

Last Revised: June 1st, 2006.

Enacting Public Space: Arendt, citizenship and the city

Commons Conference: April 29, 2006

Mark Willson

In *The Human Condition* (1958), Hannah Arendt conceives of the public realm as a space produced by particular forms of citizen interaction. Where citizens are willing to engage in the risk and unpredictability of mutual self-disclosure, she suggests, they benefit from the self-discovery that comes through interaction with previously unknown others, and solidify the bonds between citizens that produce and sustain a space for this public form of interaction. I start with Arendt here for two reasons: 1) she offers a highly substantive account of *what public space is*, an account which provides some insights into substantially differing understandings of public space from those seen in some contemporary political theory, and 2) her account of public space as constituted by highly participatory and unpredictable acts offers a way of seeing important forms of democratic citizenship practices in city activities that are normally regarded as relatively insignificant forms of political action. These closely related questions, of how we conceive of public space and of how we conceive of its production through the relationships between citizens and their surroundings, are useful to look into, as they impact what types of public spaces are recognized and envisioned, and how they are strived for and produced.

I will open up the questions of what public space is and how it is produced by outlining the approaches of some contemporary political theorists to what they identify as the political implications of the *privatization of public space*. Selected works of Margaret Kohn (2003; 2004), Susan Bickford (2000) and Benjamin Barber (2001) are indicative of an increased interest in the spatiality of politics within political science. They share a

concern that the loss of public space is associated with a decline in citizenship practices conducive to democracy, and a sense that these practices can be improved through changes to the structures and regulations of city spaces. These issues, while somewhat new within political theory, have been addressed in depth by urban theorists concerned with the relationships between cities and city inhabitants. Urban theory points to three qualities of city space that help in assessing and stretching the limits of the approaches within political theory outlined above: 1) city spaces are never constituted only by the built environment, the material structures of buildings, parks, streets, as well as the regulations and codes which govern them, 2) these structures and their regulation do not wholly determine the actions of and relationships between citizens, and 3) these spaces are constantly in flux, a result of the dynamic processes that produce them.

Through Hannah Arendt's unique vision of the public realm and with reference to examples of local Victoria street activities, implications of these approaches to public space will be explored. As a further structuring aid, and to allude to some of the urban theory informing my approach, I will distinguish the three aspects of this study using Edward Soja's description of three approaches to the study of city space: Firstspace to identify the materiality of contemporary approaches to public space in political theory, Secondspace to identify the idea and imaginary of a public realm in Arendt's thought, and Thirdspace to describe public as a dynamic "lived space," which I highlight with reference to *Reclaim the Streets* (RTS) and *Critical Mass* appropriations of city spaces (Soja, 2000:11). The general trajectory of this argument is that elements of Arendt's political philosophy and local street activities shed light on a public space and citizenship

produced and understood not only through recourse to city structures and regulations, but also through the agency of average citizens in their everyday activities.

The Materiality of Firstspace

Recent works by Margaret Kohn (2003; 2004), Susan Bickford (2000) and Benjamin Barber (2001) highlight face-to-face interactions as essential means of encouraging solidarity and mutual recognition among citizens. All three address desirable citizenship practices as an ethic of public-spiritedness among people, involving a capacity to engage with diverse others and to maintain an openness to difference, which Margaret Kohn describes as “the communication and mutual recognition needed to act together as citizens”(Kohn, 2004:18). Face-to-face interactions are central to this conception because of the non-verbal and involuntary effects of direct contact with others:

Even when members of different groups do not engage in formal political discussion, exposure to others may help offset the mutual fear and suspicion fostered by segregation. It is difficult to feel solidarity with strangers if we never inhabit places that are shared with people who are different. (Kohn, 2004:8)

As Bickford points out, direct contact not only helps to minimize fear of difference, but also impacts whose identities and perspectives are recognized and taken seriously:

And who we “happen” to see regularly as we move through the world has an influence on who we think of as citizens and who we think to engage with as citizens—in other words, whose perspectives must be taken into account when making political decisions. (Bickford, 2000: 363)

