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Jose Antonio Lara-Hernandez
James Thompson *Editors*

Temporary Appropriation in Cities

Human Spatialisation in Public Spaces
and Community Resilience

 Springer

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Foreword

The Changing Social and Spatial Character of Public Space and Its *Modus Operandi*

Cities are many things. At their best, they offer essential breathing spaces that facilitate social inclusion and enable a diverse range of informal activities. Social inclusion is important, as it is the process by which efforts are made to ensure equal opportunities—that everyone, regardless of their background, can achieve their full potential in life. Gentrification and growing privatization of space are constant threats to this potential. Efforts include policies and actions that promote equal access to public services and space, as well as enable citizen's participation in the decision-making processes that affect their lives in cities. The following chapters presented in this book look at the ways in which 'marginal groups' appropriate these informal spaces. The characteristics of informal, interstitial spaces within the contemporary city, and the numerous creative ways in which they are appropriated, challenge the prevalent critical discourse about our understanding of 'public space', place-making and the character of social order in the city in relation to these informal spaces. These non-planned spaces punctuate the homogenous, controlled, 'official' pattern of public space and the everyday, ubiquitous spaces of the contemporary city. However, they are often overlooked or relegated as 'leftover space' or 'urban voids', excluded from the 'ideal', as they run contrary to the dominant image of the ordered city, such as promoted in common master plans and urban marketing (Sennett, 2018).

Recognizing that cities are places where both problems emerge and solutions are found, at the citizen level, urban activism has been increasingly considered as an important part of urban governance processes, as local actors participate in urban politics and influence decision-making through legal tools and participatory practices.

According to Lewis Mumford, social and spatial inequalities are an intertwined phenomenon and to understand them have to be addressed simultaneously. Chouinard calls them 'places of shadow citizenship and entitlements' (1997) in

which inequality and injustice proliferate. This book aims to shed light on the dynamics generating the urban areas and conditions of urban informality and ‘shadow citizenship’, and to contribute towards understanding the drivers of urban inequalities that pose significant challenges to the existence of urban societies. The more unequal a society is, the more the likelihood of its social polarization to intensify; the wider the spatial and social inequality, the lower the economic growth of a country and consequently the higher the threat to the sustainability of its welfare state (Stiglitz, 2013).

Thus, engendering the dynamics of the United Nation’s Agenda 2030’s Sustainable Development Goals (Goal 11 calling for ‘cities and human settlements’ to be ‘inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable’), spatial inequality, and in particular inequalities exacerbated by the economic crisis and austerity measures, has been addressed by activists by means of political protest and by social innovations (Rivera, 2013). Gentrification, growing privatization and the lack of affordable housing as well as accessibility to public spaces have exacerbated the urban conditions of inequality.

How urban informality, public space, growth and inequality are interconnected has long been a field of scholarly reflection and research. It has been argued that cities exist because people tend to agglomerate around space for social, economic or political reasons. Increased job access, housing and amenities, combined with safety and fewer restrictions of personal choices, indicate some critical advantages of urban spaces. Cities form when people try to take advantage of shared infrastructure and cultural amenities. Companies and workers benefit from knowledge creation, job opportunities and matching, as well as information sharing. Agglomeration forces reinforce centralization trends, resulting in urbanization and spatial distribution of location choices and investments, in terms of infrastructure and innovation activities, within cities. The importance of public space lies in understanding it as a manifestation of social relations and a social relation itself (Florida and Mellander, 2018). Even though accelerating urbanization has a significant impact on the spatial outcomes of economic activity and inequalities, it affects in contradictory ways social inclusion in urban areas. Cities in the developed world experience a paradox where rising levels of human capital, economic activity and employment are accompanied by a trend of increasing levels of socio-economic inequality and spatial segregation. Agglomeration effects in cities can act as engines of urban growth, but also as drivers of inequality, not only in economic terms, but also in a wide range of quality-of-life aspects (Lehmann, 2019). Increasing inequalities have become a multi-scale issue. It becomes evident that the urban environments of developed cities face a situation, where despite their continuously rising shares of economic activity, employment and wealth, there are increasing levels of socio-economic inequality, which have a spatial footprint in cities, as well as between neighbourhoods.

