, the exclusion of "unacceptable" or "unwelcome" elements from public space is reflective of the widespread mental rejection of, and moral panic over, the non-mainstream others and the particular behaviours associated with them —a mentality which is now fundamentally reshaping our social life and ways of social interactions. Justified in the name of collective interests of the society and the aesthetics of dominant moralities, the purity of space is achieved through defining certain elements of the society as "out-of-place" (Cresswell 1996) and relocating them to the more marginal spaces of the society (Sibley 1988).

2.3 Practising Public Space: A Theoretical Intervention

2.3.1 Public Space as Practice, Dynamic and Assemblage

Surely, all these studies discussed in the previous section are both empirically convincing and analytically solid in themselves. Also, these studies have opened important lenses through which we could assess and evaluate contemporary public life with a solidly critical stance and attentiveness to the issues of democratic citizenship and social justice. However, these studies only present a partial picture of the complex social, cultural and spatial dynamics associated with public space. What are the socialities and spatialities which the body of literature has concealed? Does it run the risk of foreclosing the possibilities for us to envisage, situate and represent alternative stories and trajectories? In other words, if we adopt a positivist and fixed epistemology towards interpreting findings in these studies, it may also lead us to inaccurate portraits of the contested nature of public space. It also runs the risk of conveying the impression that nowadays public space is deprived of its rich

social, cultural and political meanings and thus no longer essential to our social life. In this section of the chapter, however, I would like to propose a different perspective to characterize the unsettled social, cultural and political dynamics of public space, and voice unequivocally that the political and social potentials of public space have never been fundamentally compromised, despite the ascendance of neoliberal capitalism and the construction of exclusive urban spaces.

Indeed, it seems to me that a shared point of view underlying many of these studies reviewed above is that the old ways of political engagement and social interaction in public space are being rapidly displaced. Of course, unlike earlier writers such as Sennett (1977) and Sorkin (1989a) most authors in public space research now avoid making explicit references to the vocabulary of end or death, as it cannot capture the complexities of our concrete everyday experiences of urban spaces. Many works are cited above simply because they are related to the issues of decline, privatization and regulation. However, my overview of the literature discussed above also suggests that instead of a coherent and explicitly stated argument, the "end of public space" is often a rhetorical and epistemological contour which from time to time orients our depictions and understandings of the historical trajectories of the public sphere. What can be glimpsed underneath the three strands of studies reviewed above is often a lament over the "decline" of public space: a dichotomy of past/present is subtly performed in the discursive configurations of many of these studies.

More recently, key authors in public space research such as Crawford (1995), Deutsche (1996), Mitchell (2003), Watson (2006) and Iveson (2007) have already made important theoretical interventions into the narrative of the end of public space. Without doubt, the normative ideals associated with public spaces are always the ethical infrastructure undergirding the struggles and fights for citizenship and the right to space. But these ideals need not to be understood in terms of a rigid dichotomy between an imagined vibrant public sphere located in another time and space, and a declining one which features nothing but enclosure and withdrawal. Indeed, the pessimistic accounts of Habermas (1989), Sennett (1977) and Sorkin (1992a) are often critiqued on the basis that these arguments conjure up the imagination of a romantic past in which public life was based on the universal principles of rational debates and social inclusion while more or less immune to the complex negotiations of difference and dynamics of social power.

The literature reviewed in the above section also urges us to look more closely at two important analytical problems. First, many studies in this literature are undergirded by the binary oppositions of inclusion and exclusion, presence and absence. It is assumed that being included or present in the public can be unproblematically translated to progressive potentials. On the other hand, it is also assumed that exclusion reduces the social and political relevance of public spaces. Many other space-times which do not fit seamlessly with these binary oppositions are hence ignored and less explored. Inclusion and exclusion are analysed as two separate, mutually exclusive domains. One important issue which has failed to be taken into account is the way in which inclusion and exclusion penetrate into the construction of each other. Also, repression and regulation are thought to be

imposed *upon* spatial relations, rather than constituted *through* the configuration of spatialities. Dominant regimes of social power are analysed as monolithic and top-down, which forecloses the possibilities of deconstructing hegemonic discourses, representations and rationales to create resistant potentials.