This conception of citizenship, rooted in notions of mutual recognition learned and habituated through direct physical interactions, is not uncontested. Will Kymlicka and Wayne Norman describe a range of approaches to citizenship arising from an early 1990s emphasis on a “thick” understanding of “citizenship-as-desirable-activity” as opposed to

what is described as a “thin” post-Second World War emphasis on “citizenship-as-legal-status” (Kymlicka & Norman, 1994:353-4). They categorize this renewed interest in the duties of citizenship, as opposed to a sole emphasis on the rights of citizens, as those of the New Right, emphasizing citizenship virtues of initiative and self-reliance; of civic republican, participatory democrat and civil society theorists’ emphases on virtues of mutual obligation gained through citizen participation and interaction; and liberal virtue theorists’ emphases on virtues of loyalty, open-mindedness, work ethic and willingness to engage in public discourse, gained through liberal education (355-366). According to Kymlicka and Norman, these approaches share, despite their other differences, a resistance to “private” or “passive” models of citizenship defined solely by the provision of full and equal membership to individuals through increasing citizenship rights, identified primarily in the work of T.H. Marshall (354).

Though the model of face-to-face interaction outlined above operates within the realm of the civic republican, participatory democrat and civil society approaches highlighted above, Kohn’s, Bickford’s and Barber’s concerns regarding private modes of citizenship are not rooted in questions of rights versus duties or in conceptions of citizenship within political thought. Their concern, rather, is that a market-driven logic of consumption and security in the management of city space discourages interactions between radically differing citizens and encourages privatized experiences of citizenship. Recognizing the range of approaches to “thick” citizenship, and the various political drives behind these approaches, my aim here is not to critique the face-to-face model of citizenship pursued by Kohn, Bickford and Barber, though pertinent critiques exist,¹ or to

¹ Iris Marion Young is highly critical of the “privileging of face-to-face relations” as a democratic model, due to what she suggests are the spatial and temporal exclusions they generate (Young, 1990:227). Young’s

expand on their accounts of the privatized experience of citizenship. My aim, rather, is to point to ways in which the notions of public space they pursue may constrict their goals of promoting this participatory model of citizenship in the everyday interactions of city inhabitants.

Kohn approaches public space as a cluster concept, and suggests that key core criteria are ownership, accessibility and intersubjectivity, as public space tends to be thought of as a space that is “owned by the government, accessible to everyone without restriction, and/or fosters communication and interaction” (Kohn, 2004:11). The idea here is that city spaces will tend to exhibit some, but often not all of these properties, and that a space can be deemed more or less public to the extent that it meets more or less of these criteria. For Kohn, Barber and Bickford, the increasing similarities between privately and publicly owned spaces—as spaces like the mall become a primary locus for citizen interaction (Barber, 2000:211; Kohn, 2004:70) and as downtown commercial districts are increasingly managed according to the “logic of the shopping mall” (Kohn, 2004:82; also see Bickford, 2000:361)—makes the second two criteria, accessibility and intersubjectivity, more significant markers for assessing the publicness of space. They identify this privatization of public space largely through the impact of city structures and regulations on the accessibility and intersubjectivity of areas where citizens interact. Bickford points to limits to accessibility in security guards’ monitoring of the mall, discouraging use by those identified as non-consumers by their age, race or class. She also points to sprinkler systems, a lack of protection from sun or rain, a lack of public

concern here is primarily with the exclusiveness of small autonomous communities, and so remains useful for, though less damning of, Kohn’s, Barber’s and Bickford’s interest in physical interactions in the non-sovereign space of the contemporary city.

toilets and benches designed to discourage lying down, as examples of city structures which limit accessibility by narrowing the ways city space can be used (Bickford, 2000:361). Barber highlights the impact structure has on the potential for interaction, suggesting that the architecture of malls “is designed to impede sitting or standing around and keep the traffic flow moving into the shops” (Barber, 2001:204). A market-driven logic of consumption is identified in these exclusions or difference and narrowing of interactions within city spaces, and the core concern is that this privatized logic governing city spaces negatively impacts the citizenship practices of the citizens who inhabit this space.