Global cities act as both locus and regulator of the uneven processes of capitalism (Harvey 1989), where increasing investment in the financial sector rather than other productive activities has shaped the geography of unequal development. However, the growth of spatial inequalities is not limited to global cities.

Geographical inequalities are a reflection of an out of equilibrium economy, characterized by the dynamic coexistence of regionalized growth and localized decline, by unequal interactions and asymmetrical power relations between cores and peripheries.

The impact of the 2008 economic crisis and subsequent austerity measures accompanied by the persistent stagnation of some economies, along with rapid technological changes in the world of communication and work, have caused conditions of inequality to further proliferate. Alongside regions and cities that have functioned as poles of attraction for private capital investment and innovation, boosted by ad hoc public and private interventions, there are areas in which economic hardship has been coupled with not only private sector but also public sector retrenchment. Therefore, opportunities for social and economic development generated by global economic, financial and political trends have not benefited all countries and cities equally nor have these opportunities been distributed evenly across regions, cities and neighbourhoods, nor among people (Sassen, 1991; Marcuse et al. 2009).

The economic crisis and the ways governments have sought to address it, either with austerity measures or with growth packages, have contributed towards strengthening long-established patterns of unequal territorial and spatial development. Places more equipped with human, infrastructural and social resources have greatly benefited and have had further opportunities to overcome the crisis, while areas with a weaker combination of such factors keep lagging behind. In this scenario, old divisions such as centrality versus periphery in terms of global, regional or urban economic and political centres have exacerbated pre-existing territorial inequality patterns. In Europe, for instance, these inequality patterns are found between Southern and Northern Italy, or West and East Germany, or Northern and Southern England, where gentrification and privatization have created gated communities and immigrant ghettos.

To reclaim the urban space that privatization and gentrification have conquered, it lies in the sphere of civil society where the urban problems are being defined, articulated and dealt with. However, the juxtaposition between spatial inequality and social stratification has dramatically constrained opportunities for specific categories of individuals, with those experiencing a combination of spatial and social disadvantages (e.g. elderly or disabled people in need of healthcare services), finding themselves entrapped in a spiral of deprivation. This spiral of deprivation reveals the interlocking systems of power that have an impact on the most marginalized in society, resonating with Crenshaw's (1989) 'intersectionality of structural identities' based on categories such as gender, race, sexuality and class that interact with each other in various ways and create inequalities and discrimination. In this context, the significance of opportunities for appropriation of public space becomes obvious.

Increasingly, research has focused on the localized clustering of economic activity and the importance of informal entrepreneurialism. Massey's (1984) work on labour policies and consequential spatial division of labour indicates that each stage of economic growth creates new spatial divisions of labour where each period

reflects different socio-spatial configurations, introducing new dimensions of inequalities and relations of dominance and dependence between activities in different places and people.

The book *Temporary Appropriation in Cities* conceptualizes and illustrates temporary appropriation of public space as a phenomenon that contributes to the conformation of relevant themes within the urban agenda. The chapters deal with a wide range of the above-mentioned topics, such as citizenship, inequality, social inclusion, migrants, urban social sustainability, public health care, employment, growth, informal entrepreneurialism, urban informality and resilience. Temporary appropriation has behavioural, economic and cultural dimensions, and forms of appropriation are not always obvious: they are not mentioned in building codes and can be subversive and unexpected, emerging in the grey area between legal and illegal activities in the city.

The three editors of this book—Melis, Lara-Hernandez and Thompson—have compiled a highly relevant book that presents a compelling case of the importance of this so far widely overlooked topic that requires further detailed study in the years to come. The 18 chapters of the book examine and map temporary appropriation of public space and the use of public space, in locations as diverse as Auckland, Algiers, Mexico City, Shanghai, Hanoi, San Diego, Tirana and Nairobi.

Offering a better understanding of the appropriation phenomenon, how we should design our public spaces to better facilitate the economic life and social inclusion in cities, the book finally poses the question: How could our streetscapes and plazas better cope with these new complex forms of temporary appropriation, and increasing pressures from homelessness and urban nomadism? The arguments of the authors both develop the concept of temporary appropriation and question it, as well as suggesting alternatives for future expansion.

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Preface

The book you have in your hands is about temporary appropriation (TA) of the public space which is an urban phenomenon commonly overlooked until now. I have had the opportunity to travel and experience different urban landscapes in cities across the world, in terms of both urban design and how public spaces are used by people.

