Chapter 8
Constructing Authenticity: Location Based Social Networks, Digital Placemaking, and the Design of Centralized Urban Spaces

Robert Cameron

Abstract In urban lives conducted through mobile devices, locative services, and social media discourse, the ability to interact with the image of the city and its public spaces makes it appear more liberal, heterogenous, and democratic. However, in this chapter the collection of data within digital and urban platforms is seen to facilitate an underlying political and economic value system that frames the way in which this image is constructed. Much research has addressed the ways in which social media platforms attempt to centralize online discourse to monopolize revenue from advertizing and data analytics. Less has been done to identify the ways in which governments, private developers, and nonprofit cultural institutions utilize these platforms to encourage the growth of centralized urban spaces. This chapter analyses the relationships between location-based social networks and emerging practices of digital placemaking to understand how discourse of a more authentic and communal "public" space masks the emergence of "Hypermediated Space"—places where architecture and other forms of cultural production are "optimised" to increase the profitability of centralized spaces for urban stakeholders.

Keywords Digital placemaking · Public space · Location-based social networks · Hypermediated space

8.1 Introduction

For most city dwellers, digital media and networked devices have become so integral to daily life that they are inseparable from understandings of self and place. In this context, digital platforms are providing the backbone of an expanding "network culture" (Patelli 2014). Location-based social networks (LBSNs) are a significant development in networked communications as they reconfigure relationships between people, objects, and events through their dynamic and interactive representations of the city (Evans 2015). LBSNs are social platforms that encourage users

R. Cameron (✉)
University of Western Australia, Perth, Australia
e-mail: robert.cameron@research.uwa.edu.au

© Springer Nature Switzerland AG 2020

L. P. Rajendran and N. D. Odeleye (eds.), *Mediated Identities in the Futures of Place: Emerging Practices and Spatial Cultures*, Springer Series in Adaptive Environments,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-06237-8_8

to contribute to databases of places by providing their exact location when posting their activities online. Shared information can then be accessed through the program's interface, allowing users to see other people's thoughts and memories of place. Some theorists have heralded the possibility of increased interaction between different communities within LBSN platforms as the beginning of a new culture of participation (Evans 2015; Foth and Sanders 2008; Patelli 2014). They argue that access to user-generated information about urban environments will deepen understandings of place and provide urban dwellers with greater political agency. In contrast with this view, there is a well-established body of criticism that argues that participation cannot be open or democratic within privately owned platforms whose software driven interfaces structure public discourse to service their economic ends (Hermosillo 2004; Barreneche 2012). As Hemment (2004) identifies, control over location data provides private interests with the power to pinpoint and to connect individuals to extensive databases that shape the way in which the world is represented. This chapter expands on academic discourse about the political nature of the representation of place in LBSN platforms to examine how LBSNs influence the production of space, including the design of the built environment and the production of "public" culture.

This chapter first examines theories of the relationship between technological change and the development of the urban fabric. It then identifies how political understandings of public space inform both the design of the city and its representation in media. Global city networks place urban spaces in competition with each other, vying for the attention and business of local and global populations (Taylor 2004). Despite a clear identification in urban and social theory that anytime/anywhere access to network culture has made the public sphere independent of physical spaces (Cuff 2003; De Waal 2011; Willis 2008; Shepard 2008), there is a large amount of public and private investment into the "activation" of centralized public spaces. Placemaking ideology increasingly informs the development of these spaces, consolidating public and private investment into not-for-profit organizations that curate the production of architecture, public artworks, and urban events (LeGates and Stout 2015). Placemakers argue that their methods produce authentic public spaces that "maximize shared value" for the communities that they "build". This chapter will critique the political models of liberal or community public space underpinning this rhetoric and examine more closely what communities and values placemaking represents.

In the widely cited *The Space of Flows*, Castells (2001) argues that "urbanity, street life, [and] civic culture" should be as important to urban planners as "economic competitiveness". This chapter will argue that in the *Hypermediated Spaces* of contemporary western cities, the image of urbanity, street life and civic culture is *synonymous* with economic competitiveness. As LBSNs gather more users they can provide a vast range of openly accessible or purchasable data that can be used to direct the design of urban spaces. The use of this data to "optimise" the design of architecture and public art for economic ends challenges academic rhetoric that LBSN produces more interactive, democratic, and community engaged public space. This chapter engages with political and social theory to develop a framework for understanding the relationship between LBSNs and cultural production. It uses this

framework to examine how the automation of urban life through Hypermediated Spaces might place limitations upon the political and social agency of architecture and public art. It then concludes by proposing ways in which emerging forms of interactive art and architecture could provide opportunities for urban dwellers to engage in the production of public space without being co-opted into the construction of "authenticity".

8.2 The Techno-social Ontology of Place

Every medium of communication available to a culture introduces a unique mode of discourse by providing new orientations of thought, expression, and sensibility (Postman 2006). In *The Extensions of Man*, McLuhan (1994) explains how all forms of social knowledge and practice are inseparable from the media that makes them possible. Changes to ideological constructs, such as the dichotomy between public and private, notions of address, or the relationship between the built environment and nature result from "the new scale that is introduced into our affairs by each extension of ourselves." (McLuhan 1994). While McLuhan's theories have been criticized for being deterministic, similar theories of the social construction of technology such as those of Simondon (2009) identify a dialectic relation in the way that political and cultural values influence the design and implementation of technology. Hence the difference between invention, which is involved in the creation of new knowledge, technologies, or artefacts, and innovation which directs invention towards an economic teleology. As technologies increase the mobility of objects, people, and information they transform how we perceive places in both an immediate, embodied sense, but also the ways in which we communicate our knowledge and memory of place to others (Curry 1999). Ownership and control over the technological media of public discourse is therefore a position of immense social power as its design shapes the way we perceive the world and each other.