As Kohn suggests, “[b]y structuring people’s perceptions, interactions, and dispositions, spatial practices and architectural markers can mitigate or intensify ingrained social dynamics.” Where city spaces encourage segregation and discourage interaction the risks of being approached by a stranger—of being confronted with unsettling or unfamiliar perspectives and identities—are minimized, allowing privileged citizens to remain isolated from marginal viewpoints and identities (Kohn, 2004: 8). The homogeneity of these spaces allows a sedimentation of identities which works against the solidarity of citizens:

We are no longer moving with and negotiating around diverse strangers in a shared material world, but rather with a certain kind of bounded space that determines who we are and what we perceive. (Bickford, 2000: 363)

And it is not just exposure to difference but the nature of city spaces themselves which shape identities. Barber argues that where space is structured to meet the needs of consumers, inhabitants are encouraged to think of themselves as customers rather than as “neighbors and citizens” (Barber, 2001:213). For these authors, then, the privatization of

space leads to a degradation of face-to-face interactions between citizens and the types of relationships and identities they enable, minimizing the possibility of producing forms of mutual recognition and understanding necessary for a successful democratic politics. The city as a public space of spontaneity, diversity (Barber, 2001:211-213), discomfort, disruption and provocation (Kohn, 2004: 57-63) is increasingly managed as a space of “control, security, sameness and predictability” (Bickford, 2000:362), and citizens themselves mirror these privatizing tendencies in the ways they interact.

While these approaches identify ways in which a privatization of city spaces has the capacity to impact citizenship practices, the emphasis on structures and regulations also serves to limit how public space is defined and the types of actions that are pursued to preserve or renew this space. Bickford emphasizes “redesigning the institutional context in which citizens’ interactions and decisions take place” as a means of re-publicizing citizenship practices (Bickford, 2000:356), and suggests one way of doing so involves ensuring that municipality and school district boundaries are redrawn in a way that produces overlapping borders, discouraging the reproduction of homogeneous populations (368). Barber, with a similar interest in encouraging interactions between a wide range of citizens, highlights redesigning the mall as a “Mall-town Square” (Barber, 2001:215), easily accessible by transit to all citizens, and encouraging diversity and spontaneous interaction through the introduction of a broad range of non-consumer services, seating and open spaces, and varied cultural events (212).

There are two limitations in these approaches to institutional contexts. First, while this emphasis on changing structures and regulations seem to offer a way of combating one problem these authors outline, the accessibility of spaces and the segregation of

citizens, it is not clear that this approach offers a way of dealing with the second issue, that of privatized ethic among citizens that involves a distaste for, and unwillingness to engage with, radically differing others. The question here is whether having citizens in the same spaces with each other necessarily, or even usually, means that these citizens will be compelled to have significant interactions with one another. Institutional modifications seem ill-suited to adequately address such questions of public culture.

A second limitation is in the accessibility and degree of participation fostered by the means used to bring about these institutional changes. Though Bickford acknowledges that if “institutional change is not to be a nondemocratic version of social engineering, it has to be the result of democratic processes and public contestation,” she does not offer clarification on how such a democratic and participatory planning process might come about (Bickford, 2000:370). Her interest lies more in the participatory citizenship practices that might result from such planning than in the inclusiveness and accessibility of the process itself. Barber follows a similar tack, drawing his recommendations for rebuilding public space from the Agora Coalition, a New-Jersey-based “group of architects, planners, social scientists, developers, vendors, and state government officials” (Barber, 2001:214). Though the recommendations of this group may facilitate substantively public interactions within the mall, the degree to which these changes and their implementation reflect the interests and involvement of the citizens they are designed to serve is unclear. Highly participatory citizenship practices are the ends of these projects, yet a key moment for such citizen agency—involvement in the production of shared space itself—is largely unaddressed. Kohn’s remark that “mass demonstrations may still be the best way to inform leaders of the intensity of citizens’

priorities” draws attention to a more expansive and accessible means by which city structures and regulations might be altered by citizens (Kohn, 2004: 44). Like Barber’s and Bickford’s approaches, though, such acts are implicated in a chain mediated by government authority: from pressure or planning groups to government; from government to public-oriented changes to the structures and regulation of city spaces; and from the publicization of city space to enabling solidarity and mutual recognition through face-to-face citizenship practices. The qualities or implications of the citizenship practices at the beginning of this chain, and how they might directly engage with public space, are not attended to. These questions, of the institutional capacity to promote a public culture, and of the role of active citizen engagement in the direct production of public space as opposed to the role of public space in the production of citizen engagement, point to a limit to what these approaches offer in terms of understanding the relationship between the production of space and citizenship practices. While these approaches offer strong accounts of the shift from public to private spaces, they do not capture all that is happening in the production of public space, nor do they capture the central and highly participatory roles of average citizens in this production.