As a result, many studies in line with this perspective tend to focus exclusively on the spatial openness or enclosure of particular public spaces, while largely neglecting the complex internal dynamics which disrupt the imagined coherence of spatial practices in the public. The presence and visibility of bodies in spaces alone are thought to be sufficient for the enactment of democratic citizenship (Mitchell 2003a). It is assumed that "being seen" in the public can automatically breed democratic social life, and what is sidestepped is the closer scrutiny of the actual social, cultural and discursive practices delineating the complex contours and boundaries of identities and differences (see Iveson 2007 for an insightful critique of this visibility-equals-empowerment narrative). However, the social and political significance of public space which is founded upon this paradigm seems to be intrinsically vulnerable. It is often assumed that any social or cultural dynamics destabilizing the pre-programmed routines of visibility, participation and social interaction would lead to the assumed authenticity of public space being sabotaged and render public space less relevant to our everyday social life. What is neglected, however, is the constitutive role which space plays in the production of social relations and the rubrics of everyday life, as well as the analytical importance of space in our attempts to deconstruct hegemonic social power.

Second, many studies in this literature also reproduce the rhetoric of the decline of public space by presuming urban spaces which accommodate fixed types of uses and spatial practices, and thus produce fixed social, cultural and political meanings. This fixity can be glimpsed, for example, from Habermas (1989) and Sennett (1989) arguments that people are nowadays less and less inclined to participate in public life, which is supposed to lead to an *inevitable* decline of the public sphere. In their portraits of social and political life, only some fixed modes of social interactions can facilitate political associations and social connections. These two theorists, among others, were thus reluctant to expand the scope of their analyses beyond the spaces which they had focused on, and thus failed to heed *other* modes of social interactions which might equally contribute to interpersonal relations and political associations.

In this way, the public sphere is imagined in terms of restricted spatial imaginations and limited modes of social interactions. Such a perspective only allows us to examine spaces which are identified and defined in advance, but not to actively locate spaces in which practices take place in non-presupposed ways. Hence, for many theorists, the political ideal of the public sphere seems to reside only in the rational debates located in widely shared physical or discursive spaces as well as those overtly confrontational public protests in landmark urban places (e.g. Mitchell 1996, 2003b). With regard to the civic ideal of the public sphere, on the other hand, social theorists such as Sennett (1977, 1992) often assume an irresolvable tension or a win-lose relationship between the organic and authentic *theatrum mundi* of the city and other modes of interactions in public space. Also, Sennett's examinations

of urban life are confined within a public sphere whose boundaries are delineated by the author *prior* to analyses. As a result, Sennett failed to take into account the ways in which *other* urban spaces or *other* modes of social interactions which were excluded from his analyses could contribute to the construction of meaningful public spheres through practices and actions *from below*.

A similar fixity of interpretation is also manifested in the empiricist conclusion that privatized urban spaces such as shopping malls are essentially deprived of social and political potentials: the category "shopping mall" is analysed as a pre-given and ontologically static "fact" which determines from above social and cultural processes. While the accounts which these studies provided are empirically grounded, they are also epistemologically closed: they failed to take into account the *alternative* ways of forming collective social life and thus foreclosed the possibilities of *other* space-times of participation and practice.

These two analytical problems have led to some unproductive consequences for the study of public space. First, since a large number of studies focused on the ways in which specific spaces and conventional modes of social interactions were regulated, much less effort has been made to examine how people can actually interact with others and engage with public space. Second, since a rigid distinction between exclusion and inclusion has been enacted, most critical analyses of public space simply view public space as a physical container in which certain social processes are located in, or from which others are removed. Burdened with these closed epistemological perspectives, the social and political potentials of public spaces are taken as pre-given and ontologically static and coherent: the public sphere is imagined to be an archipelago of spaces that fit into standard imaginations of democratic and progressive practices in public. In this vein, our imagination of the possibilities that public space can accommodate is severely constrained: any social or political force which destabilizes the well-defined boundary of the public sphere, it seems to us, would suddenly lead to the collapse of the social and political significance of the public realm.