Historically, changes to dominant systems of communication brought about by new technologies have caused drastic shifts in the way that the public spaces of towns and cities are designed (Shane 2014). In *Complexity and Contradiction* the architect (Venturi 1977) examined this idea in relation to transmutations in architectural form and symbolism, demonstrating how they are manifestations of program and structure. As the built environment is adapted to the needs of the predominant political, technological, and social context, this in turn changes the symbolic meaning of the environment. McLuhan (1994) gives the example of electric lighting, which provided architecture with a mutability of appearance depending on context and opened the city to new modes of social activity. Koolhaas (2014) describes this change in detail in his history of Coney Island, which served as a testbed for experimental use of electric lighting to facilitate new patterns of consumption within a dramatic nightlife. McQuire (2008) also discusses this in relation to the role of the camera in Hausmann's transformation of Paris and how the image of the city in postcards, billboards and other forms of print and broadcast media fragmented the spatial understanding of

the city and disseminated the idea of the modern city as a visual spectacle. Thrift (2004) discusses this in relation to the invention of clocks, timetables, and other technologies of address which have shaped the development of modern cities through the standardization and naturalization of space and time as the organizing factors of urban life. The transformation of the built environment in each of these examples cannot be solely understood through the influence of the technologies themselves. In each case the implementation of these technologies has varied depending on their cultural and political context.

In The Cultures of Cities, Zukin (1996) writes at length about the relationship between cultural production and the business of cities. Culture, she argues, is “a powerful means of controlling cities. As sources of images and memories, cultural artefacts symbolize “who belongs” in specific places.”. Our understanding of the meaning of place (of which public space is but one model) is dependent on the mediums through which it is communicated and those that control them. Architecture and public art play a leading role in this relationship, because their “visible ability to produce both symbols and space”. Buildings serve as the physical structure upon which social interaction occurs, while also operating as the backdrop for the “symbolic economy”.

Traditionally, architecture provided a relatively persistent and stable ground for urban elites to express their political and economic interests (Sudjic 2006) and for urban inhabitants to establish cultural memory (Ekman 2012). The “public space” that was produced by architecture played a vital social role as a site in which people could be confronted with these ideas. As technology has changed the dominant media of public discourse this has had a tangible effect on the ways that spaces and symbols are produced. Despite the emergence of networked communications which have extended public discourse across time and space, many nostalgic understandings of public space persist and frame the way in which political and economic powers construct the spaces and images of the city. To understand the impact of LBSNs upon the production of the city it is important to understand how the media of public discourse shapes the way that we understand public space.

8.3 Space and the Public Image

As Iveson (2009) identifies, “different people frequently claim to address, or act in the best interests of, ‘the city’.” The problem with any assertion of design operating in the interest of “the city” or “the public” is that who constitutes the public, who has access to its resources, and who controls its authorship are complex and contested ideas which sit are the core of political debate around the meaning of place.

In *The Production of Space*, Lefebvre (1991) identified how the built environment emerges from social structures or “spatial codes” that are complex and in flux but can be decoded through an analysis of the values and meanings that “elucidate their rise, their role and their demise.” Like the concepts of space and place, public space could be considered as one of these spatial codes that influences the production of the

city. Public space is a term that is used in a common-sense fashion, but its meaning is often ill-defined and highly contested. As Gieseking et al. (2014) identifies, the terms "public" and "private" are social constructs that "are used to conceptualise different domains of everyday life". This all-encompassing system of classification determines the "degree of access granted to outsiders" in relation to objects, places, activities, and increasingly our bodies. These concepts also order our understanding of psychological, social, and political processes. As such, understandings of public space are inherently political as they assert who has access to society and the kinds of action that are permissible within its spaces.

Kingwell (2014) argues that the public is not simply a sum of private interests nor the resources that are made freely available to them but is the conceptual precondition for their existence. In capitalist societies it is necessary to measure the boundaries between public and private space to properly assert their identity and ownership. In this way we "cannot enter the public because we have never left the public". Our identities themselves are predicated on the notions of what is public and what is private, of who is included and excluded (which also structure or understandings of place). As this chapter has identified, technology plays an important role in this relationship, conforming the body to notions of space, time, and ownership while naturalizing social practices and relationships (Thrift 2004). Iveson (2009) identifies that the city as a public community could not be imagined without some form of mediated discussion. The public sphere is more than just the spaces of the city but any form of media which enables public discourse. While Habermas's influential concept of the public sphere idealises an arena of political discourse in which people can relate independent of the economy and the state (Habermas 1991; Crawford 1995) argues, this is not possible in a society in which access to the public sphere is dependent on one's social position and wealth.