The emphasis on the structure and regulation of city spaces outlined above can be understood as what Edward Soja describes as a Firstspace perspective. He describes this as a material emphasis on “measurable and mappable” aspects of the city and urban life, from physical structures—described as the ‘built environment’—to such measurable things as land use, cultural identity, and class differences (Soja, 2000:8-11). As Soja suggests, to distinguish this perspective is not to suggest that it is less relevant than others, but only that it tends to capture only one element of a complex process of the

generation of city space. He suggests that where city space has “tended to be viewed primarily as an architecturally built environment, a physical container for human activities, shaped and reshaped over time by professional or vernacular citybuilders...[t]his has concentrated attention on the distilled material forms of urban spatiality, too often leaving aside its more dynamic, generative, developmental, and explanatory qualities” (Soja, 2000: 9). Urban theorists point to two other aspects of these broader processes that aid in looking at public space and citizenship in a slightly differing fashion. Manuel Castells argues that “spatial forms do not determine social relationships” (Castells, 1984:235), but rather that social activities and conflicts are the “producers of society, of culture, of space” (2003:66). For Castells, spatial forms neither determine society nor reflect it. Space, rather, “*is* society” (Castells, 1984:235-7). The argument here is that society and space are so closely intertwined as to be indistinguishable as separate elements. Following from this, Warren Magnusson points to a tendency within social scientific approaches to politics to locate politics solely within the locus of state action, with little attention paid to the politics of everyday life. The politics of everyday life can be seen in the range day-to-day activities, including those of social movement which, as Magnusson points out, “lay claim to a political space that may or may not conform to the spaces allowed by the existing system of government” (Magnusson, 1996:9-10). Significant here is how citizens themselves engage with and produce the spaces they inhabit in unpredictable and creative ways, often beyond that which can be anticipated or initiated by city planning. City space, from this perspective, is 1) not made up only of the built environment and its management, 2) indistinguishable from social relationships and, as such, does not wholly determine them, 3) not tied to government

authority and planning and, as such, is a space of flux, a product of dynamic social processes.

This criteria provokes a slightly differing and more immediate perspective on the lobbying and movement activities described by Barber, Bickford and Kohn, where the face-to-face citizenship practices they value are more fully implicated in the production of public spaces. Where public space is not defined solely by its materiality and its relationship to government authority the activities of citizens can, in themselves, be seen as productive of public space insofar as they foster interactions and spur participation among citizens. While there is a broadening of the terms of public space at work here, how is this more immediate, non-institutional and non-state, production of public space to be conceptualized? According to Soja, essential elements of this everyday activity are citizens' *ideas* and *enactions* of public space.

Arendt's public realm as a Secondspace

Soja describes Secondspace as the "urban imaginary," a "*conceived* space of the imagination" which impacts urban experiences and behaviors (Soja, 2000:11). Arendt is useful here because of her colourful account of the role of ideas, in senses of self, of the other and particularly of the space "in-between," in the production of a vibrant public realm (Arendt,1958:10). For brevity's sake, Arendt's unique approach to the loss of both public and private space through the rise of a pseudo-public, market-dominated space she describes as the social (33), and her association of this rise with the dominance of labor and work as the primary forms of modern human activity will not be addressed here. Emphasis is placed instead on her conception of this threatened public space as a space of

face-to-face interaction, and on the production of this space through intersubjective citizen activity rooted in: 1) the courage to engage in unpredictable actions, 2) a willingness to retain an identity open to change through interaction, and 3) a capacity to engage in public interactions without a clear sense of material gains or accomplishments, or what Arendt describes the instrumental drive to achieve ends.