In this book, however, I would like to align my analyses with some other perspectives and approaches which may further enrich our understandings of public space in ways alternative to literatures reviewed in the previous section. To begin with, I advocate an epistemologically more open approach towards public space which focuses on the ways in which space is *actually* practiced and produced by social actors. This approach enables us to examine the processes whereby some spaces are rendered exclusionary under particular social, cultural and political contexts, but at the same time it does not foreclose the efforts to actively locate alternative trajectories and search for unanticipated possibilities of participation, interaction and engagement. Also, this approach underscores that there are diverse ways of social interactions. Different modes of mutual engagement all contribute to the production of social relations and cultural meanings. This approach sees no pre-given *form* or *nature* of public space which determines a priori its social and political values. Instead, I am interested in the multiple geographies and dynamics which emerge from actual social encounters and immediate social relations. As I will argue in Chap. 4, the progressive potentials of public space do not simply

reside in the chances to meet and talk. Rather, a public space which matters in everyday social life is built upon an immense investment of human agencies and labours. It is an ongoing and intense *process* in which social relations are configured, cultural meanings are produced, and identities are negotiated and performed.

Second, I do not view inclusion and exclusion as two mutually separate domains which are epistemologically incompatible with each other. Instead, both inclusion and exclusion will be analysed as embedded in the microcosms of social relations and interactions. They are not simply ideal-type end-states, but always in situ and in flux, produced and practiced through the production of discourses, the negotiation of identities and the configurations of spatial relations. As Watson (2006) research on relationships between public space and difference reveals, socially inclusive public space is by no means separable from the relations of power and the dynamics of difference. Similarly, exclusion does not simply mean the annihilation of the public realm. As Madden (2010) has insightfully contended, privatizing and regulatory regimes create new visions and conceptions of "publicness". Thus, there is a need to analyse in detail the ways in which these visions and conceptions are actually enacted. Above all, in my analyses I do not rule out the possibility of the coexistence of inclusion and exclusion. Also, this book follows the idea that space is not simply the physical setting in which practices of exclusion and inclusion are carried out. Rather, both inclusion and exclusion works *through* the imagination and production of space and spatial relations. Hence, even exclusion and regulation does not necessarily reduce the social and political relevance of public space. In certain cases, inclusion and exclusion can even be mutually constituent. Contradictions between inclusion and exclusion are always extant, but our analyses of the production of space need to be approached from the diverse practices which produce intersecting geographies of inclusion and exclusion at a microscopic level.

In summary, I argue that social and political values of public space are never determined *prior* to social members' active participation in the construction of the public realm. Public space is constantly *made* and remade through engaged practices which produce and construct the social and cultural turfs of space *from below*. What the rhetoric of the end of public space neglects is that real actors in the production and construction of public space can appropriate spaces in a multiplicity of ways and create complex, often unpredicted meanings and social dynamics. Public space is rarely dominated by a single and unidirectional social or political process. On the contrary, it is often a radical juxtaposition of engagement and disengagement, inclusion and exclusion, hegemonic norm and resistance, oppression and care, etc. This is in line with social sciences' ongoing engagement with bottom-up agency which arguably dates to works of de Certeau (1984). But instead of celebrating uncritically and romantically everyday appropriation of urban space, my analyses will be firmly articulated with solid structures of social relations and power as well as the social and political effects these structures produce.

Furthermore, public space is not merely the passive container of political activities and social interactions. Rather, it is always a constituent element of the social and cultural fabrics of city life. Public space may be contested or even rendered exclusionary, but very often it is precisely through conflict and contestation that public space is enacted as an irreducible element in the constitution of civic life and political processes.

In this vein, Kurt Iveson (2007) argues that rather than mapping political and social activities neatly onto specific spaces, we need to engage with a *procedural* conception of public space: public space is not reduced to a fixed set of topographically defined sites in the city. Rather, public space is understood to be any space which is *made* the site of power, political address, or identity performance through political actions and engaged practices. In this conceptualization, no particular urban space has a privileged relation to specific aspects of publicness. When an established geography of public space is destabilized or disrupted, it does not rule out the possibilities of new emergence and new formation, either in the same site or in somewhere else. Sophie Watson (2006, p. 15) also contends that "space is inherently conflictual and implicated in struggles over inclusions and exclusions". She contests pessimistic accounts which lament the loss of a once vibrant public life, in particular those in Mike Davis (1990) now canonical work *City of Quartz*. Contravening the monolithically apocalyptic portraits of contemporary city life, Watson calls for closer examinations of the people who actually inhabit public spaces and the specific sites and ways of interaction "in their finer-grained texture" (*ibid*).