In 1985 Neil Postman's signalled that the technological shift from print to broadcast media as the predominant means of public discourse marked a transition from the "Age of Exposition" to the "Age of Show Business". While a public discourse facilitated primarily through printed text required the "coherent and orderly arrangement of facts and ideas", the "decontextualized information environment" of telecommunications media not only drastically increased the amount of information that people were exposed to but it also transformed the structure of media discourse so that any event, regardless of its relevance to the reader, could become a part of an increasingly fragmented "public image". Telegraphy, he argues "gave a form of legitimacy to the idea of context-free information; that is, to the idea that the value of information need not be tied to any function it might serve in social and political decision making and action, but may attach merely to its novelty, interest, and curiosity. The telegraph made information into a commodity, a "thing" that could be bought and sold irrespective of its uses or meaning." (Postman 2006). Broadcast media greatly expanded the role of the image as the predominant medium of public discourse. As public discourse has moved online, urban dwellers are exposed to an increasingly complex media environment. This has had a dramatic influence upon the way that the idea of public space has been communicated, transforming the representation of place from a professional and institutional practice into a social practice. As with public space,

access to the digital public sphere is subject to the structures and interfaces put in place by the owners of media platforms and network infrastructure who shape the way that people are exposed to representations of place.

Latour (2005) argues that to critically engage with the complexity of relations that make up the contemporary public sphere we need to stop examining issues purely in terms of the values, opinions, attitudes, or principles that are evoked around them and instead focus our attention upon the objects or things that assemble people and ideas. He notes that in the observation and discussion of objects of a political nature we are primarily concerned with questions of representation. The process of producing a faithful representation, Latour argues, has traditionally been understood in two ways: as the gathering of the legitimate audience around a topic, and the accurate representation of the thing to be discussed. In a media environment where world events are consumed in fragmented patterns and from a range of different sources, and with the increasing prevalence of things like "fake news" we need to be critical of both how places and events are represented and the medium through which they are consumed.

Harvey (2008) argues that "The right to the city is [...] far more than a right of individual access to the resources that the city embodies: it is a right to change ourselves by changing the city more after our heart's desire.". In a networked culture where the understanding of place and public space is determined as much through the image of the city consumed in media as it is through the spatial experience of architecture and landscape, this argument should be extended to include a right to the image of the city. The public, that is anyone that is interested in the city and its image, should have the capability to contribute to its authorship. Evans (2015) argues that LBSNs do this by extending the authorship of place to a wider audience. If this is the case, has the right to the spaces of the city also become more equitable? How has the development of a networked culture and society in which public discourse is conducted around the public image influenced the production of urban space?

8.4 The Centralization of Network Culture

Cuff (2003) argues that the networking of social systems through digital media undermines the spatial hierarchies that comprised the traditional city. Anywhere/anytime access to digital media blurs distinctions between public and private, dislocating the public sphere from physical space. The dissemination of the public sphere both spatially and temporally, she argues, makes discussion about urban centres and margins irrelevant. Castells (2001) presents a more balanced argument that the reorganization of space in "networked society" contains aspects of both centralization and decentralization. The centres and margins of cities are a legacy of past approaches to urban design that concentrated social activity in public spaces located in proximity to major nodes of transport networks. While centralized spaces still support public interactions, urban dwellers are less dependent upon them to conduct their lives as location-based technologies have expanded their consciousness of and access to

different parts of the city (Willis 2008). Despite this, centralized public spaces still attract massive amounts of investment, while developers and politicians frequently argue for their importance in the functioning of the city.

Taylor (2004) argues that the economic activities made possible by global information networks have led to "a new centralization" of capital into cities and urban public spaces that facilitates a "hugely inequitable and frighteningly unsustainable" process of consumption-driven behaviour. Within a context in which the imageability of things is understood by many to have the greatest impact on the way that people understand cities (Lynch 1960), competition over the visibility of place within the social imagination is increasingly important for urban stakeholders who stand to profit from greater activity in centralized urban spaces. Zukin (1996) identifies this in the way that "[developers] compete for tourist dollars and financial investments by bolstering the city's image as a center of cultural innovation, including restaurants, avant garde performances, and architectural design."

As Harvey (2009) identifies, local cultures are useful tools for marketers to promote places and products as they represent opportunities to establish what he refers to as "monopoly rents". Monopoly rents, he argues, "[arise] because social actors can realize an enhanced income stream over an extended time by virtue of their exclusive control over some directly or indirectly tradable item which is in some crucial respects unique and non-replicable." (Harvey 2009). There are two conditions in which this can happen: when social actors control a resource, commodity or location that enables them to extract monopoly rents from those who seek to use them (i.e., A vineyard producing exceptional quality wine), or where the place itself is valued for its location (i.e., A centralized site, accessible to concentrated activity such as a public square). In these situations, it is not the place itself that is the commodity that is being traded but the commodities and services produced in relation to them. In the process of constructing an image of the city more amenable to the production of monopoly rents, all forms of cultural production within the city (architecture, public art, performances etc.) are useful because they contribute to the spectacle of public life that is vital to the establishment of an authentic "sense of place". Monopoly rents can be created through the construction of places that are unique by virtue of their cultural production. This has a range of benefits for the stakeholders of these spaces as increased attention and physical traffic means greater opportunity to extract profits from tourism, commercial activities, and public events. At the same time governments and developers can argue for the benefits of the increasing "social capital" that is being provided for those who use these spaces. Local identity and authenticity is an important part of this process, however it is not the only way to attract the attention to public spaces. Cities frequently seek input from renowned international artists and designers to produce unique works that are popular with global audiences.