In *The Human Condition* (1958), Hannah Arendt describes the essential problem of modern life as “world-alienation,” or the loss of worldliness from human activity (Arendt, 1958:6). The problem Arendt identifies is that where reality is multifaceted and many-sided, worldliness can only be constituted through a plurality of citizen perspectives which, through interaction with one another, “constitutes reality” (Arendt, 1958:50):

Without being talked about by men and without housing them, the world would not be a human artifice but a heap of unrelated things to which each isolated individual was at liberty to add one more object... (Arendt, 204)

For Arendt, the greatest danger to this mutually constituted reality is the possibility that one perspective or goal could come to dominate citizens’ interactions: “The end of the common world has come when it is seen only under one aspect and is permitted to present itself in only one perspective” (58). To keep this mutual constitution of reality open, Arendt draws from an image of the classical Greek agora as a space of active, highly participatory and face-to-face interactions to theorize citizen interactions rooted in unpredictability. Arendt highlights the world-making and self-making capacities that come from “being seen and heard by others,” which she describes as a special sort of ‘action’ (57). She describes this action as a peculiar form of face-to-face interaction and highly visible words and deeds, valuable because of their potential disclosing and

“revelatory” character:

This unpredictability of outcome is closely related to the revelatory character of action and speech, in which one discloses one’s self without ever either knowing himself or being able to calculate beforehand whom he reveals. (192)

Insofar as we never know exactly what we will say or do in the presence of others, or how these actions will be taken, Arendt highlights how citizens have the capacity, through such interactions, to continuously enact their identities both through the unpredictability of their own publicly visible acts and through comparison with the acts of others (179).

Like the identities of individual citizens, the locus for this interaction is also unfixed, produced through the actions of citizens. According to Arendt, when citizens engage in such disclosing and revelatory interactions, they form an “in-between” (182) space or collective “power” (204) that exists where citizens themselves create and maintain a shared public space for further interactions:

Power preserves the public realm and the space of appearance, and as such it is also the lifeblood of the human artifice, which, unless it is the scene of action and speech, of the web of human affairs and relationships and the stories engendered by them, lacks its ultimate *raison d’être*. (Arendt, 1958:204)

Arendt is interested in this collective constitution of public space because of what she describes as the potential for “beginnings” (178): new and original aspects of collective life that are brought about only where relationships among citizens are constantly evolving, rooted in contestation between a multiplicity of perspectives which are never fully resolved. And she highlights the courage and initiative required of citizens to engage with the multiple unknowns of self, the space between citizens, and the future (186).

The final element of Arendt’s notion of public action to be addressed here is her

controversial exclusion of goal-oriented activity from legitimate politics. Though Arendt's exclusions of the necessities of labor and the instrumentality of work from substantively public action at times act as serious bars to questions of social justice,² her thoughts regarding the activities of the *Students for a Democratic Society* (SDS) in the 1960s provide one indication of a less exclusive emphasis on non-goal-oriented action in her work. In *On Violence* (1970), Arendt describes student activists as "everywhere characterized by sheer courage, an astounding will to action, and by a no less astounding confidence in the possibility of change"(Arendt,1970:118). Arendt is particularly impressed by the activities of the SDS, and she commends the "disinterested and usually highly moral claims of the white rebels" (121). This disinterest and morality is likely tied to the SDS's *Port Huron Statement* (1962), which involves a central argument for the re-creation of the public realm in terms of participatory democracy (121). Though the actions of this group were heavily charged with strategic and goal-oriented claims, such as active protest of the Vietnam war (Miller, 1987:284), they nonetheless seem to meet Arendt's criteria for disclosing speech and public action. To Arendt, their goal-oriented claims do not appear to wholly constitute their actions, which also include the strengthening of a public space for further, and improved, public interactions. This suggests that Arendt may not have been interested in a total rejection of all goals from public interaction, but rather held a strong sense that an interest in constituting public space itself must be a central component of all public action.³ It is this aspect of her

² See Arendt's 'Reflections on Little Rock' (1959) for her disapproval of the US government's involvement in desegregation, or Bonnie Honig (1993) on Arendt's aversion to the raced and gendered politics of the body.

³ In the context of 'On Violence,' this looser definition of public action continues to involve questionable exclusions from legitimate public activity, such as Arendt's wholesale condemnation of the Black Power movement (1970:121).

thought, rather than her emphasis on strict definitions of proper politics, that is significant here.