There is a vast and diverse activity occurring in such public spaces across cultures and environments. However, some of these activities belong to temporary appropriation that as we shall see in the following pages helps to edify the social landscape of the city, serving to construct the urban identity, social sustainability, public health, crime and the culture of a place. As cities and urban population grow, the understanding of these urban dynamics plays a crucial role to achieve a sustainable, inclusive and healthy urban environment.

This edited book is the result of more than four years of research. It includes contributions from authors whose research is focused on different urban environments across the globe such as Auckland, Hong Kong, Shanghai, Italy, UK, USA and Mexico, illustrating the complexity and multiplexity of TA as a global urban phenomenon. Through our journey, we realized that TA has a multi-scalar and multidimensional nature, meaning that it is highly related to different landscapes within the city such as economic, legal, cultural and political. This compilation aims to illustrate some of these intertwined examples in the contemporary city, highlighting the relevance of the liaison between the design of the built environment and the social landscape in the city.

As academicians and professional urban designers, we are sure that the work is timely and potentially appealing due to its geographical and thematic diversity. Through a series of essays, *Temporary Appropriation of the City: A Contribution to Urban Sustainability* addresses the human spatialization of public spaces, one of the most important events occurring within the urban landscape. The spatialization of the human being unfolds striking relationships with urban design and planning by using urban spaces as the main stage but varies across countries and cultures.

Newcastle, UK
June 2019

Jose Antonio Lara-Hernandez

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General Introduction



Jose Antonio Lara-Hernandez

Abstract This book conceptualises and illustrates Temporary Appropriation (TA) as an urban phenomenon, evidencing the complex and the multi-scalar nature of TA in relationship to other dimensions and relevant issues of the urban landscape such as sustainability, informality, culture, inclusivity, streetscape design, homelessness, socio-spatial inclusion, building re-use and regulations controlling the use of public spaces. Some forms of appropriation can also be subversive, existing in a grey area between legal and illegal activities in the city. Since urban populations are certain to grow further, this is a key topic for understanding urban dynamics. The book intends to focus on the TA instead as a consequence of the necessity of adapting human needs of a city that deprives the population of reference points due to sudden and unexpected changes. In this last case, the temporality of appropriation becomes an essential element of flexibility, the study of which, however, still constitutes a research gap. Hence, the present book takes into consideration the assumption that the current conjuncture crisis due to the unstoppable growth of the cities imposes a reflection on their development in terms of community resilience, and therefore on the adaptation of the concept of appropriation with respect to the aforementioned phenomena of growth and change.

Keywords Temporary appropriation • Urban design • Public space • Resilience • Social sustainability • Assemblage theory • Informal economy • Informality • Streetscape design • Activity support • Crime prevention • Homelessness • Outdoor comfort • Urban identity • Urban metabolism • Adaptive reuse

The work presented here in a broad sense is about the interaction between people and places within the urban environment. It aims to elucidate the temporary appropriation (TA) as an urban phenomenon, evidencing the complex and the multi-scalar nature of TA in relationship to other dimensions and relevant issues of the urban landscape such as sustainability, informality, culture, inclusivity, streetscape design, homelessness, socio-spatial inclusion, building re-use and regulations controlling the use of public spaces.

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The book intends to focus on the TA instead as a consequence of the necessity of adapting human needs of a city that deprives the population of reference points due to sudden and unexpected changes. In this last case, the temporality of appropriation becomes an essential element of flexibility, the study of which, however, still constitutes a research gap. Hence, the present book takes into consideration the assumption that the current conjuncture crisis due to the unstoppable growth of the cities imposes a reflection on their development in terms of sustainability (Lehmann, 2015), and therefore on the adaptation of the concept of appropriation with respect to the aforementioned phenomena of growth and change.

The following paragraphs describe the term appropriation in the urban environment.