Much like the way that digital platforms increase their power through the centralization of flows of people and information (Srnicek 2016), so too do urban developers attempt to increase the economic growth of cities through the concentration of people and activity into central locations (Molotch 1976). As code determines the prominence of locations within LBSNs it has the effect of increasing the public consciousness of some spaces while obfuscating others. For those who interact with

the city through LBSNs it can have the effect of reframing the symbolic meaning of the urban fabric (Andersen and Pold 2011).

In urban lives experienced as much through digital interfaces and representations of the city as they are through embodied experience, the spatial codes of modern society are more complex than what can be seen on the surface of the urban fabric. Access to smart devices in urban spaces expands the scope of activities that can occur within cities (Willis 2008), however the centralization of social activity within digital platforms increasingly influences the ways in which many people inhabit the spaces of city. While the aesthetic and symbolic dynamism introduced to urban spaces through media technologies and LBSNs facilitates a change in their political and social function, control over this environment is constituted by a hidden geography of relations between the owners of both the spaces of the city and the media platforms that structure public discourse. Degrees of access to this public sphere are increasingly inequitable as they depend on both technical knowledge of software and computer hardware, and the ownership of the data that they produce.

The centralization of activity within both urban spaces and digital platforms services the economic interests of both digital platform owners and urban stakeholders as it increases their capacity to extract profit from social and commercial activity. Centralized public spaces also have a major strategic advantage for private interests that collect and sell data because they have the capacity to concentrate people in high numbers within spaces of consumption. As flows of people become less dependent on centralized spaces, as territories can be occupied by multiple groups and as the procedures, networks, and assemblages of the city move beyond our perception, new forms of urban intervention such as place-making, media architecture, and interactive public art are emerging to attract people back into these spaces. The developers of centralized public space argue that they operate in the interest of the public and the city. Given the complexity of groups and understandings of place that exists in networked society, we should ask the question for whose city and whose culture are these groups claiming to advocate?

Networked society has expanded the scope of influence that places with an economic interest have to market themselves to a global audience, placing cities in competition with both global and local interests to generate capital from public activity. The resulting competition for visibility and attention has led to a tangible impact upon the ways that public spaces are designed.

8.5 Constructing Authenticity

In reaction to a perceived loss of community and public engagement brought about by a retreat from public spaces to shopping malls (Sorkin 1992), private enclaves (Davis 1990), and private modes of media consumption, the image of the city has become an important component of urban theory focused on the psychology of urban experience (Wirth 1938; Lynch 1960; Putnam 2000). A shift in urban design towards approaches that aim to structure the “visual literacy” of public space can

be seen in the planning practices of New Urbanists such as Peter Calthorpe and Jan Gehl, who advocate for designs that frame the visual appearance of public space in order to engineer greater levels of activity (Gehl 2011; Calthorpe 2010). These approaches to urban planning have recently been popularized in countries such as America and Australia through the work of the global think-tank Project for Public Spaces which describes its methodology of placemaking as a "collaborative process by which we can shape our public realm in order to maximize shared value." (LeGates and Stout 2015).

Proponents of this approach to urban design argue that there is a need to bring people together physically in public spaces to counteract perceived social problems brought about by private modes of consumption. They justify this through two understandings of public space that (Iveson 1998) outlines: the community model and liberal model. The community model of public space is most commonly seen in the writing of advocates of New Urbanism who believe that centrally located public spaces, modelled after pre-capitalist and early twentieth century villages, can ameliorate social issues through the creation of community. These ideas often align with liberal models of public space which idealize physical spaces as "contemporary iterations of the Athenian assembly, providing spaces of embodied co-presence which ideally enable unmediated forms of public interaction." (Iveson 2009).

There are two problems that are evident in these normative and narrow models of public space. Firstly, as Crawford (1995) argues, these ideals stem from nostalgic and deterministic understandings of historical examples of public space such as the Greek Agora, the coffeehouses of Hausman's Paris, or the piazzas or villages of traditional Italy as spaces of open and democratic interaction. As Arendt (2013) identifies, while many of the democratic ideals that we value today originated in Ancient Greece, freedom of access to the polis was only afforded to citizens who were wealthy enough to emancipate themselves from the biological concerns of private life. Narratives that equate urban public spaces with (Habermas 1991) ideas of the public sphere as an arena of open and equitable interaction ignore the fact that class relations dramatically influence the degrees of access and agency people have in relation to the city.

Second, in public spaces all encounters between strangers are mediated by the knowledge or expectations that people bring with them. Representations of places in media are crucial in shaping such expectations and access to them is not evenly distributed. The mobility of urban dwellers also depends on their access to particular technologies such as automobiles and smart phones which shape the way that they perceive the built environment and determine their agency to act within public spaces (Massey 2010). It is also very difficult in a cosmopolitan society to identify who a local community might be, especially as LBSNs such as Airbnb have transformed the demographics of urban inhabitants in many city centres (Chayka 2016). Considering these problems, at best there is a strong cognitive disconnect in language that argues for the axiomatic importance of "unmediated" encounters in urban spaces while simultaneously using media to engineer interaction. At worst, this conceals a deliberate attempt to increase the economic and political power of urban elites

through the colonization of the sensory experience and symbolic meaning of the environment.