Arendt's notion of the unpredictability and world-making capacity of action, rooted in very specific forms of interaction between citizens, offers a conceptual approach to the production of public space distinctly tied to the activities and initiatives of citizens rather than to planning processes associated with more structured government authority. It also offers a vivid image of public space as inseparable from, and produced by, a shared ethic of citizenship. In the next section, I look specifically at how citizenship practices within the city engage enact an Arendtian unpredictability, openness of identity and emphasis on public interaction as an end in itself, in their uses of city streets. Emphasis here is on the ways citizens, through everyday activities, actively produce and reproduce citizenship practices fundamental to the existence of substantively public spaces.

Thirdspace as the enacting of Arendtian citizenship practices

Distinct from the Firstspace of *measurable and mappable* aspects of cityspace, and from the Secondspace *conceptions* of cityspace, Soja describes Thirdspace as a “lived space, a simultaneously real and imagined, actual and virtual, locus of individual and collective experience and agency” (Soja, 2000:11). Soja envisions this approach to space as encompassing both first- and second-space approaches, in its attentiveness to the complex relationships between images of space, actions in space and relationships with physical surroundings which are always sites of “conflict and resistance” (11):

This process of producing spatiality or “making geographies” begins with the body, with the construction and performance of the self, the human subject, as a distinctively spatial entity involved in a complex relation with our surroundings (6).

Though Magnusson points to social movements in general—as essentially pluralistic, impermanent, inclusive and unbounded—as involved in the production of highly democratic political spaces (Magnusson, 1996:68), I highlight two specific activities here that, because of their mode of organization, offer particularly clear examples of citizen activities which have the potential to promote intersubjective interactions among radically differing citizens: *Reclaim the Streets* (RTS) parties and *Critical Mass* bicycling events.

Both RTS and Critical Mass are urban activities common to cities on an international scale. RTS began as a reclaiming of motorways in London in the mid-1990s using music and festive activities, and quickly spread to other cities as a mode of political action (Day, 2005:25). Critical Mass rides, with origins in early-1990s San Francisco, entail large groups of cyclists meeting monthly at a designated location to engage in short-term appropriations of city streets. Victoria has also been a site for these activities. Critical Mass rides occur at the traditional time of the last Friday of every month, beginning at Centennial Square. Events occurring along the logic of Reclaim the Streets parties are more difficult to track, as they do not tend to be regularized events either in space or in time. Victoria’s most well-publicized RTS event was that of May 16, 1999 where one of Victoria’s tourist-oriented streets, Government street, was appropriated for several hours between the blocks of Fort and View (Harnett,1999: A1).

Several characteristics associated with the decentralized modes by which these activities are organized make them interesting models for thinking about the role of

small-scale acts in the publicization of citizenship practices and city spaces. Richard Day uses the term “newest social movements” (Day, 2005:8) to describe “strategies and tactics” that differ from the new social movements of the 1970s and 1980s. Three key differences he identifies in these activities are their disinterest in targeting the state, either to take or to influence state power (8), their non-hierarchical forms of organization, and their engagement in direct action (50). The de-centralized means of organizing RTS and Critical Mass actions and the lack of a fixed state target ensure that, despite the historical roots of these actions, the goals, messages and targets participants bring to respective events will vary over time and space. And insofar as these activities engage in direct action—in *uses* of city space of which a primary purpose is the *use* itself—these events differ from traditional protest activity in the sense that they do not necessarily engage with issues outside of the act itself. The centrality of the act, as opposed to the messages it may carry, draws the types of interactions and relationships sparked by these activities to the forefront in ways that, while also an immanent characteristic of more traditional social movement activities, may be less visible where attention is drawn to fixed and over-arching goals, messages and targets. These acts are interesting models for considering the enacting of Arendtian citizenship practices and public spaces not only because of the visibility of this function, but also because of the capacity of these acts to produce political impacts of a differing order than more traditional forms of political protest.

