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Claiming Space for an Engaged Anthropology: Spatial Inequality and Social Exclusion

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ABSTRACT I use the concept of “engaged anthropology” to frame a discussion of how “spatializing culture” uncovers systems of exclusion that are hidden or naturalized and thus rendered invisible to other methodological approaches. “Claiming Space for an Engaged Anthropology” is doubly meant: to claim more intellectual and professional space for engagement and to propose that anthropology include the dimension of space as a theoretical construct. I draw on three fieldwork examples to illustrate the value of the approach: (1) a Spanish American plaza, reclaimed from a Eurocentric past, for indigenous groups and contemporary cultural interpretation; (2) Moore Street Market, an enclosed Latino food market in Brooklyn, New York, reclaimed for a translocal set of social relations rather than a gentrified redevelopment project; (3) gated communities in Texas and New York and cooperatives in New York, reclaiming public space and confronting race and class segregation created by neoliberal enclosure and securitization. [*engaged anthropology, spatialization, colonial and postcolonial studies, public space*]

ABSTRACTO En este artículo uso el concepto de antropología comprometida para enmarcar una discusión sobre cómo “la espacialización de la cultura” descubre sistemas de exclusión que quedan invisibilizados o naturalizados por otros encuadres metodológicos. “Reclamar espacio para una antropología comprometida” se plantea en su doble sentido-reclamar más espacio intelectual y profesional para el compromiso social, y proponer que la antropología debe incluir el concepto de espacio como un constructo teórico central de igual importancia que el concepto de tiempo. Utilizo tres ejemplos de trabajo de campo para ilustrar el valor del encuadre propuesto. El primero reconsidera la etnohistoria de la plaza hispanoamericana para rescatar el espacio de la plaza de su injustificado pasado eurocéntrico y devolverlo a los grupos indígenas y la interpretación cultural contemporánea. El segundo explora el mercado de Moore Street, mercado Latino en Brooklyn, Nueva York, para reclamar este espacio urbano comercial como un conjunto translocal de relaciones sociales en vez de como un proyecto de renovación urbana gentrificado. El tercero examina residentes que viven en proyectos de vivienda privada tales como comunidades cerradas en Texas y New York y complejos de apartamentos cooperativos en Nueva York, para rescatar el espacio público y confrontar el racismo y la segregación de clase creados por el encierro neoliberal y el giro hacia la seguridad.

ABSTRAIT Dans cet article, le concept d’anthropologie engagée me permet de discuter comment une approche spatiale de la culture révèle des systèmes d’exclusion cachés ou naturalisés qui les rendent invisibles à d’autres approches méthodologiques. “Revendiquer l’espace pour une anthropologie engagée” se comprend dans un double sens: celui de réclamer plus d’espace intellectuel et professionnel pour l’engagement et celui de proposer l’espace comme une construction théorique que l’anthropologie devrait adopter. Je me base sur trois exemple de terrain pour illustrer l’intérêt de cette approche. Le premier revient sur l’ethno-histoire des places publiques hispano-américaines afin de soustraire l’espace de ces places à un héritage eurocentrique artificiel et ainsi de le restituer aux

groupes indigènes dans les interprétations culturelles contemporaines. Le second explore Moore Street Market, un marché alimentaire couvert Latino-américain à Brooklyn, New York. Il pose cet espace commercial urbain comme un ensemble de relations sociales translocales plutôt que comme un projet de rénovation et de gentrification. Le troisième exemple questionne les résidents des programmes de logements privés tels que les “gated communities” au Texas et New York et les co-propriétés au Texas et à New York, afin de reconquérir l’espace public et d’affronter le racisme et la ségrégation de classes produite par le séparatisme néolibéral et la titrisation.

摘要 在這篇論文中我以應用人類學的概念來探討我空間化文化我的研究方法如何能揭露透過其他研究取徑我常難以或無法呈現之社會排除現象我因此本文中的我爭取應用人類學的空間我具雙重涵義——一方面企圖為人類學在學術界與專業實務界爭取更多應用的空間我另一方面則是提議人類學應包含空間面向之理論架構我以三個田野研究案例來闡明此方法的價值。第一個研究重探拉丁美洲廣場的族裔歷史我發現過去由不合理的歐洲中心歷史所界定的廣場我實應屬於當代在地的住民我且應由他們的文化來詮釋廣場的意義。第二個研究探討摩爾街市場—一處位於紐約市布魯克林區的拉丁裔室內食品市場我我認為應讓該市場維持為一個集結跨地域社會關係的都市商業空間我而非被繙紳化的更新案所取代。第三個研究探討住在德州的門禁式社區我以及紐約的公寓大廈等私有集合住宅居民之生活經驗我以重申公共空間的重要我並且正視自自由主義式的空間圍塑與警衛保全我所導致之種族歧視與階級分化問題。

I premise this article on the assumption that engagement in real-world problems should be at the center of anthropological practice. Furthermore, in it I argue that a concern with the public realm is integral to the conduct of 21st-century anthropology in that our theories and modes of analysis lend themselves to addressing social issues such as political conflict, environmental degradation, social inequality, xenophobia, and racism. Although many anthropologists agree with this assumption in principle, there are conflicting views of what constitutes “engaged anthropology,” its history, and its practice.

One perspective is that anthropological knowledge was developed to remedy social problems as well as those of colonial administration and therefore was always engaged (Bennett 1996; Rylko-Bauer et al. 2006; Schensul and Schensul 1978). Another approach is that doing anthropology was a politically conscious, critical practice that flourished from the 1930s through the 1970s to address inequality and offer a political-economic critique of then-current social practices (Berreman 1968; Hale 2006; Lamphere 2004; Patterson 2001; Roseberry 2002; Sanford and Angel-Ajani 2006; Silverman 2007; Smith 1999). The practices and motivations of engaged anthropologists vary from reconstituting a postcolonial relationship with anthropology’s subject through innovative participatory methods and multivocal writing to creating a nonimperialist system for the distribution of knowledge and expertise and formulating new ways to work collaboratively rather than hierarchically within communities (Besteman and Gusterson 2005; Clifford and Marcus 1986; Forman 1993; Gusterson and Besteman 2010; Lassiter 2005; Marcus and Fischer 1986; Merry 2005; Schensul and Schensul 1992; Singer 1990; Susser 2009).