As Postman (2006) argues "we do not measure a culture by its output of undisguised trivialities but by what it claims as significant." We should be wary of positivist claims about what constitutes good design in the context of public spaces as claims that representations of a place are axiomatic, factual, or non-virtual conceal attempts to assert or obtain political power by assuming ontological authority.

As Sassen and Shepard (2011) identify, global networks destabilize local understandings of places, as they establish themselves spatially within the topography of urban sites. Augé (2008) argues that the overabundance of information within networked society produces a density of events which threaten to rob public spaces of all meaning. Despite its homogenizing tendencies, network culture does not eliminate place but redistributes control over public space to a range of new actors, often with competing interests. Returning to Venturi, this is a prime example of how the symbolic meaning of the built environment is transformed by a predominant body of political and cultural knowledge that emerges alongside techno-social development. Despite Auge's argument that the authenticity of place is dependent on local history, writers such as Escobar (2001) and Massey (2010) argue that these narratives of loss ignore the fact that place-based cultures, even within "non-places", remain incredibly meaningful to much of the population. In a networked and image-focused society, the source of this meaning is therefore not necessarily reliant on local history, culture, or even architectural symbolism. While in the past we have understood the identity of centralized urban spaces as an emergent phenomenon or a genus loci, Massey (1999) argues that "local uniqueness [or] a sense of place derives not from some mythical internal roots nor from a history of relative isolation—not to be disrupted by globalization—but precisely from the absolute particularity of the mixture of influences found together there.". The idea of a heterotopic or multi-public city that is the site of many different hybrids of cultural and ideological groups, each with their own understanding of and interest in place presents a challenge for groups that wish to bring people together in centralized public spaces. If as Massey identifies, networked media allows for communities and cultures to emerge organically within the spaces of the city why is there still a need to bring people together through the construction of place?

Narratives espoused by theorists such as Augé (2008), Nora (1989), and others of the loss of the authentic identity of urban spaces in the face of globalization have been capitalized upon by placemakers who use them to justify the need for increased "planning, design, management and programming of public spaces" (LeGates and Stout 2015). Placemakers act as middlemen for public and private investment into cultural production so that it can produce the biggest return for the economic stakeholders of public spaces while simultaneously providing the best social outcomes for "the community". Through urban psychology, the image of place is used as a tool to attract people into spaces. Designing the image of urban culture is a marketing exercise where the aim is to instil brand loyalty by encouraging people to equate place identity with individual identity. As Kalandides et al. (2011) identifies, "a brand is, per definition, a network of associations in the minds of individual persons,

and is therefore—on an aggregated level—steeped in the dynamic perceptions of different groups.”. He suggests that it is the role of placemakers to fulfil the diverse demands of these “customers” with the support of a fitting place-brand. Constructing an image of public space that meets these requirements is often done through qualitative research into the place perception of specific target groups, to optimize its appeal to the average consumer. Local and emerging cultures and understandings of place present both a challenge and an opportunity for placemakers if they can be appropriated to attract greater activity around their interventions. The increasing use of LBSNs by urban dwellers provides “digital placemakers” with extensive access to both qualitative and quantitative data about the perception of public spaces. The design of space to be more amenable to communication through LBSNs and the use of data derived from these communications to shape the cultural production of the city results in the emergence of *Hypermediated Space*.

8.6 Hypermediated Space

In his book “Platform Capitalism”, Srnicek (2016) argues that as a result of an overall decline in manufacturing profitability brought about by increased competition and efficiencies, capitalism has had to find new sources of innovation from which to derive profits. While the analysis of data to find efficiencies in production processes and advertizing is not a new thing, the shift towards a networked society has enabled the collection of data on a massive scale. This data is increasingly used to “optimise production processes, give insight into consumer preferences, control workers, provide the foundation for new products and services (e.g. Google Maps, self-driving cars, Siri,), and sell to advertisers.” (Srnicek 2016).

Social media platforms are driven towards the centralization of social activity to maintain business models that are primarily supported through advertizing revenue. Companies increasingly compete to find new forms of social interaction that can be included into this valorization process, to increase the number of users providing this data, and to design their platforms to keep the users’ attention for as long as possible. Platforms such as LBSNs achieve these goals by providing “free” access to their services. The cost of this is offset by the collection of user data which is then sold to data analysis companies and advertisers. Analysis of user behaviour on these platforms is also used to “optimise” the presentation of discourse on their platforms. For example, Pariser (2011) identifies how the news feeds of users on Facebook are organized to present them with political content that reflects their world view. The reason being that they are more likely to return to the platform if they are shown information that reaffirms their beliefs rather than challenging them. A result of this is the formation of “filter bubbles” that present a different view of media events to different groups depending on how they use the platform.

As public consciousness is increasingly driven towards these systems they develop the power to shape the way in which the city is understood. As Ström et al. identify, the way that LBSN platforms represent urban territory naturalises an idea of culture

and nature in which the value of things derives from their ability to attract attention. The objectification of cultural memory in LBSNs and its organization based on likes, upvotes, and shares is problematic for public discourse because it threatens to instate a positivist or essentialist understanding of place. Arendt (2013) refers to the situation in which the social rather than the political shapes public discourse as the "tyranny of the masses". The use of statistics to determine good or "authentic" urban design, limits the capacity for ideas that deviate from these norms to emerge or for political transgression to occur. This can be seen in the emerging practice of Digital Placemaking which integrates data from social media into placemaking practices to justify urban interventions that produce "better" public spaces through "authentic civic engagement" (Latorre 2011).