In *For Space*, Doreen Massey (2005) lists three theoretical propositions for a restructuring of our understanding of space. These propositions are not particularly new but can help us ito capture the ways in which space works through practices and complex interactive relations. First, there is an intricate dialectic between the social and the spatial. Space is constituted through connections and interactions. The identities/entities, and the relations between them, constitute and are constituted by spatialities. As Massey (2005, p. 101) so thoughtfully argues, it is not the specific *form* of space which guarantees its social, political and ethical connotations. Instead, what is at stake is the *content* of space, namely the multiple relations through which space is constituted (and also lived). Second, space needs to be viewed "as the sphere of the possibility of the existence of multiplicity in the sense of contemporaneous plurality; as the sphere in which distinct trajectories coexist; as the sphere therefore of coexisting heterogeneity" (p. 9). In Massey's view, there is no trajectory of space which is the single legitimate or the inevitable. Finally, space is always under construction: it is a process rather than a stasis. Space can never be a fully closed system, but demonstrates a radical openness of the future. Space and time are not two mutually exclusive domains, and space is always in the process of emergence and becoming.

This conception of space is in line with the Lefebvrian theorization which focuses on the social production of space (Lefebvre 1991). But it is also more than this. Notably, Massey's second and the third propositions echo with the Deleuzian conception of assemblage which argues that the juxtaposition and alignment of

heterogeneous elements do not only produce stability and fixed patterns, but very often also the possibilities of excess, of transformation, and of becoming (Deleuze and Guattari [1987]2004). As McFarlane (2011, p. 24) emphasizes, to view spaces or spatial relations as assemblage is to reject the spectres of fixity, essence or linear determination: "urban actors, forms or processes are defined less by a pre-given definition and more by the assemblages they enter and reconstitute". McFarlane also suggests that the term assemblage departs from conventional conceptions of space in two ways. First, assemblage does not favour stasis or rigidity. Instead, it is always oriented toward the potential, the possible. In other words, there are always *alternative* ways for us to envisage how our world is co-constituted by the spatial and other events and processes. Second, assemblage is a process of *doing* and *performing*. Spatial and social processes are not passively written onto a fixed template: elements are drawn together at particular junctures but very often these alignments themselves are not stable at all.

Questioning the binary opposition of openness and closure which often dominates our imaginations of place, Massey (2005) writes:

> Each of these space-times [meaning space-times of openness or closure] is relational. Each is constructed out of the articulation of trajectories. But in each case too the range of trajectories which is allowed in is carefully controlled. And each space-time, too, is continually shifting in its construction, being negotiated.

> Developing a relational politics around this aspect of these space-times would mean addressing the nature of their embeddedness in all those distinct, though interlocking, geometries of power. (pp. 179–180)

Related to Massey's relational reading of space-time, Clive Barnett (1999, 2005) works employ a Derridean deconstruction and argue that the political value of identities or processes of difference is not determined a priori by established concepts and definitions. Therefore, inclusion of public space does not necessarily contribute to a good society in all the taken-for-granted ways: it very often involves the redrawing of boundaries and the reproduction of otherness. Similarly, exclusion may not simply lead to the dispossession or even annihilation of space: exclusion may contribute to progressive projects sometimes; but in this book my argument is that because conflict and contestation always unfold *through* the configuration of space, the social centrality, to borrow Hetherington (1998) term, of public space can never be fully annihilated. Space always matters and it is always possible for us to talk about the dialectics between the spatial and the social.