The strength of U.S. anthropology is embedded in this history of engagement—as exemplified by Margaret Mead, Ruth Benedict, and Franz Boas, all of whom addressed issues of national and international importance regardless of the impact on their personal and professional careers (Mead

1942). Their early commitment to engagement encouraged other anthropologists to enter into contemporary public debates concerning the nature of scientific knowledge and human origins, the way global economic and political forces decimate the lives of forest dwellers and villagers, and the effects of natural disasters, war, AIDS, and urban poverty (Checker 2009; Eriksen 2006). Most anthropologists work with people who are impoverished, suffering, and politically disenfranchised as part of an implicit humanitarian and intellectual mission, but many also “study up” (Hymes 1969; Nader 1969), examining global and transnational networks and major institutions.

Although recognizing that there are inherent contradictions and disagreements in how engagement is practiced in different geopolitical contexts, under diverse social conditions, and during distinct historical moments, I define *engaged anthropology* as those activities that grow out of a commitment to the informants and communities with whom anthropologists work and a values-based stance that anthropological research respect the dignity and rights of all people and have a beneficent effect on the promotion of social justice (Low and Merry 2010). In my own work, engagement has meant uncovering inequality and social segregation as well as using this knowledge for remediation, especially on behalf of those who are marginalized, oppressed, or injured by exclusionary policies, institutional structures, and related discursive practices. I am particularly interested in the ways that middle-class residents reinscribe racism and social segregation in housing developments, gentrification schemes that disrupt local communities and privatize public space, and urban design and urban planning ideals that encode local places with hegemonic and exclusionary forms and meanings.

Through long-term research and collaborative projects, I have found that spatializing culture—that is, studying culture and political economy through the lens of space and place—provides a powerful tool for uncovering material and representational injustice and forms of social

exclusion. At the same time, it facilitates an important form of engagement because such spatial analyses offer people and their communities a way to understand the everyday places where they live, work, shop, and socialize. It also provides them with a basis for fighting proposed changes that often destroy the centers of social life, erase cultural meanings, and restrict local participatory practices.

To frame this discussion, I draw in this article on both my commitment to engaged anthropology and my experience with the effectiveness of spatializing culture for addressing inequality. These domains are integrated through my contention that theories and methodologies of space and place can uncover systems of exclusion that are hidden or naturalized and thus rendered invisible to other approaches. The systems of exclusion I am particularly interested in encompass a range of processes. Such systems include:

1. physical enclosure that limits who can enter or exit, such as fenced and gated spaces;
2. surveillance strategies such as policing, private security, and “city ambassadors,” and webcam and video cameras that discourage people of color from entering the space because of racial profiling;
3. privatization of property, especially areas that surround public spaces and deny public access;
4. financial requirements such as the price or ability to pay that limit entrance to malls or private housing schemes;
5. legal and governance instruments that restrict entrance and use such as those found in Business Improvement Districts and condominiums and cooperative housing;
6. aesthetic restrictions that symbolically communicate who is welcomed or excluded through high-end designs or elite renovation of parks, public markets, and buildings as well as defensive designs that deter particular behaviors;
7. discursive strategies such as signs and media commentary that identify either the kinds of behaviors or the types of people who should be allowed in a space; and
8. political decisions about what is built or not built, such as public housing or a stadium in a downtown area.

All these systems of exclusion reference the underlying structural racism, sexism, and classism that permeate contemporary neoliberal society.

Although many anthropologists study the structural basis of exclusion through a number of other approaches, especially political economy and historical analysis, there are a few anthropologists studying exclusion through the uneven development of space in the city (Caldeira 2000; Gregory 1998; Low 1999; Pellow 2002; Sawalha 2010; Zhang 2010; also see N. Smith 2008). In the same way that history sheds light on a cultural change that is incorrectly seen as timeless and therefore not an important object of study, the study of space, too, can direct attention to social and spa-

tial arrangements that are presumed to be given and fixed and are therefore considered “natural” and simply “the way things should be.” Space and its arrangement and allocation are assumed to be transparent, but as Henri Lefebvre (1991) asserts, these things never are. Instead, when critically examined, space and spatial relations yield insight into unacknowledged biases, prejudices, and inequalities that frequently go unexamined.

Thus, the title of this article, “Claiming Space for an Engaged Anthropology,” is doubly meant: to claim more intellectual and professional space for engagement in contemporary anthropology and to demonstrate how the deployment of space as a theoretical and methodological construct is useful in this endeavor. After reviewing the concept of spatializing culture as it has been developed within anthropology, I then draw on three diverse fieldwork examples to illustrate the value of the approach. The first revisits the ethnohistory of the Spanish American plaza and claims the space of the plaza for indigenous groups and contemporary cultural interpretation from its unjustified Eurocentric past. The second explores Moore Street Market, an enclosed Latino food market in Brooklyn, New York, claiming this urban commercial space for a translocal set of social relations, rather than a gentrified redevelopment project. And the third examines residents living in private housing schemes such as gated communities in Texas and New York and cooperative apartment complexes in New York, reclaiming public space and confronting the racism and class segregation being created by enclosure and securitization.

SPATIALIZING CULTURE

The concept of “spatialized culture” that I employ builds on the work of many anthropologists, beginning with Hilda Kuper’s (1972) seminal article on political space as well as considering ethnographies that examine the relationship of architecture and culture (Fernandez 1977; Griaule 1954; Paul 1976). It emerged while working collectively with a group of urban anthropologists who employ material space as a strategy for interrogating the city (Bestor 2004; Holston 1989; Low 1999; Pellow 1996; Rotenberg 1995; Rotenberg and McDonogh 1993; Rutheiser 1996) and from reading French social theorists, geographers, and anthropologists who problematize space and spatial relations in terms of the power dynamics and meanings of everyday life. Much of this terrain has been covered in reviews by John Agnew (2005), J. N. Entrikin (1991), Henrietta Moore (1986), Fred Myers (2002), and Margaret Rodman (1992) as well as by Denise Lawrence-Zúñiga and myself in an early article (Lawrence and Low 1990) and in the introduction to *The Anthropology of Space and Place* (Low and Lawrence-Zúñiga 2003).