As the value of art and architecture is equated with its ability to attract an audience rather than from its content, it produces a distinct effect upon the aesthetics of the built environment. D.G. Shane argues that the hybridization of placemaking with quantitative data leads to spaces in which the ability to quickly adapt to changes in activity increases their profitability. This, he argues is similar to Foucalt's "heterotopias of illusion" such as department stores, theatres, carnivals, casinos, and theme parks which have the capacity to "shift actors in time and space through performance and scenography" (Shane 2014). Hypermediated spaces increasingly employ tactics that allow the image of the city to adapt to popular demand. This leads to two distinct approaches in the production of hypermediated space: economic speculation through image-focused design, and the emergence of viral tropes in urban interventions.

Fuller (2011) argues that data driven urbanism "generates demands for momentary, [...] market-driven, intellectual fitnesses that are soon rendered redundant, rotten or exemplary." What results is not the prophesised outcomes of the hegemonic narrative of "smart cities" but an urban landscape that Koolhaas (2002) refers to as Junkspace—a built environment driven by economic speculation and transformation of public space and the public sphere into sites for the staging of private lives. An example of this can be seen in the "Urban Prototyping Festival", a new form of urban event devised by placemakers to conduct design research into more effective ways of activating urban spaces. These events utilize government and philanthropic grants to fund the ideas of local artists and community groups, generating a platform for "bottom-up" intervention in public space. The first festival of this kind was developed by the studio of Jan Gehl in 2015 as the Market Street Prototyping Festival in San Francisco (Gehl_Studio 2015).

Digital placemaking plays a major role in these events as studies are undertaken to determine which installations produce the most public attention both on site and through social media. A result of this form of placemaking is that recipes for "good public space" that are produced from this research are disseminated through networks of placemakers and re-emerge in other locations. Some examples of this are the piano stairs (Fig. 8.1), parklets (Fig. 8.2), or the proliferation of supergraphics by celebrity artists over the surface of the built environment (Fig. 8.3).

As Cohen (2007) describes "The culture of place making involves humans adding layers of shared experiences.". The curation of ephemeral events within the city (which the Project for Public Spaces refers to as the "Lighter, Quicker, Cheaper"

Fig. 8.1 Playing on Piano Stairs at the CNN Center, Atlanta. *Source* Maxim B

Fig. 8.2 The Cyclehoop modular parklet, a modular product used in public spaces in the United Kingdom. *Source* Cyclehoop

Fig. 8.3 A projected optical illusion at the Fremantle Festival 2018. *Source* Daniel D'Annunzio

method) is a major placemaking strategy as they are cheaper than public art and architecture and present stages through which urban dwellers can present their public personas to their social media contacts (Spaces). Events also are more adaptive than objects as they enable the image of the city to react to trends in fashion and popular culture to attract larger crowds. An example of this can be seen in the phenomenon of international travelling performance artists such as the Arcadia Project, a performance centred around a giant mechanical fire-breathing spider (Fig. 8.4).

In the context of placemaking, architecture plays an important role in making places easily recognisable by operating as an icon or brand. A result is that architectural design in hypermediated space is appropriated as a graphic component in the composition of the public image. Cohen (2012) describes the effect of this on the urban fabric as a "proliferation of large and spectacular buildings [that express the] aspiration of modern cities to be characterized by gigantic signs". He continues by describing how "a new populism seems to be manifesting itself in a spectacular architecture whose models can be traced to the mass media" whose design "falls back on a sort of oversimplification, even an iconic primitivism, which allows it to be instantly intelligible on television screens and the front pages of newspapers". Many post-modern styles of architecture such as Supergraphics, and Parametricism are common within hypermediated spaces as these approaches are deeply concerned with the way that architectural design can create unique spatial and formal aesthetics. Supergraphics specifically operates through the transformation of the architectural

Fig. 8.4 The Arcadia Project—Fire-breathing spider music show at Perth's Elizabeth Quay, 2016. *Source* Paul Morris

fabric into a series of flat images directed to points in space (Brook and Shaughnessy 2010). Regionalism, is also an architectural style that is commonly applied to the design of hypermediated spaces as vernacular traditions associated with places can be revived to establish monopoly rents.

Increasing competition between architects to develop novel aesthetics has led to many new inventions in architectural design however the success of design approaches in public spaces often depends on how well a design lends itself to reproduction as images. Data from LBSNs is increasingly used by researchers and private organizations to optimise patterns of consumption within cities, shaping cultural production to more effectively drive people into the city (Abbasi et al. 2015). More recently "Media Architecture" has emerged as an architectural style which incorporates media facades, digital screens and environmental sensors. Media Architecture treats the surface of public space as a dynamic interface that transforms itself in relation to the behaviour of its users. Increasingly, interaction design, as instanced in city-wide events such as the Vivid Festival in Sydney, has become a medium through which artists and architects explore the relationship between technology and social space. For architects, engaging within the field of interactive public art enables the prototyping and testing of ideas on a scale that allows for a degree of experimentation usually not within the scope of a building-scale project. In this context, design research becomes a means of establishing new forms of urban intervention that fit within narratives of placemaking.