Appropriation, a Brief Background

The Oxford English Dictionary (2015) defines appropriation as the making of a thing private property. However, within the socio-urban design fields, the use of the term has no consensus and remains vague. For instance, some authors (Araya Diaz, 2016; Blanco, Bosoer, & Apaolaza, 2014; Garcia Ramon, Ortiz, & Prats, 2004; Ramirez-Lovering, 2008) use the term when referring to the illegal or informal use of the public space or territory by analysing their time occupancy, utilised design elements and their daily routes. Nevertheless, there is ambiguity when referring to the appropriation as both uses of the public space, illegal and informal, because it belongs to the citizens, and so does its use, and because for most of the governmental authorities, the informality is usually linked to informal commerce.

The psychologist Korosec-Serfaty introduced the term appropriation in the Proceedings of Strasbourg conference in 1976. As a process similar to humanisation (Graumann, 1976), is conceptualised as temporary phenomenon, involving a dynamic interaction between the individual and its environment (Korosec-Serfaty, 1976). For Graumann (1976) the appropriation is the essential societal defined meanings interiorised by the individual. In other words, TA are the activities occurring in public spaces. Considered by authors such as Purcell (2002), Pol Urrútia (2002) and Yory García (2003) as an inborn human need expressed through activities in public spaces as a crucial part of the urban landscape, establishing a theoretical link between people and places. However, the question of what these activities are is still unanswered.

Stickily, when the public space is being used it is being appropriated, although just for a fraction of time. It could be argued that appropriation and the use of the space are similar concepts because as far as an individual exist, she is appropriating the space. Authors, such as De la Torre (2015), Vidal Moranta and Pol Urrútia (2005), Pol Urrútia (2002) and Pol and Iñiguez (1996) argue that the appropriation plays a crucial role constructing the urban identity through individual and collective activities in the urban landscape, arguing that the users only appropriate public spaces where they feel identified. Thus, implying that the appropriation and the use of space are adjacent concepts, not similar though. Users appropriate a determinate area of a

public space on daily basis because they feel comfortable there (Franck & Stevens, 2007). Fonseca Rodriguez (2015) provides a definition with potential uses helping to distinguish between the activities related to the appropriation and the simple use of the space. She defines TA as “the temporary act in which people use public spaces to carry out individual or collective activities other than the purpose that the space was originally designed for”.

However, this text starts from the assumption that appropriation of the built environment is an inborn socio-spatial special need of the individual (Graumann, 1976; Yory, 2011). Lefebvre (1971) argues that the concept of appropriation is one of the most remarkable results that centuries of philosophical reflections have bequeathed. He describes appropriation as the goal of the social life by claiming that the domination of the natural environment without the appropriation tends to be absurd. Yory (2011), corroborates this argument by stating that we as humans are connaturally engaged with the construction-appropriation of our environment. Moreover, the concept of appropriation is embodied in his theoretical definition of topophilia as “the act of co-appropriation generated between the man and the world; through which the world becomes the world, at the opening realised by the man within its historic-spatial nature and human becomes human through its spatialisation” (Yory, 2011: p. 45).

Temporary Appropriation in the Urban Environment

Regarding the urban landscape, the appropriation can also be defined as the interaction between citizens and their city expressed through certain kinds of activities occurring in public spaces (Lara-Hernandez, Melis, & Caputo, 2017). These activities contribute to the edifice of the social urban landscape, which is embedded in the second aspect of the right to the city. Purcell (2002), inspired by ideas of Lefebvre, argues that the appropriation allows citizens to produce urban space rather than just to use the already produced urban space. The appropriation is what gives citizens the right to fully use and manage their everyday life within the urban environment (Lefebvre, 1992). Graumann (1976) contributes to reinforce this position by stating that the appropriation of the public space is a medium and a goal in order to overcome human alienation. Thus, it can be inferred that appropriation of space that is ephemeral and time framed could be understood as TA, in which the design of the built environment is necessary but not sufficient (Graumann, 1976). Along the same trajectory, Martínez (2014) emphasises that the TA relies on both the configuration of the built environment and the meanings and implicated relationships (people’s values, behaviours and actions) of the social life in the city.

It follows that the TA is an individual, social, and spatial need that cannot be underestimated when it comes to urban studies. Public spaces and their design are strongly associated to the possibility of occurring activities related to TA (Gehl, 2010; Madanipour, 1996; Moudon, 1991; Noschis, Dosio, Feddersen, & Triantis, 1978). Thus, while appropriation is a broader term, its temporary variation refers

more specifically to urban public spaces. Although there is conspicuous literature on the more general theme of appropriation, a phenomenon that refers to a lasting and consistent condition over the years (Ardura Urquiaga, 2014; Díaz & Ortiz, 2003; Ramirez-Lovering, 2008) and, even if less, on TA, that refers to non-permanent, daily or extemporaneous appropriation (Fonseca Rodriguez, 2015; Lara-Hernandez et al., 2017). The accent in the latter has always been placed on the informality of this action.