French social theorists have placed considerable emphasis on decoding spatial arrangements as one aspect of a social analysis of power and its deployment. They focus on how physical space and spatial relations subjugate or liberate groups and individuals from the state and other sources of power and knowledge. Pierre Bourdieu (1977), Michel De

Certeau (1984), Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (1987), Michel Foucault (1977), and Henri Lefebvre (1991) specifically address the movement and manipulation of the body in space as a dimension of spatial and political control, providing a basis for embodied spatial arguments.

Drawing on Foucault, Paul Rabinow (1989) was one of the first anthropologists to link the growth of modern forms of political power with the evolution of aesthetic theories as well as to analyze how French colonists in North Africa exploited architectural and urban planning principles to reflect their cultural superiority. James Holston (1989) also examines the state-sponsored architecture and master planning of Brasilia as new forms of spatial domination through which daily life became the target for state intervention. In their work, spatializing culture uncovers how spatial relations and architecture contribute to the maintenance of power of one group over another through national, colonial, and postcolonial governance practices.

Lefebvre's foundational work on the social production of space adds that "space is never empty: it always embodies a meaning" (1991:154). His well-known argument that space is never transparent but, rather, must be queried through an analysis of spatial representations, spatial practices, and spaces of representation is the basis of many anthropological analyses. Miriam Kahn (1990), Nancy Munn (1996), Stuart Rockefeller (2010), and Li Zhang (2010) draw on Lefebvre to link conceptual space to the tangible by arguing that social space is both a field of action and a basis for action.

Other anthropological efforts start with Bourdieu (1977) and focus on how meaning and action interact in interdependent ways to inculcate and reinforce cultural knowledge and behavior. Bourdieu's theory of practice provides the point of departure for Henrietta Moore (1986), who concurs that space only acquires meaning when actors invoke it. She argues that spaces are subject to multiple interpretations, such that Endo men and women may share the same conceptual structure but enter into it in different positions and therefore subject it to different interpretations (Moore 1986:163).

Miles Richardson (1982) and Rodman (1992), however, rely on phenomenology and theories of lived space to focus attention on how different actors construct, contest, and ground their personal experience. Alberto Corsín Jiménez goes even further and insists that "space is no longer a category of fixed and ontological attributes, but a becoming, an emergent property of social relationship" (2003:140).

In my own ethnographic work, I initially proposed a dialogical process made up of the social production of space (Harvey 1989; Lefebvre 1991) and the social construction of space (Berger and Luckman 1967; Richardson 1982; Rodman 1992) to explain how culture is spatialized. In this analysis, the social production of space includes all those factors—social, economic, ideological, and technological—that result, or seek to result, in the physical creation of the material setting. The materialist emphasis of the term *social production* was useful in defining the historical emergence and

political-economic formation of urban space. The term *social construction* was reserved for the phenomenological and symbolic experience of space as mediated by social processes such as exchange, conflict, and control. Thus, the social construction of space is the social, psychological, and functional transformation of space—through people's social exchanges, memories, images, emotions, and daily use of the material setting—into scenes and actions that convey meaning. Both processes are social in the sense that the production and construction of space are mediated by social processes, especially because they are contested and fought over for economic and ideological reasons. Understanding them can help us see how local conflicts over space can be used to uncover and illuminate larger issues (Low 1996, 2000).

Unfortunately, this coproduction model is limited by its two-dimensional structure. It does not consider two other important spatial dimensions: that of the body and of the group—the embodied spaces of the self—person—family in the Western intellectual tradition and the transnational and translocal spaces of the modern world and global economy. Further, the coproduction model does not address how language and discourse influence the meaning and politics of the built environment. To develop a more powerful notion of spatializing culture, it is necessary to incorporate these additional understandings of spatial practices and meanings.

Adding embodied space to the social construction and social production of space solves much of this problem. The person as a mobile spatial field—a spatiotemporal unit with feelings, thoughts, preferences, and intentions as well as out-of-awareness cultural beliefs and practices—creates space as a potentiality for social relations, giving it meaning and form; ultimately, through the patterning of everyday movements, the person produces place and landscape (Low 2009; Munn 1996; Rockefeller 2010). The social construction of space is accorded material expression as a person—spatiotemporal unit, while social production is understood as both the practices of the person—spatiotemporal unit and global and collective forces. Further, language and discourse theories expand the conceptualization of spatializing culture by examining how talk and media are deployed to transform the meaning of practices and spaces (Duranti 1992). For example, gated community residents' discourse of fear and the media's excessive reporting of crime each play a critical role in sustaining the spatial preference for and cultural acceptance of walled and guarded developments. The concept of "spatializing culture" employed in this discussion, thus, encompasses these multiple processes—social production, social construction, embodiment, and discursive practices—to develop an anthropological analysis of space and place.

The following fieldwork examples emphasize different aspects of this conceptualization. The Spanish American plaza study employs a historical social production and social construction perspective. The Moore Street market ethnography utilizes an embodied spatial analysis to understand the