8.7 Conclusion

Referencing Deleuze, Hemment (2004) describes how "the disciplinary society of factories and prisons has given way to the control society, where mechanisms of domination are less evident but far more pervasive and operate through codes and passwords, not restricting or regulating behaviour but modulating and organizing it". The production of the image of place before social media was primarily an institutional exercise and so it was easy for local communities to position themselves in opposition to "top-down" intervention. In the age of social media, the image of public space constructed by urban developers and other corporate interests appears to be less and less in conflict with local communities and cultures. The blurring of public and private initiatives within social media makes it increasingly difficult to critically assess the difference between local culture and institutional or corporate constructs.

McQuire (2006) identifies that the media event is in the process of returning to the spaces of the city as we increasingly consume media within urban outdoor spaces. He argues that this has the potential to reverse the demise of public space, arguing that being confronted with difference in physical space presents the possibility of a more democratic public sphere. LBSNs provide urban dwellers with greater access to information about the city and the ability to contribute to an online discourse about urban places. This has transformed the ways in which people can meet and socialize within the spaces of the city and has provided greater opportunity for expression. The agency afforded by these technologies, however is not experienced evenly. One's social position, their access to technology, and knowledge of its use and function plays a fundamental role in their capacity to take part in emerging digital cultures.

The digital cultures that are facilitated by LBSNs can lead to the emergence of new communities who can appropriate the spaces of the city in a much more distributed manner than in the past. The opportunity for greater public engagement brought about by LBSNs is counterbalanced, however, by its capacity to introduce greater systems of control over public interaction and discourse. The representation of place within digital platforms is not a completely democratic or liberal process as the owners of media platforms structure the way in which information is accessed. Ownership over the data that is produced in these systems is also a major political issue. As Kingwell (2014) argues, "we all have the right to collect data in 'public spaces' but access to that data depends on the control of private infrastructure". Currently the business models of most LBSN platforms revolve around the collection and sale of public and private data to private interests. In both physical public space and social media, control over access and user data is managed by private interests instead of individuals. The result is that urban data can be used to produce hypermediated spaces that are increasingly optimized to extract value from commercial activity.

Place-making utilizes the media-event as an ever-renewing spectacle that drives the commodification of space by leveraging the efficiencies of the computer interface, the expansion of address through locative technology, the extension of media to the remaining senses, and the distribution of the branded happening through global

networks. Hypermediated spaces flatten the social and cultural spheres by appropriating creative practices into economic systems of valorization. Any ideas, events, or creations can be appropriated into this process as long as they have the capacity to attract ever greater levels of public activity. This is most evident in centralized public spaces, however it increasingly emerges in locations which wish to attract the attention of transient populations.

How then might artists and designers intervene within public spaces without being subsumed into this process of social engineering through the construction of authenticity? The answer may be found by reframing our understanding of what public space is and its relation to cultural production. As Crawford (1995) identifies, the public sphere is not a property inherent to any place or space but is an event that emerges at sites of conflict. Opportunities for transgression may emerge if cultural production is approached as something that can produce public space rather than something that is sited in it. As Sassen and Shepard (2011) identify, the transgressions of digital culture emerge in the spaces of the city at "analytic borderlands"—sites where local and global cultures and politics intersect. In this sense the public sphere is not constrained to space and certainly not centralized public space. Architecture and public art that reveals relationships between the digital public sphere and hypermediated space could go a long way towards allowing the public to engage critically with the complexity of relations that make up the digital public sphere.

References

Abbasi A, Rashidi TH, Maghrebi M, Waller ST (2015) Utilizing location based social media in travel survey methods: bringing twitter data into the play. In: Proceedings of the 8th ACM SIGSPATIAL international workshop on location-based social networks. ACM

Andersen CU, Pold S (2011) FCJ-133 The scripted spaces of urban ubiquitous computing: the experience, poetics, and politics of public scripted space. Fibreculture J (19 2011: Ubiquity)

Arendt H (2013) The human condition. University of Chicago Press

Augé M (2008) Non-places: an introduction to supermodernity (trans: Howe J). Verso, London and New York

Barreneche C (2012) Governing the geocoded world: environmentality and the politics of location platforms. Convergence 18(3):331–351

Brook T, Shaughnessy A (2010) Supergraphics: transforming space: graphic design for walls, buildings and spaces. Unit

Calthorpe P (2010) Urbanism in the age of climate change. Island Press

Castells M (2001) Space of flows, space of places: materials for a theory of urbanism in the information age. In: The city reader, pp 572–582

Chayka K (2016) Welcome to airspace. How silicon valley helps spread the same sterile aesthetic across the world. The Verge

Cohen J-L (2012) The future of architecture, since 1889. Phaidon

Cohen M (2007) Tracing new absence events for place-making and place-faking. In: About performance. Centre for Performance Studies

Crawford M (1995) Contesting the public realm: struggles over public space in Los Angeles. J Architect Educ 49(1):4–9

Cuff D (2003) Immanent domain. J Architect Educ 57(1):43–49

Curry MR (1999) New technologies and the ontology of places. Red Rock Easter News Service