It is of course not my aim to romanticize the agencies of space and social actors at the expense of a critical assessment or normative evaluation of public space. In this book, I employ the assemblage thinking mainly as an epistemological, analytical and methodological orientation which guides my interpretations of the complex dynamics through which space is constructed. Yet, I do not intend to dismiss attention to political economy and consolidated structures of social power (Brenner et al. 2011). Perhaps even structural factors can be deconstructed as assemblages of social actors and material conditions, but it is not my aim to extend

the poststructuralist gesture in my analyses to such an extent. I try to keep a normative and critical edge in our examinations of public space. As Olson and Sayer (2009) have argued, a regime of normativity must always stand. My argument, on the other hand, is simply that the political relevance of public space cannot be unproblematically understood in terms of the binary opposition of exclusion and inclusion. Instead, we need to consider how various processes and possibilities coexist and co-constitute in the production of public space as an assemblage.

2.3.2 The Many Space-Times of Public Space

At an empirical level, a relational and non-essential reading of public space can be approached from various perspectives. As a point of departure, one classic critique of bounded readings of the political and civic ideals of public space is that rather than a romantic realm of unfettered social interaction and idea exchange, public space, and public sphere in general, are always-already contested and full of conflicts, dissonances and struggles. Public space and public sphere are always constituted in agonistic relations—they are always in a state of becoming and emergence, producing exclusion, conflict and contestation across various lines of difference (Watson 2006; Connolly 1998). Indeed, as Collins (2010) suggests, it is more often through agonistic relations rather than harmony that we grasp the complexities of urban processes. Over history, public sphere has never lived up to the promise to include all members of the society. The Greek *agora* and Roman *forum* were only open to a small group of people who were entitled as citizens. Women, slaves and foreigners were strictly excluded from those spaces. Similarly, in Haussmann's Paris the opening of boulevard was followed by the bourgeois class's efforts to privatize street spaces and control the mobility of the urban poor (McLaughlin and Muncie 1999; Harvey 2006).

The bourgeois public sphere extolled and advocated by Habermas is also a highly exclusive one: in this paradigm of rational political negotiation only members of the bourgeois class have access to the political forum of the liberal democracy (Habermas 1989; Howell 1993; Fraser 1990). Besides, many critics have pointed out that the Habermasian model of public sphere is, to a considerable extent, a masculine one. Feminist scholars have argued that women were usually excluded from rational political deliberation and strictly constrained within the private domain (Deutsche 1996; Fraser 1990, 1991; Bondi 1998; Marston 1990; Staeheli 1996). Pateman (1989) once pointed out that liberal public sphere was held up by a masculinist assumption that women and what they symbolized should be excluded since the disorderly irrationality of women would erode rational political debate and idea exchange. Hence, Benhabib (1996, pp. 205–206) argues explicitly that "all hitherto 'publics' have rested on the exclusion of certain groups of individuals from participation or deliberation": the *public* itself is an ambiguous term implying inclusion as well as exclusion, and the realization of a public must be dependent on the boundary between the "we" and the "they".

Recognizing the inherently exclusive nature of the public sphere, Nancy Fraser (1990) proposes the concept of counter-publics—a multitude of social and political collectives which contests the exclusionary nature of the bourgeois public sphere and celebrates alternative political behaviours and social norms. Fraser promotes a new regime of public politics where "arrangements that accommodate contestations among a plurality of competing publics better promote the ideal of participatory parity than does a single, comprehensive, overarching public" (p. 66). Fraser's theses forcefully contend that in the complex webs and dynamics of social life there are many *publics*, rather than a single, unitary public: the counterpublic political spheres provide subordinate social groups with the opportunity to speak out in "one's own voice" to construct, enact and express diverse social positions and cultural identities.