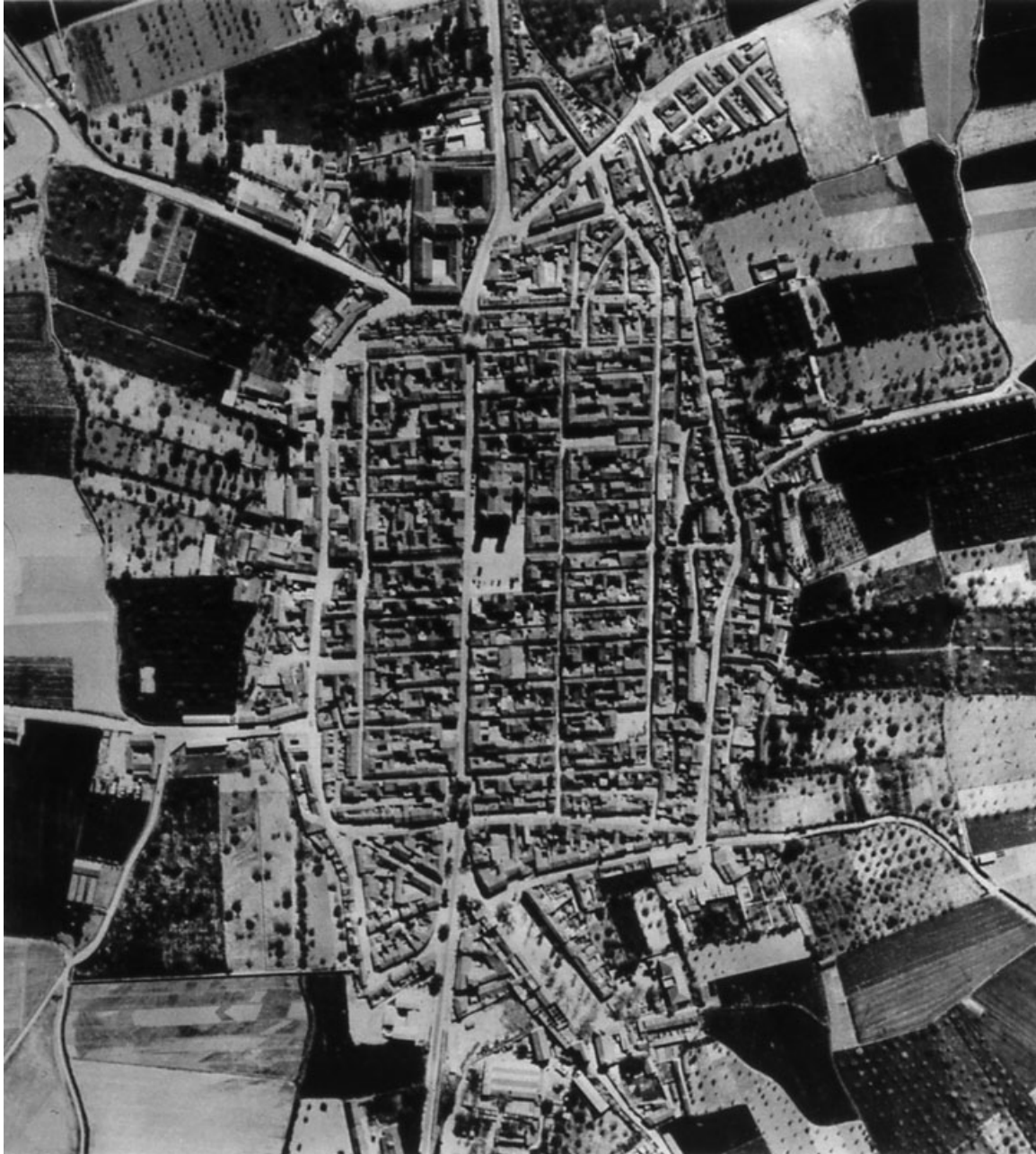


FIGURE 1. *Santa Fe de Granada, Spain. (Photograph by Setha Low)*

immigrant social center as a translocal place worth preserving. And the gated communities and New York City cooperative housing study that began as a spatial analysis also contains legal, governmental, and financial dimensions of exclusion.

THE SPANISH AMERICAN PLAZA

The first fieldwork example began 20 years ago as part of a long-term ethnographic project on the meaning of the plaza in San José, the capital city of Costa Rica (Low 2000). I was studying Parque Central, the colonial and contemporary center, as a site of social resistance and expression of national

culture and wondered about the origin of its design and central grid-plan location in terms of its historical meanings for Josefinos (San José residents). Costa Rican historians, architectural historians, and many anthropologists suggested that I look for its antecedents in Spain and other parts of Western Europe, where plazas were initially constructed. Madrid, Salamanca, and *bastides* (fortified new towns) in France as well as the garrison town of Santa Fé, Granada (see Figure 1) were identified as models (Foster 1960). I visited Spanish, French, Dutch, and Italian plazas and was puzzled to find that most of them were of more recent construction than the ones found in the New World and

did not conform in spatial configuration, design form, and location.

What I found instead was that the conventional wisdom regarding the plaza's architectural history was based on a tacit assumption that the plaza-centered urban design was of solely European derivation. For example, the literature identified the 1573 "Laws of the Indies" or the writings of the Italian Renaissance as the main sources of New World plaza design, even though these documents were published many years after the establishment of the first Spanish American towns. In fact, according to Ramón Gutiérrez (1983), the design of the Plaza Mayor in Madrid completed in 1617 (see Figure 2) was stimulated by the urban design experiments of the New World, rather than the reverse. When Madrid was chosen to serve as the political center of Spain in 1561, it became an architectural laboratory in which ideas received from Spanish-controlled cities were tried and developed and then sent out again into the Spanish realm (Escobar 1995). The implication is that European and North American architectural historians and some anthropologists overlooked the Precolumbian architectural and archaeological legacy of the Americas and so constructed a Eurocentric narrative of the evolution of this urban form (Low 1995).

Interestingly, though, within archaeology, the assumption that the Nahua and Maya of Mexico and Central America were passive recipients of colonial Hispanic culture had been thoroughly refuted (Jones 1989; Weeks 1988). But this insight had not been applied to the domain of architecture and urban design, where the supposed ascendancy and control of the Spanish colonizers remained unquestioned. From the vantage point of thinking about the plaza spatially, Nahua and Maya peoples' resistance to colonial domination was likely to have taken spatial and architectural forms that could be traced in the archaeological and historical record. If, as I and many others (Harvey 2000; Low 1996; Low and Smith 2006; Mitchell 2003) have argued, cultural conflict and contestation are encoded in the built environment, then the material evidence and its coconstitutive sociospatial relations should reflect these struggles.

I next consulted the archives at the John Carter Brown Library where I found the original maps of Tenochtitlan in letters and reports by early travelers, priests, and conquistadores that described New World cities and their ceremonial and market spaces. I also had an opportunity to read the existing archaeological accounts of pre-Columbian and colonial excavations of plazas functioning or built throughout this contact period (Graham 2004, 2006, 2008, 2009; Graham et al. 1989; Jones 1989; Pendergast 1993).

New World cities such as Tenochtitlan in Mexico (Clendinnen 1991, M. E. Smith 2008) and Cuzco in Peru (Hyslop 1990) were large, centered on ceremonial plazas surrounded by major temples and residences of the ruling elite. On their arrival, the Spaniards admired these exceptional models of urban design and wrote about the grandeur, order, and urbanity of these newly discovered cities. Even though there were major differences between the Valley

of Mexico and the tropical lowlands in that straight streets did not characterize the lowland urban form, a hierarchy of central plazas and temples was found in most Mesoamerican cities. The ceremonial and commercial use of these plazas, as well as their sacred and civil meanings and regular forms, contrasted with the irregular and functionally dispersed spaces of the medieval European city and yet were similar to the subsequent colonial plazas built after the Conquest.