The appropriation of the built environment as a continuous synergy between citizens and the urban landscape displayed through specific activities that contributes to the edifice of the social urban landscape (Lara-Hernandez et al., 2017). When citizens appropriate public spaces, they participate in producing urban space beyond merely inhabiting an urban space already formed and receive the right to manage and use their everyday life completely (Lefebvre, 1992). Relph (1976) defines place as the centre of action, a blending realm between human and natural spheres and as the heart of our prompt experiences of the world. Thus, the space endowed with meaning and values, determined by culture occupied by a person or a thing are places (Madanipour, 1996). Graumann (1976) reinforces that argument by claiming that the appropriation of the public spaces contributes to overcome human alienation. The latter implies that the fleeting and time-framed appropriation might be assumed as temporary appropriation (TA), in which the design of the built environment is crucial but not sufficient (Graumann, 1976). Martínez (2014) support this argument by claiming that TA is dependent upon both the design of the built environment and the cultural connotations of its social realm. For instance, Lehmann (2009) wrote about strategies for informal urban interventions and the influence of site-specific artistic concepts in the creation and appropriation of informal public space. He notes that ‘vacant city lots and buildings are often used as starting points for cultural innovations. Over the course of the transformation of the post-industrial city, public space has become an exciting laboratory for interdisciplinary cooperation between artists, architects, urban planners, and landscape architects. Consequently, TA is a spatial, and social need that must be taken into consideration in regards research within the urban field.

In the following chapters it will be argued the multi-scalar and highly complex nature of TA in relation to other relevant urban issues such as sustainability, health, informality, crime, outdoor comfort, theoretical discussions focused on insurgent urban space, crime and urban design, environmental comfort, day-labour, homelessness, women in public spaces, emergent assemblages, citizenship, political ecology, urban culture and identity.

Chapter “[Understanding Temporary Appropriation and Social Sustainability](#)” frames within the urban context, the relevance of the temporary appropriation in relation to social sustainability, identifying and categorising temporary appropriation into three main groups of activities featuring the urban landscape. It illustrates how the TA as concept is aligned with what Seghezze (2009) calls *persons*, as one of the fifth dimensions of sustainability, differing from the definition used by Leary-Owhin (2015), and influenced by Lefebvre, that describes the TA as a time span condition by differential spaces in the urban context.

Chapter “[Between Assemblages and Temporary Appropriation: The Case of Mexico City](#)” explores the way in which temporary appropriation could be interpreted as an assemblage product of other assemblages within the urban landscape. It unravels aiming to re-think TA nature through intertwined theoretical frameworks such as assemblage theory. The chapter combines a diverse range of theories conceptualising TA as an essential feature of the urban landscape and as an emerging product of other assemblages such as culture, legal framework and urban design. To do so it illustrates Mexico City Centre as an example of a highly coded city in which these assemblages emerge, taking a representative sample street as a case-study to analyse TA in relation to the streetscape design through participant observation and image analysis of the visual complexity of the streetscape.

Chapter “[Temporary Appropriation and Informality](#)” explores the definitions and uses of both informality and TA in an urban context, illustrating TA as an overlooked urban phenomenon and misinterpreted as a form of informal practice. By separating TA from informality, our team provides a simpler model for understanding urban informality, whilst at the same time consolidating TA as a concept in its own right. Existing definitions of informality as applied in studies concerning informal practices in the Global North are challenged, arguing that some understandings of informal behaviour in urban settings could be better understood when viewed as forms of TA. A categorisation of temporary appropriation is provided with examples from different cities and cultures, showing that there is a definite need for a deeper understanding of temporary appropriation and its relationship with the urban informality of any socio-cultural landscape.