Drawing from the existing literature, I would like to summarize a number of typologies and geographies of public space to further destabilize the rhetoric of the end of public space, and summarize how these insights will inform my empirical analyses in the following chapters. First, we need to note that despite all those regimes of privatization and revanchist regulation, there are still engaged uses and rich practices in public spaces. Such practices emerge not only in the conventional political forums or civic spaces, but in all types of spaces that can be appropriated for a variety of uses and purposes. There are no fixated uses associated with particular types of spaces—a space may have its primary or legitimate functions, but as Lefebvre (1991) reminds us, every space is inherently a human *oeuvre*. It is the assemblage of multiple layers of meanings and texts—a palimpsest which is always open to writing and rewriting. The burgeoning literature on young people's appropriation of public spaces in the forms of parkouring, skateboarding and skating is just one example of grassroots' social members' agency in rewriting or even reversing the dominant narratives of urban landscapes. Other examples can be found in Shields (1989) and Tyndall (2008) counter-narratives to the apocalyptic depictions of social life in the shopping malls (e.g. Hopkins 1990; Goss 1993, 1999). In these two studies, the authors analysed mall visitors' multiple spatial narratives and spatial performances not constrained by the dominant definition of consumerist identity and how unbounded understandings of the "publicness" of the malls emerged from engagement and practices.

In Chaps. 4, 5 and 6, my analyses will all focus on grassroots social members' active practices in banal urban spaces. A place for leisure may be the predominant definition of these spaces, but it is also interesting to see how ordinary urban people construct their own webs of social relations and cultural meanings, whether for the performance of identities, for the negotiation of "abnormal" homosexuality, or for the production and reproduction of political attitudes. In all these cases, social members and cultural identities are not only *allowed to be seen* in the public. Their spatial practices unfold in ways which an aesthetic of visibility cannot sufficiently account for. As Loretta Lees (1997, 2001) once commented, the widely accepted understandings and representations of any particular public space are by no means exhaustive of its social and cultural energies and potentials. Instead, we need to acknowledge that meanings of space come to realization only through our active

inhabitation of it—"the 'happening' of understanding is something performed by investigators engaging actively with the world around them and in the process changing them both" (Lees 2001, p. 57).

Second, it is also essential to note that every space is inherently ideological. This conviction leads to two important viewpoints. To begin with, there is no absolutely ideal public space which is completely free of relations of power and the inter-ruptive effects of difference. The political and civic ideals associated with public space can certainly be achieved, but they are equally implicated in the constitution of social relations and power. More importantly, the management and regulation of public space across lines of difference are by no means new phenomena (see e.g. Marne 2001; Sevilla-Buitrago 2014). As Cresswell (1996) well-known theory of place reminds us, the social and cultural construction of place is always-already situated in a complex system of discourses, knowledge and norms. Social members can of course contest the entrenched structure of hegemonic knowledge, but in doing so we are creating new possibilities and configurations of discourses, nar-ratives and knowledge, rather than eradicating them altogether. The works of Sibley (1995) and Watson (2006) also argue explicitly that our complex understandings of, and attitudes towards difference are always projected onto spatial practices: the strangers and others are often the mirror images of the part of the self which we fear and detest. Hence, Di Masso (2012, p. 124) points out that "behaviour in public is regulated by normative representations that tell us what actions are (in)appropriate, which spatial uses are (not) expected under specific circumstances, and who is (not) a legitimate public within the confines of "normal" coexistence".

In his analyses of the social life in Rio de Janeiro's coastal beaches, James Freeman (2002; 2008) brings to our attention how an assumedly democratic space of unconstrained interaction and participation is in fact crosscut by subtle social boundaries enacted around the axes of race and class (also. Godfrey and Arguinzoni 2012; Aptekar 2015; Keul 2015). In Chap. 4, I will analyse the moments of identity performance in Chinese people's everyday public space. While the picture that I will present looks fairly benign and socially inclusive, it is not a fixed pattern. Some of the relations emerging from spatial practices are socially progressive and even facilitate mutual care and acknowledgement, but in other cases certain relations are also shaped by entrenched prejudices, discriminations and social inequalities.

In the meantime, however, it may also be added that no moral judgement on inclusion or exclusion should be made *prior* to a closer scrutiny of the immediate social, cultural and political dynamics. Exclusion is not naturally the equivalent to the exercise of hegemonic power (Staeheli and Mitchell 2009). Iveson (2003) study of McIvers Ladies' Baths in Sydney, for example, presents a counter-discourse to the monolithic assumption that exclusion necessarily leads to the annihilation of difference. Iveson's analysis shows that the women bath users' insistence on the exclusion of the baths to male users is based on a gendered claim that the women's right to using the baths and forming a public sphere free of masculine intervention must be maintained through a certain degree of enclosure.