The case of Tenochtitlan, today's Mexico City, provides a revealing example. For the Mexica, the ideal city type was a sacred space oriented around a sacred center and a replica of cosmological space (Carrasco 1990). If the central plaza and Great Temple of Tenochtitlan was the sacred space of the Mexica world, I postulated, then it would retain its sacredness even when Cortés built the cathedral and the colonial plaza on its ruins. Based on the idea that space is produced by its social relations and that those social relations are made up of different conceptualizations of space, each time an indigenous plaza is reconstituted or rebuilt retaining aspects of its original spatial form and integrity, the new form retains and conserves some of its historical and cultural meanings. Further, from the point of view of the indigenous residents, the colonial plazas were not used so differently from how they were used before: that is, they remained sites of elite religious and political power. It is also important to keep in mind the actual construction process wherein builders were indigenous workers who knew the meanings of the carvings and spatial relations that they were realigning.

From my Mesoamerican archaeology colleagues, Wendy Ashmore (Ashmore 2007; Ashmore and Knapp 1999), Elizabeth Graham (2004, 2006, 2008), and Michael Smith (1996, 2007, 2008), I also learned that many colonial plazas and churches were superposed: that is, built directly on top of the Mexica or Maya originals. By exploring the urban design and plaza layout in Mexico City and two archaeological sites in Belize—Negroman-Tipu and Lamanai—where superposition had occurred, I was then able to trace the evolution of these plaza spaces and their indigenous foundations.

Tipu was a continuously occupied town that flourished in the period prior to the Conquest, and it is an example that documents the way in which Maya and Spanish architecture was interrelated (Graham 2004, 2006, 2008, 2009; Graham et al. 1989; Jones 1989; Pendergast 1993). It reaffirmed my contention that even though Spaniards built a new plaza near the original Postclassic temple—or superposed a church on a ceremonial platform in Lamanai—this did not necessarily represent a break with earlier traditions, and the Maya continued to practice their own religion and follow their earlier cultural beliefs, even while building for the Spanish priests. Contemporary ethnographic evidence from Chiapas further confirms that Maya belief and practice did not come to an end—it only went underground. Even the Zapatista rebels built Maya sacred ceremonial centers called *aquacalientes* to proclaim their political and ethnic identity (Gossen 1996).



FIGURE 2. *Plaza Mayor, Madrid, Spain. (Photograph by Setha Low)*

Mexico City's plan, designed by Hernán Cortés and executed by Alonso Garcia Bravo, was derived from the structure and foundations of the Mexica city of Tenochtitlan. The *zocalo* (plaza) of Mexico City and surrounding buildings retained a close relationship to the original order of Mexica governmental and religious architecture. The pattern of successive core-central space domination here was appropriated by the Spanish and repeated throughout the region (Ashmore 1991).

From an examination of the spatial, ethnohistorical, and archaeological evidence, it appears that the central plaza of Spanish America has its foundations primarily in indigenous, and secondarily in Spanish, urban design traditions. It could be argued that, especially for Mexico City and archaeological sites like Tipu and Lamanai, the spatial relationships that were maintained by building on the ruins using the same stones and foundations and using the same laborers reinforced the remaining elements of the Mexica politico-religious cultural system. These latent meanings may have been used to reaffirm indigenous identity, self-esteem, and spiritual power and preserve indigenous beliefs, practices, and sacred space.

The sociospatial and historical analysis of the Spanish American plaza's built form demonstrates that the tensions of conquest and resistance are encoded spatially and architecturally. Thus, the plaza remains a contested terrain of architectural and political representation. The history of the plaza, however, also illustrates that spatial representations

of the dominant—in this case, colonial—culture obscure representations of the less powerful. But this obfuscation can be remedied by the investigation of specific places, utilizing historical, ethnological, and archaeological research. The exploration of the indigenous history can illuminate indigenous peoples' political and cultural resistance in the face of Spanish hegemonic practices. And this is the engaged aspect of this project: the use of social critique reclaims the plaza for an indigenous present and validates indigenous peoples' knowledge production, planning skills, and design ingenuity. Instead of continuing to write and reproduce a seamless story of colonization and oppression, the investigation of physical space and its meanings and its social relations reconstitute it as an indigenously produced place and offer a more complex reading of the local experience. Space thus offers another venue for resistance: in this case, academic resistance to Eurocentric and hegemonic discourses of the Conquest as well as indigenous resistance to published European claims to the past.

MOORE STREET MARKET, BROOKLYN, NEW YORK

At lunchtime, Moore Street market is bustling, housed in a squat, white cement building that, with its barred windows and painted metal doors, looks more like a bunker than an enclosed food market. The deserted street in the shadow of the looming housing projects seems oddly quiet for a busy Monday morning. On entering, however, carefully stacked displays of fresh fruit, yucca, and coriander;

passageways lined with cases of water and soda; and high ceilings with vestiges of the original 1940s architecture of wooden stalls, bright panels, and ceiling fans reveal another world. Puerto Rican salsa music emanating from the video store competes with Dominican cumbia blaring from a radio inside the glass-enclosed counter of a narrow restaurant stall where rice, beans, empanadas, and arroz con pollo, glistening with oil and rubbed red spice, are arrayed. The smell of fried plantains fills the air-conditioned space as Puerto Rican pensioners gather at the round red metal tables with red-and-white striped umbrellas open to offer intimate places to sit and talk. A young boy in a Yankees T-shirt orders lunch for his Colombian mother, who is hesitant to pass the security guard perched at the entrance who she thinks might ask for her immigration papers. She remains outside in the already-blazing Brooklyn sun, searching for a spot to sell flavored ices on the crowded sidewalk near the subway entrance.

One of the vendors, Doña Alba, shuts her metal-screened stall, locking away her Seven Saints' oil, plastic flowers, and white first-communion dresses. She tells me about her most recent trip to Latin America and success at obtaining the special orders and medicinal potions for her regular customers. As a young girl from Mexico, she worked her way up from cleaning for the white middle-class families who at that time lived in the neighborhood and selling fruit at a street stand to leasing her own retail space. The recent threat of eviction by the New York City Economic Development Corporation (EDC), however, has slowed what little business there has been during the economic recession, and she worries about her future and the enterprise of which she is so proud and has so painstakingly built.