One way of characterizing the primacy of action over message in RTS and Critical Mass events is as a challenge, not to a single issue or target, but rather to everyday experiences of the spatialized logic of the private. This logic, addressed by

Barber, Bickford and Kohn as a logic of predictability, homogeneity and consumption, has been described by urban theorists as a logic of flows where the city is defined by the smooth, unfettered movement of commodities, information and people (Magnusson, 1996:111; Castells, 2003:58). If applied to everyday experiences of the city, the logic of flows could be used to describe practices privileged citizens employ to disengage from one another in ostensibly public spaces, such as driving from home directly to parkades in office buildings and minimizing contact on the street through the aversion of eyes, the use of headphones, and by ignoring verbal claims for ‘spare change’ and other forms of assistance. If the sedimented identities and limited interactions supported by these practices are implicated in the enacting of privatized city spaces, RTS and Critical Mass, through their disruptions, blockages and slow-downs of the usual city flows of vehicle and pedestrian traffic, introduce an element of unpredictability to the city street which opens a space for differing experiences of the city, of the self, and of relationships with other citizens.

The guerilla street party and the takeover of downtown city streets by cyclists produce alternate forms of city space that, while temporary, have the potential to produce lasting memories of city spaces that were, and could be, otherwise used. The slowing-down of physical movement also has the potential to provoke a slowing-down of mental processes, allowing a space for reflection and engagement among citizens who may otherwise traverse city space in privatized states.⁴ In RTS in particular, these interactions

⁴ As mentioned earlier, this type of use seems somewhat different from the appropriation of city streets for the sake of protest, where the use of space is secondary to the message that it carried through its use. This type of activity should also be distinguished, for several reasons, from city-sponsored block parties and street closures. To the extent that these are regulated and pre-planned events, they minimize the chances of citizens being caught up in or challenged by these uses of space. Insofar as these are professionally planned and monitored events, the extent to which participants are effectively engaged in the production of space is also heavily constrained.

involve a blurring of the boundaries between participant and spectator. Where the street is not appropriated for a specific or single use, it becomes a multi-use area, encouraging spectators to become participants who define the space by the uses they bring to it, from dancing to sidewalk chalking, sports, games and discussion. As in Arendt's model, the democratic potential of such productions of space is not in their capacity to induce some form of shared identity or harmonious, cooperative and common project among citizens. The potential, rather, is in the provision of a space for contestation between citizens that carries the possibility of generating and regenerating identities and relationships, not necessarily in the direction of homogenization, but instead in an openness to the new and unknown. Here, public space is neither a site for the production of unproblematic forms of solidarity among citizens or a site for protracted battles between fixed oppositional groups, but a site for exploring always contingent and temporary coalitions among a range of individuals and groups. What this space requires of and encourages in citizens is the courage to engage in the challenges to one's identity and perspectives that comes through such ungoverned, agonistic and face-to-face modes of interaction.

Conclusion: Publicization and Citizenization from Below

Soja's account of First- Second- and Third- approaches to space encourages a broad interpretation of how public space is produced and sustained, and provides a resource for pushing accounts of the relationship between civic culture and the city within political theory. My aim here has not been to challenge the merits of the participatory, face-to-face model of citizenship pursued by Kohn, Bickford and Barber, but to present an alternate perspective on how such modes of citizenship might be

generated, and what their capacities might be, in relation to public space. Arendt's conception of the public and the street actions of RTS and Critical Mass offer examples of the indistinguishability of public space from the relationships developed among citizens. This indistinguishability is significant as it encourages a vision of public space as more than the structures and regulations of the city, of citizenship practices with degrees of autonomy from these material elements of the city, and of public spaces and citizenship practices as mutually self-produced, de-linked from state planning and authority. As a model for pursuing a publicization of spaces and relations between citizens, this diverges from what was described earlier as a causal chain linking pressure groups to such publicizations through the mediation of state planning. Understanding public space as synonymous with the heterogeneity, spontaneity and open-ended qualities of social interactions highlights, instead, a cyclical and self-reinforcing process where everyday localized activities have the capacity to produce temporary public forums that enable and encourage substantively public relationships and interactions among citizens.