In Chap. 7, I will analyse how the regulation of public space works within a terrain of ideologies and discourses. With that case, I want to show that the

representations and practices of spaces are the constituent elements, rather than simply the outcomes, of the structures of social relations and power. In this sense, the practices of regulation make public space no less central to our civic and political engagements. Instead of envisaging ideal public spaces free of regulatory practices, I suggest that a more productive perspective concentrates on how ideological regimes operate to reconstitute the social and cultural fabrics in microscopic spaces and how these ideological operations speak back to the wider structures of social relations and power. As John Allen (2006) argues, the regulatory power is not always in the form of coercive force: very often it resides in the taken-for-granted understandings and representations of space, the material designs of space (see also Kärrholm 2008, 2012) and even the practitioners of space being motivated to self-regulate.

In this vein, it can be an interesting terrain of research to investigate how rationales for the regulation of space are differently configured under specific social, cultural and political conditions. For example, the collaborative works of geographers Mark Jayne, Sarah Holloway and Gill Valentine have presented interesting accounts of how drinking behaviours in the public and the private are closely intertwined with the gender-based public/private division (Jayne et al. 2006, 2008; Holloway et al. 2009; see also Kneale 2001). In cases of this nature, the management of public space is not out of business interests or revanchist oppression of the disorderly, but operates alongside the lines of traditions, moral convictions and cultural identities. Yet, these subtle cultural and ideological operations are intrinsically political and productive of both social inequalities and relations of domination (e.g. Alhadar and McCahill 2011; Anjaria 2009; Popke and Ballard 2004; Hubbard 2004; Jackson 1988, 1992). If we engage with the questions such as why the French do not like the Islamic headscarves in the public (Bowen 2007), we find that even when space is not thoroughly enclosed and everyone is legally entitled to be present in space, public space is far from a tranquil heaven but always ideological laden and contested. This point will be reflected in both Chaps. 4 and 5.

Sometimes, rationales for the regulation of public space may even disrupt conventional understandings of law, policy, right or citizenship. For example, the regulation of homeless people and other marginalized social groups is not a unitary policy field even within the Western context. As Johnsen and Fitzpatrick (2010) point out, the regulation of homeless people in England goes beyond the revanchist logic and has indeed taken into account the wellbeing of the targeted social groups (see also Atkinson 2003). In Chapter 7, I will also engage with Nicholas Blomley (2011) recent theoretical intervention into the constitution of police power. In this model of space policing, the discourses in urban policies avoid making any explicit references to the questions of power, politics and right. Instead, public space is defined as merely functional space for utilitarian purposes, and the exclusion of those behaviours which do not fit with the utilitarian vision of space is justified on the basis of technological rationality rather than legal definitions of right and citizenship (also Blomley 2007a, b, 2010).

Third and related to the first and second points, we should also note that public space is very often the juxtaposition of regulation *and* active practices. In many

cases, social members carve out possibilities of engagement even in face of hegemonic regulatory regimes. On the one hand, spatial practices are often employed as the forceful resistance to dominant powers. We must be aware, as Mitchell (2003a, 2017) argues, that the democratic ideal of the public space as the centre of participatory urban life is never guaranteed. Instead, it must be *won* through different forms of struggles. Hence Iveson (2010b) comments that critical analysis of the social construction of public space must go beyond exposing the dichotomous relations of domination/subordination and look more closely at the agency of the marginalized social groups to creatively mobilize the space as the venue of resistance. As Staeheli (2010) points out, each of these struggles stages a resistance to established patterns of order, and to achieve the aim of democratization these struggles must rely on disruption, chaos and disorder. Indeed, as Paddison and Sharp (2007) argue, it is precisely from these conflicts and struggles that we can conclude that public space is still intrinsically essential to both everyday social life and the cultivation of grassroots political agency.