Moore Street Market, built in 1941 and located in East Williamsburg, Brooklyn, is one of nine enclosed markets constructed to relocate the pushcart vendors and open-air markets and supply modernizing New York City with safe and affordable food. During the 1940s and 1950s, it was a thriving Irish, Jewish, and Italian immigrant market. Although the neighborhood had a significant Puerto Rican population by 1960, as late as the early 1970s some of the original residents and market vendors remained. But the market and the neighborhood physically deteriorated with urban disinvestment during the 1970s and 1980s. Despite an architectural renovation in 1995, its tenuous commercial viability because of a decreasing number of vendors and shoppers was exacerbated in March of 2007 when the EDC announced that it would be closed to make way for affordable housing (Gonzalez 2008a).

With the threat of closure, the Public Space Research Group (PSRG), a team of CUNY faculty and graduate students, joined the remaining vendors and the Project for Public Spaces to help formulate a community-based response to the EDC's closure. Reporters from the *New York Times* also supported the Moore Street market vendors, stating that "the 70-year old Moore Street market was always more than just a place to do business . . . [it was] part of the fab-

ric of Williamsburg life, with periodic cultural events and tiny shops and stalls that hearken back to the days before glitzy shopping malls and sterile big-box stores" (Gonzalez 2007). New York City officials and private developers who would benefit from building affordable housing argued instead that the market was not supporting itself and was "tired" and "rundown." The media coverage and heated community meetings drew political attention from U.S. Representative Nydia Velázquez and State Assemblyman Vito Lopez, who ultimately secured \$3.2 million in federal funding to keep Moore Street open (Gonzalez 2008b).

The ethnographic descriptions and vendor life histories collected are being used to reinstate the market as a Latino social center and to offer an alternative to the gentrification project that "saved" Essex Street market, a boutique food market in Manhattan's Lower East Side. Although the revitalization of the market is still in process, one of the members' of the PSRG, Babette Audant, continues to attend community meetings and collaborate with stakeholders. This advocacy effort, though, also required a more embodied spatial analysis focused not only on the social production of this historic market but also on the everyday practices and agency of the vendors, shoppers, and neighbors who valued the market. By *embodied spatial analysis*, I mean the theoretical premise that individuals as mobile spatiotemporal fields realize space and the importance of bodily movement and mobility in the creation of locality and translocality as discussed earlier in this article (Low 2009; Rockefeller 2010). Moore Street market reverses the plaza example in which historical, archaeological, and spatial evidence resulted in social critique and engagement. Here, what began as a collaboration and advocacy project also generated scholarly insights into a translocal and community-based public space through the mobilities, emotions, and meanings of the people who work, shop, and hang out there.

Moore Street market vendors are Latinos from Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Mexico, and Nicaragua. The Puerto Ricans immigrated to New York in the 1940s, while Dominicans, Mexicans, and Nicaraguans immigrated mostly in the 1980s. Their national and cultural identities are spatially inscribed with Puerto Rican vendors located at the market's social and economic heart, a central area near the café that sells Caribbean food and plays salsa music, while the relatively new Nicaraguans and Mexican vendors are located in stalls along the periphery. These first-generation immigrants keep ties to their homeland alive through music, food, family relationships, and visits home. Many travel back and forth from their native countries bringing goods for sale and carrying gifts and merchandise to families living in Latin America.

The majority of customers are older Puerto Rican men and women who use the market for day-to-day social interactions and the purchase of food (see Figure 3). For older Puerto Rican men, buying food seems a pretext for socializing with the vendors and other customers. Often the same group of men moves slowly from one end of the market to



FIGURE 3. *Moore Street Market vendors.* (Photograph by Babette Audant)

the other, perching on the “No Sitting” barriers and at the tables in the café area, sometimes taking a tour outside the market onto Moore or Humboldt Streets, only to return later in the afternoon. Puerto Rican women are almost always in motion, arriving in pairs and chatting as they select their vegetables (see Figure 4). If they stop for a snack, it is eaten leisurely but while standing. But once their purchases are complete, the women move on and out of the market. On weekends, the crowd remains overwhelmingly Puerto Rican with other Latino customers shopping but not necessarily joining the family groups seated at the café tables, eating *sancocho* (a traditional stew of root vegetables and meats) and other specialties.

Analytically the ethnography of Moore Street market reveals how urban public space links the body in space, the global–local power relations embedded in space, the role of language and discursive transformations of space, and the material and metaphorical importance of architecture and urban design. It is through this embodied space that the global is integrated into the arenas of everyday urban life and becomes a site of translocal and transnational as well as personal experience. Moore Street market can be understood as a place where people spend the day listening to music from their homeland, eating lunch, and working at stalls wherein they make their livelihoods. Simultaneously they are enmeshed in networks of relationships, transnational circuits,

and ways of being that extend from the built environment of the market to the towns from which they came—and from which, in many cases, the products they sell came and where family members remain, supported from the profits of these commercial endeavors.

It is in the movement of these vendors, shoppers, pensioners, and visitors—differentiated by gender, age, class, ethnicity, and national identity—and their everyday activities such as conversations, purchases, the enjoyment of music, and the consumption of homemade food that makes the market space what it is. And it is through the embodied spaces of their social relationships that the market is simultaneously a local and translocal place.

That is not to say that the market as socially produced by the political machinations of New York City institutions and officials does not continue to play a role in its physical condition and architectural form and pose a challenge to the market’s continued existence. Nor that the meanings of the market are not socially constructed differently by the African American residents who live nearby, tourists who visit, the officials who want to close it, the media who want a story, and the regulars who see it as their place. Even the language and metaphors of state officials and the media and the “talk” of visitors and neighbors contribute to a series of characterizations of the space as being either at “the center of the Latino community” or a place that is



FIGURE 4. Moore Street Market women. (Photograph by Babette Audant)

“forlorn, decaying and deteriorating” (interview, 2009), but these contradictory discourses come into dialogue with one another through the space of the market and the people who use it. In this sense, the market is a form of spatialized culture that encompasses multiple publics and conflicting meanings, contestations, and negotiations. In this case, the engaged practice of community collaboration and activism to preserve the market from gentrification also generated a better understanding of translocality and its role in creating and maintaining a culturally diverse urban public space.