Davis M (1990) Fortress La. In: Cities and society, pp 267–283
De Waal M (2011) The urban culture of sentient cities: from an internet of things to a public sphere of things. In: Shepard M (ed) Sentient city, ubiquitous computing, architecture, and the future of urban space, p 60
Ekman M (2012) Architecture for the nation's memory: history, art and the halls of Norway's national gallery. In: Macleod S, Hourston Hanks L, Hale J (eds) Museum making: narratives, architectures, exhibitions. Routledge, London, p 148
Escobar A (2001) Culture sits in places: reflections on globalism and subaltern strategies of localization. Politi Geogr 20(2):139–174
Evans L (2015) Locative social media: place in the digital age. Springer
Foth M, Sanders PS (2008) Impacts of social computing on the architecture of urban spaces. In: Augmented urban spaces: articulating the physical and electronic city, pp 73–91
Fuller M (2011) Boxes towards bananas: dispersal, intelligence, and animal structures. In: Shepard, sentient city, pp 173–181
Gehl J (2011) Life between buildings: using public space. Island Press
Gehl_Studio (2015) Makers on market—lessons from the market street festival (vol 1). https://issuu.com/gehlarchitects/docs/mspf_report_final_20151218_final
Gieseking JJ, Mangold W, Katz C, Low S, Saegert S (2014) The people, place, and space reader. Routledge
Habermas J (1991) The structural transformation of the public sphere. An inquiry
Harvey D (2008) The right to the city. In: The city reader, vol 6, pp 23–40
Harvey D (2009) The art of rent: globalisation, monopoly and the commodification of culture. Soc Regist 38 (38)
Hemment D (2004) The locative dystopia. nettime.org
Hermosillo C (2004) Introducing Humdog: Pandora's Vox Redux. The Alphaville Herald
Iveson K (1998) Putting the public back into public space. Urban Policy Res 16(1):21–33
Iveson K (2009) The city versus the media? Mapping the mobile geographies of public address. Int J Urban Reg Res 33(1):241–245
Kalandides A, Kavaratzis M, Zenker S (2011) How to catch a city? The concept and measurement of place brands. J Place Manag Dev 4(1):40–52
Kingwell M (2014) The prison of "public space". In: The people, place, and space reader, p 212
Koolhaas R (2002) Junkspace. In: October, pp 175–190
Koolhaas R (2014) Delirious New York: a retroactive manifesto for Manhattan. The Monacelli Press, LLC
Latorre D (2011) Digital placemaking-authentic civic engagement. Project for Public Spaces
Latour B (2005) From realpolitik to dingpolitik. Making things public: atmospheres of democracy, p 1444
Lefebvre H (1991) The production of space. Oxford Blackwell
LeGates RT, Stout F (2015) The city reader. Routledge
Lynch K (1960) The city image and its elements, vol 41. MIT Press, Cambridge, p 73
Massey D (1999) Spaces of politics. In: Human geography today, pp 279–294
Massey D (2010) A global sense of place. Aughty.org
McLuhan M (1994) Understanding media: the extensions of man. MIT press
McQuire S (2006) The politics of public space in the media city. First Monday
McQuire S (2008) The media city: media, architecture and urban space. Sage
Molotch H (1976) The city as a growth machine: toward a political economy of place. Am J Sociol 82(2):309–332
Nora P (1989) Between memory and history: Les lieux de mémoire. In: Representations, pp 7–24
Pariser E (2011) The filter bubble: what the Internet is hiding from you. Penguin UK
Patelli P (2014) Post-optimal cities or: how architects learned to stop worrying and love the network and vice versa. In: Innovative technologies in urban mapping. Springer, pp 157–166
Postman N (2006) Amusing ourselves to death: public discourse in the age of show business. Penguin

Project for Public Spaces (2018) The lighter, quicker, cheaper transformation of public spaces. https://www.pps.org/article/lighter-quicker-cheaper. Accessed 17 Apr 2018
Putnam RD (2000) Bowling alone: America's declining social capital. In: Culture and politics. Springer, pp 223–234
Sassen S, Shepard M (2011) Unsettling topographic representation. In: Sentient city: ubiquitous computing, architecture, and the future of urban space, pp 182–189
Shane DG (2014) Meta city: origins and implications. In: Innovative technologies in urban mapping. Springer, pp 59–72
Shepard M (2008) Locative media as critical urbanism
Simondon G (2009) Technical mentality. Parrhesia 7(1):17–27
Sorkin M (1992) Variations on a theme park: the new American city and the end of public space. Macmillan
Srnicek N (2016) Platform capitalism. Wiley
Sudjic D (2006) The Edifice complex: how the rich and powerful—and their architects—shape the world. Penguin
Taylor PJ (2004) Global city network. Routledge, London
Thrift N (2004) Remembering the technological unconscious by foregrounding knowledges of position. Environ Plann D: Soc Space 22(1):175–190
Venturi R (1977) Complexity and contradiction in architecture. The Museum of Modern Art
Willis K (2008) Places, situations and connections. In: Augmented urban spaces: articuating the physical and electronic city, pp 9–26
Wirth L (1938) Urbanism as a way of life. Am J Sociol 44(1):1–24
Zukin S (1996) The cultures of cities. Wiley-Blackwell

Robert Cameron is an Australian-based designer/artist and a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Western Australia. His research aims to better understand the influence of location-based social networks upon the perception and design of urban spaces. Robert's artistic practice plays with generative systems, advanced fabrication techniques and the production of experimental interactive public artwork.