But in the same time, social members' responses to hegemonic norms and moral standards are often more complicated than the unidirectional logic of resistance. The public space is an ongoing dialectic of inclusion and exclusion. In the social construction of public space, power is contingently produced through social relations between multiple publics (Fraser 1990; Sharp et al. 2000). How do people in the public differently orient their subject positions and behaviours to negotiate the fluid boundaries between normal and abnormal, right and wrong, acceptable and undesirable? This answer can be as complex as the diverse configurations of social processes themselves. In some cases, we see people carefully negotiating the dominant rules and norms of public space to reorient their behaviours rather than directly acting against hegemonic structures of power (Young 2003; Driskell et al. 2008). Mona Domosh (1998) description of women's tactical transgressions in negotiating the upper-class values inscribed in the streets of New York City is one classic example of this micro-politics of public space. In other cases, however, social groups which are labelled deviant and disorderly may even conform to the dominant norms of space by rendering their behaviours more "normal" and "acceptable" (Nolan 2003; Spinney 2010). In Chap. 5, I will present an analysis of Chinese gay men's spatial practices in a renowned urban park. Throughout my ethnographic accounts I will attempt to argue that although gay men's presence in the public certainly challenges the dominant public/private divide prescribed by hetero-normativity, their negotiation with the norms and moral standards of space enhances, rather than challenges, cultural marginality of homosexuality in the society.

Finally, it comes to the issue of political expression in the public. It might be true that with the dominance of mass circulated popular culture the bourgeoisie class or a clearly defined social community is nowadays less interested in rational political debates in a shared political forum. But at the same time, we need to note that public space is inherently open to political expressions. Space is rendered the centre of ideas and attitudes not only because it acts as the material setting for political expressions to take place, but also because it catalyses the experience, negotiation

and production of political attitudes and identities. As Mitchell (1995) argues, the right to free speech or being seen in the public is not a privilege naturally attached to public spaces. Rather, it is *won* through the contested and competing visions of *what* can be said in *where*. In other words, we need to pay attention to the ways in which space is *made* political through engaged actions and practices. Very often these practices of space do not fit seamlessly with the Habermasian model of public sphere. Political ideas are exchanged through "serious talks" as well as the moments of joy, festivity and even carnival. Such spatial practices do not necessarily take place in those conventional venues of political debates and they are also featured by complex, often irrational ways to exchange, negotiate and contest political meanings.

Eric Laurier and Chris Philo (2007), for example, provide an intriguing account of the English coffee houses as the shared social realms of gathering, communicating and political debating. Questioning the Habermasian assumption that civic public sphere is built upon the rational-critical principles of bourgeois class their study presents "the rhythms of a typical day spent in a busy coffee-house, punctuated by the differing constituencies of coffee-drinkers who arrive at different hours, each inscribing upon the space their own discursive ways of conversing" (p. 260). Political identities are neither unitary nor static—they are continually asserted, contested and produced in differently configured interactive moments. In a similar way, Cooper (2006) also challenges the assumption of rational communicative actions underlying the model of liberal democracy. In his study of the Speakers' Corner in Hyde Park, Cooper forcefully demonstrates that political negotiation in the Speakers' Corner was far from linear and rationally oriented. On the contrary, it was a highly diversified and contested field saturated with proselytizing, political ranting, verbal nonsense, personal insults, play combats, and random encounters with the strangers who are not necessarily included in the same political community. Cooper's research foregrounds the carnivalesque and comic nature of the Speaker's Corner as a lively public sphere filled with the negotiations of difference and diverse ideas.

In Chap. 6, I will provide an analysis of how political identities and attitudes are not simply transported to an established political forum, but performed and reproduced through grassroots social members' negotiations with various cultural symbols and their active participation in the production of political meanings. In a series of works connecting the reconfiguration of spatial relations to the reshaping of political identities, Mitchell (1996, 2002, 2003b, 2005), Mitchell and Staeheli (2005) and D'Arcus (2003; 2004; 2006) have very well demonstrated that spaces or spatial relations are the constituent elements, rather than the physical containers, of political agency and identities. In particular, Mitchell (1996, 2003b) and Mitchell and Staeheli (2005) adept analysis of the "public forum doctrine" unpacks how political expression is contingent on the fine-grained parsing of spatialities. Echoing this stance, Chap. 6 will elaborate on the cultural and political energies immanent to spatial practices and examine the performance and reproduction of political attitudes in a non-bourgeoisie, non-rational political forum.