GATED COMMUNITIES AND COOPERATIVES

The last fieldwork example evolved from a multisited ethnography of residents living in gated communities in New York, Texas, and Mexico, in which I found that gating serves as a mode of spatial exclusion and produces a limited kind of safety and security (Low 2003; see Figures 5 and 6). These findings developed into a platform for speaking with residents, urban planners, private developers, and real estate brokers about social, political, and economic consequences of the escalating number of gated communities in the United States, China, and Latin America (Low 2007). But I also found that the impact on social relations was not solely because of the walls and gates but also the legal arrangement of separate ownership of the housing and common ownership of the facilities (Low 2010).

Although my public engagement focuses mainly on the negative consequences of gating such as increased public taxes, reduced access to public space, and other forms of spatial segregation, the main message is that gating is most deleterious for children and families because walls and gates increase fear and anxiety about other people entering (Low 2003). But some of my findings such as sparse neighbor interaction, loss of civil rights because residents are not citizens but members of a corporation (McKenzie 1994), and minimal political participation and sense of representation cannot be explained adequately by spatial enclosure. Instead, they appear to be because of the articulation of the walled space with the legal institution that organizes the collective ownership of the facilities and the governance structure of the homeowners’ association that regulates and monitors it. It is this interlocking of spatial, legal, and governance systems in gated communities that creates a “securitized” environment.

Although my use of the term *securitization* emerged from the discourse of interviewees during my fieldwork, theoretically it is similar to Emil Røyrvik’s (2010) concept of “securitization,” which draws from both the economic financial and political military securitization that, in my research, was expressed in the home environment (Low 2008). He identifies two major trends: the securitization of the social and the sociality of securitization that create distrust and distancing,



FIGURE 5. *Gated community entrance. (Photograph by Setha Low)*

cultures of fear, militarism, and deep patterns of global inequality based on the unhooking of symbolic representations from reality and what he calls “racketeering” (Røyrvik 2010). Matt McDonald’s (2008) work is also helpful because of his unpacking of the discursive construction and unspecified elements of security and securitization in the context of the speech act. With regard to this project, however, while *security* is employed by interviewees discursively, I am using the term to describe interlocking and overlapping spatial, legal, institutional, governmental, and financial strategies of producing security in its multiple meanings and dimensions in private housing environments.

There are other kinds of collective private housing schemes such as the market-rate cooperative apartment buildings in New York City known as “co-ops,” so I began another study to compare what impact these types of buildings have on residents (see Figures 7 and 8). Although co-ops are explicitly committed to democratic practices and nondiscrimination (Conover 1959; see also Susser 1982), in practice they are sometimes exclusionary and often perceived as socially segregated, just as gated communities are (Gaines 2005). Exactly how this social exclusion occurs varies by the following: the size of the building; the history, location, and politics of the neighborhood; and the social composition of the residents. Furthermore, because I am still completing the research, I can only draw a preliminary picture of what I am finding. However, gated communities and co-ops have some features in common, such as the creation of a private, securitized environment that is partly the result of urban neoliberal policies, privatization practices, and municipal regulations. The similarities appear to be the result of the comparable corporate derived legal and gover-

nance structures, not just the spatial configuration, and in the case of co-ops, an additional financial screening component (Low et al. in press).

Both forms of collective private housing schemes evolved originally from a racist history of deed restrictions, restrictive covenants, and selective mortgage lending. In 1948, the Supreme Court ruled that enforced racial covenants violated the equal protection clause of the U.S. constitution, hoping that the case of *Shelley v. Kraemer* would end racial segregation because these covenants would no longer be enforceable. Of course, strategic mortgage lending, red lining, and real estate collusion continued in force (Hayden 2003), but other more invisible forms of social control also began to be used to spatially monitor and limit who belongs within a community. Collective private property schemes in the United States have their origin in Gramercy Park in New York City, where the park and streets were owned by a trust. Common Interest Developments (CIDs) were developed in 1928 to create collective private property regimes with homeowners associations and cooperatives with co-op boards. Market rate co-ops had been in existence and used by the wealthy and artists since 1981 but increasingly became a means for organizing and limiting residential membership (McKenzie 1994, 1998, 2003).

The major difference between cooperative housing and gated communities is the structure of ownership. Co-op residents purchase shares in a corporation but do not actually own their units. Gated community residents retain fee simple ownership of their units and common ownership of the facilities. This means that gated community residents can sell or rent their units without the approval of the homeowners’ association board—although some HOAs retain the right of



FIGURE 6. *Gated community development.* (Photograph by Setha Low)

first refusal—while a co-op board must approve buyers or renters and has the power to grant or withhold approval based on an extensive financial review. Co-op boards are notorious for refusing prospective buyers who may even have already qualified for a mortgage. Although they are not allowed to discriminate by race, ethnicity, age, gender, and sexual orientation, they can refuse those they feel are a financial risk.

In terms of representation, board participation, and social interaction with their board and neighbors, residents living under these two private governance regimes reported experiences that were quite similar. However, my coauthors and I found a divergence in how safe and secure they feel and think this difference is revealing (Low et al. in press). For instance, while gated community families say that they feel safe and secure, they often express considerable ambivalence about the matter and talk about their constant anxiety about workers and others as illustrated in Karen's comment:

That's what's been most important to my husband, to get the children out here where they can feel safe, and we feel safe if they could go out in the streets and not worry that someone is going to grab them . . . we feel so secure and maybe that's wrong too. You know, we have got workers out here, and we still think, "oh, they're safe out here." [interview, July 2002]

Co-op residents, however, are less concerned with safety and attribute this to the combination of the financial-screening process and gate-like actors such as doormen or a secured key entry. As Yvonne puts it: "I've seen them stop people at the door whom they don't recognize and so you feel kind

of safe, you know, you're going to be in the building with people that are supposed to be here" (interview, September 2007).

But it is just as much the co-op application process and the financial vetting of potential residents that is said to create this sense of security. Vanessa explains: "There is a certain feeling like knowing that everyone else had to go through the same agony to get by the co-op board . . . that my next door neighbor isn't this axe-murderer or that they are not paying their rent by selling drugs [laughs]" (interview, October 2007). Similarly, Patricia says, "I really trusted the homogeneity of that building, that I was not going to find someone so very different from me" (interview, December 2006).