This model is useful for thinking about participatory, face-to-face forms of citizenship, as it extends the emphasis on relations of *solidarity* among citizens to the necessary role citizens play in defining the quality and *shape* of such relations through their active role in producing the forums where this potential solidarity is formed. Public or common space, from this perspective, is not a pre-existing or institutionally-produced container which delineates who participates and how they do so, but instead remains an unfinished project open to contestation and revision through confrontation with previously unrecognized perspectives and identities. Following from this, city planning

and state authority are not necessarily the only, or the best, means of approaching the publicization of citizenship practices or the preservation of city spaces.

Where the everyday uses of city space are somewhat ungovernable, and will often conflict with, resist and confound the material structures of the city, social movements may be a fruitful locus for studying the production of substantively public citizenship practices and public spaces. Attention to social movements focuses attention on the central role of average citizens, and the agency of these citizens, in mutual self-production and of production of the spaces they inhabit. As mentioned earlier, such activities also promise to offer more convincing explanations for the proliferation of substantively public citizenship practices than what can be provided through reference to state-centred changes to structures and regulations. In terms of the specific social movement activities highlighted here, one potentially interesting research question might involve asking what factors influence the public ethic—in the courage, initiative, and fairly profound interest in interacting with unknown others—exhibited by participants in these activities.⁵ Such inquiries might lead to useful accounts of activities which exhibit a capacity to encourage substantively public relations within, and uses of, city spaces in highly inclusive, participatory and localized fashions; small-scale activities which could be described as forms of publicization from below.

⁵ The youth-driven element of these activities might be an interesting area for further attention, with emphasis on youth organizers' and participants' experiences and conceptions of city space, and of public and private space, in relation to their social and political activities.

Bibliography

- Amin, Ash & Nigel Thrift. 2002. *Cities: Reimagining the Urban*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Arendt, Hannah. 1958. *The Human Condition*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- _____.1970. *On Violence*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World.
- _____.1959. Reflections on Little Rock. *Dissent* 6(1), pp.45-56
- Barber, Benjamin. 2001. Malled, Mauled, and Overhauled: Arresting Suburban Sprawl by Transforming Suburban Malls into Usable Civic Space. In *Public Space and Democracy*. M. Henaff & T. Strong, eds. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Bickford, Susan. 2000. Constructing Inequality: City Spaces and the Architecture of Citizenship. *Political Theory* 28(3), 355-76.
- Castells, Manuel. 1983. *The City and the Grassroots*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- _____.1984. Space and Society: Managing the New Historical Relationships. In *Cities in Transformation*. M.P.Smith, ed. Beverly Hills: Sage Publications.
- Day, Richard. 2005. *Gramsci is Dead: Anarchist Currents in the Newest Social Movements*. London: Pluto Press.
- Harnett, Cindy E. 1999. Block party gets ugly: Protesters assault officers, paint cop cars as hundreds barricade Government Street. *Times-Colonist*, May 17, p.A1.
<<http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?did=251858611&sid=2&Fmt=3&clientId=3916&RQT=309&VName=PQD>> retrieved May 13, 2006.
- Harvey, David. 1996. Contested Cities: Social Process and Spatial Form. In *The City Reader*. R.T. LeGates and F. Stout, eds. London: Routledge.
- Holston, James. 1999. Spaces of Insurgent Citizenship. In *Cities and Citizenship*, James Holston, ed. London: Duke University Press.
- Honig, Bonnie. 1993. Arendt's Accounts of Action and Authority. In *Political Theory and the Displacement of Politics*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Kohn, Margaret. 2003. *Radical Space: Building the House of the People*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- _____. 2004. *Brave New Neighborhoods: The Privatization of Public Space*. New York: Routledge.
- Kymlicka, Will & Wayne Norman. 1994. Return of the Citizen: A Survey of Recent Work on Citizenship Theory. *Ethics* 104(2).

Magnusson, Warren. 1996. *The Search for Political Space: Globalization, Social Movements, and the Urban Political Experience*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Miller, James. 1987. *Democracy is in the Streets: From Port Huron to the Siege of Chicago*. New York: Simon and Schuster.

Mitchell, Don. 2003. *The Right to the City*. New York: Guildford Press.

Soja, Edward. 2000. *Postmetropolis: Critical Studies of Cities and Regions*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.

Young, Iris Marion. 1990. *Justice and the Politics of Difference*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.