In Chapter “[Ongoing Appropriation: Invisible Seattle and Red May](#)” Keith Harris illustrates Invisible Seattle and Red May as events that were a mature and explicitly anti-capitalist development of a project from the early 1980s, serving as both a history of the movement between the two groups and their work, as well as a theoretical contribution to the notions of insurgent urban space (Hou, 2010) and nomad citizenship (Holland, 2011). The central argument is that although urbanists and activists often focus on the spatial dimensions of occupation, the temporal dimension is perhaps even more crucial for the constitution of collective subjectivity (Braidotti, 2013).

In Chapter “[Temporary Appropriation and Public Space: Assessing the Cpted Principle of Activity Support](#)” Alexander Gomez-Torres assesses the role of activities related to urban design as contributor of TA of the public space for crime prevention purposes. It presents a case study which critically assesses the Third Millennium Park in Bogota DC, Capital District of Colombia. The results unveiled a significant low level of activities and a tendency for using signage mainly as sets of instructions for mandatory purposes rather than a strategy for helping TA of the public space. The research chapter concludes that the urban design intervention played a positive role in the reduction of crime within the areas in the case study. Though, its concentration variously increased throughout the locations in the surrounding areas. Hence, implications of territoriality, crime displacement and the access to comprehensive crime data should also be considered in further research.

In Chapter “[Temporary Appropriation of Public Spaces: The Influence of Outdoor Comfort](#)” Daniele Santucci, Ata Chokhachian and Thomas focus on TA using an

approach highlighting the necessity of adapting human comfort to the needs of a city to compensate sudden and unexpected changes due to urban microclimate. In the context of the enormous urbanization phenomena occurring all over the world, the relevance of this issue increasingly gains importance. There is still an open question, if the daily public life or use of urban spaces can be acknowledged as appropriation or not. If yes, is this temporary or permanent? The concept of appropriation is closely tied to the sense of identity and comfort as well, besides temporal factors. This chapter will conclude supporting the idea that the temporary appropriation takes place in urban public spaces in which individuals or group of people feels culturally and environmentally identified.

In Chapter “[Origins of Informality: Examining the Historical and Spatial Roots of Informal Day-Labor Hiring Sites](#)” Sean Crotty explores the daily-appropriation of space for labour-seeking, drawing on more than five years research in the San Diego Metropolitan Area. He analyses the *places* where hiring sites operate to demonstrate the linkages between neighbourhood characteristics and the establishment of day-labour hiring sites. Ethnographic data further supports an argument that hiring sites exhibit a high-degree of locational “stickiness,” due to the historical, economic, and emotional content embedded in each site through the production of space. The chapter concludes by examining the specific ways that laborers and other stakeholders interact to ensure that access to space is maintained and in so doing, foster relationships that produce socially-sustainable outcomes for day-laborers and their neighbours.

In Chapter “[Unsheltered Homelessness and the Right To Metabolism: An Urban Political Ecology of Health and Sustainability](#)” Jeff Rose explores the relationship between TA and unsheltered homeless utilising an urban political ecology approach, considering the ways in which a right to metabolism demonstrates that the temporary appropriation of space by those facing homelessness is a biopolitical claim to survival. In this appropriation of public space, those facing unsheltered homelessness lay bare the socioenvironmental relations that characterize aspects of all human life, including eating, breathing, disposing of wastes, and others. These human metabolic processes for people facing unsheltered homelessness uncovers a justice-focused analysis in which a “right to metabolism” is a fundamental necessity for city life.

In Chapter “[Temporary Appropriation in Shanghai and Hong Kong: Two Study Cases Assessing the Resilience of Women Faced With the Lack of Affordable Housing](#)” Alessandra Lai discusses the scholastic notion of ‘temporary appropriation’ of the public space, referring to a wide range of urban scenarios that evoke conditions of either spatial, temporal or socio-economic disorder. Such disorder is manifested by the frequent contrast between the planned purpose of a public space and its actual use. Often, the unforeseen habits of the users of a place obscure the planned design narrative, adding a juxtaposed layer to the urban life. The chapter investigates two phenomena in relation to its occurrence in public spaces in China, the characteristic spreading of various domestic functions (such as cooking and laundry) onto the sidewalks of Shanghai and the widespread use by Filipino maids of the squares and bridges of Hong Kong during their days off. It highlights how such ‘user invasions’ reflect the resilience of these largely female communities in order to effectively and efficiently face issues related to affordable housing.