Some residents, though, perceive the co-op application process as having racist implications, and we found more than one instance in which people of color felt they were treated differently. Yul, a self-identified Filipino, talks about what he perceived as "racist questions" during his application interview, explaining that he was asked "things they won't ask in a job interview that you could sue for . . . [including] do you cook any ethnic food that smells offensive?" (interview, October 2006). Similarly, Korean American Yvette explains her concern: "I think co-op boards can get away with discrimination without . . . doing it outwardly because they don't have to tell you what they like and what they don't like" (field notes, April 2007).

Another aspect of this securitization process found in both gated communities and co-ops is the purchase price of



FIGURE 7. *Cooperative apartment building. (Photograph by Jessica Miller)*

the unit, ability to obtain a mortgage and pay the monthly fees, and the resulting *laissez-faire* racism (Bobo et al. 1996). Gary, a white male, laughed knowingly when he explained how this kind of inadvertent racism occurs:

Cause first of all, there's an income screen. By the time you enter a building like that, people . . . at least can afford to rent and they can mortgage a million-dollar condo. Like the apartment, I bought this for six-fifty [years ago]. The one that's identical to this just got sold for a million-two. And the person that bought it was not acceptable to the board. Then it got resold for approximately a million. So, by the time you are at that level, uh, you're color blind, but you don't see that many colors. [interview, April 2007]

This kind of discrimination was evident not only in terms of race and socioeconomic status but also with regard to sexuality. Other co-op residents used a neighbor's fear of being identified as a homosexual to control how much access he had to garden space. This individual acquiesced to these

demands because he saw it as “preserving life in the middle of danger.”

These everyday events are experienced as tolerable, told as anecdotal, and are reflected in the discourse of “people like us” that extends beyond race and class to police most aspects of identity and regulate social homogeneity. Thus, the desire to live with similar people and with people who behave in a similar way is perceived as normative and natural, but the mechanisms to achieve this goal are structurally complex and hidden even to the residents themselves. Gated communities provide this desired homogeneity through extensive covenants and regulations and the containment and surveillance of communal spaces with walls and limited access (Low 2007, 2008; Monahan 2006). For this reason, gated communities are viewed by critics as increasing spatial segregation. Co-ops, however, provide homogeneity through the application and selection process and the ability to determine who



FIGURE 8. *Cooperative apartment building. (Photograph by Jessica Miller)*

can buy or rent a unit, thus creating a social environment that is perceived as safe and where residents feel at home without draconian spatial restrictions (Low 2010). Yet this desire for social and economic homogeneity also produces environments in which minority residents feel singled out and where racist and exclusionary behavior can be more easily exhibited.

The development of neoliberal policies in the United States, which include the growth of privatization and market-driven housing schemes, saturate the state, political culture, and social relations with a market rationality that effectively strips commitments to political democracy from governance concerns (Brown 2006:695). In doing so, undemocratic processes and legal arrangements such as cooperatives and gated communities that previously might have been interrogated instead continue to reinforce social and racial segregation within this neoliberal landscape (Harvey 2005; Peck and Tickell 2002). What this research adds to this discussion is that spatial enclosure, often identified as a foundational neoliberal strategy, does not fully account for the resulting social exclusion and spatial inequality without also considering governance and legal institutional practices. Private governance structures and the financialization of daily life (Martin 2002)—which measures personal worth and trust in term of income, investments, and savings—play equally important roles. It is this interweaving of space, governance, and financial and legal institutions that is so politically and so-

cially powerful, especially when evoked by residents' fear or anxiety about Others and the desire to live with "people like us." The concept of "securitization" brings together these interlocking structures with the desire for safety and security, as an important dimension of the increasing spatial fragmentation and social segregation that is occurring in cities and suburbs today. Thus, my engagement with the public about the social, political, and economic problems produced by gated developments evolved into a much broader concern about the impact of corporate privatization and securitization on social relations in general.

CONCLUSION

These case studies illustrate how engagement and spatialization amplify the impact and enhance the breadth and scope of the research or advocacy project. In the Spanish American plaza example, the engagement was through a social critique mobilized to revise the Eurocentric academic account and to recapture plaza history and meaning for indigenous Mexicans. The Moore Street market ethnography project was engaged from its inception, incorporating a collaborative place ethnography to assist the local community and vendors in retaining the market for local use. The spatial analysis helped residents to see the centrality of the market in the neighborhood. It also produced a better way to think about translocality as embodied by users' and residents' circuits of exchange and social networks.

The comparative ethnography of gated community and co-op residents had a more complex evolution. What began as an exploration of the impact of gated developments on residents and a critique of gating's potentially negative consequences on community life became a theory of how neoliberalism works that moves beyond enclosure. In the co-op example, spatial enclosure and surveillance operate in conjunction with legal institutions, governance structures, and financial vetting to transform social relations negatively and reinforce laissez-faire racist practices. Thus, what I have tried to illustrate through these fieldwork examples is how spatial analysis led to engaged practice and how advocacy and application generated spatial and theoretical insights. I believe that one of the strengths of anthropology lies in this close relationship, its theoretical grounding in practice.

My second point is derived from this view of engagement: I suggest that anthropologists have an advantage with regard to theorizing space because we begin our conceptualizations in the field. Regardless of whether it is an ethnographic multisited study, a survey of human-bone locations, or an archaeological dig, there is an encounter with the inherent materiality and subjectivity of fieldwork that situates the anthropologist at its interface. Theories of space that emerge from the sediment of anthropological research draw on the strengths of studying people in situ, producing rich and nuanced sociospatial understandings. Further, when spatial analyses are employed, they offer the engaged anthropologist a powerful tool for uncovering social injustice because so much of contemporary inequality is imposed through spatial and governmental control of the environment and the discourse that mystifies its material effects. Therefore, anthropological approaches to the study of space such as the social production and construction of a Spanish American plaza, the embodied translocal spatiality of Moore Street market, and the spatial governance of co-ops and gated communities suggest ways to improve the lives of those who live, work, or hang out there. In this sense, spatializing culture can be a first or last step toward engagement and one that anthropologists can uniquely employ.

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NOTES

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