Dancing Beijing residents turn overpasses into impromptu stages; San Francisco parking spaces become temporary pocket parks; private residential Tokyo gardens are newly opened to the public street. Each of these can be categorized as acts of “guerrilla urbanism.” *Insurgent Public Space*, a recent collection of essays edited by University of Washington professor Jeffrey Hou, offers an exploration of these innovative (and often extralegal) alterations to urban space. As one of the few scholarly texts on this topic, the collection carries the burden of introducing this movement and its underlying theories. In Hou’s introduction, he defines guerrilla urbanism broadly as “citizen initiatives and informal activities” (9) occurring in – and redefining – urban public space. Such actions have garnered increased attention since the book’s 2010 publication. For example, the aforementioned repurposing of parking spaces into small parks has spread nationwide via Park(ing) Day, and the Occupy Wall Street movement has generated dialogue around citizen use of privately owned public spaces, or POPS.

Hou’s collection is comprised of 20 essays describing guerrilla urbanist projects, primarily in east Asia and western North America. Hou frames these case studies with a six-category typology, focusing on the underlying intentions of the “remaking” of urban space in each example: from appropriating public spaces, to contesting their existing meanings. For the cover-to-cover reader, these categories quickly blur as the essays that follow defy easy categorization, covering projects across a spectrum of complexity, public and private involvement, and engagement with existing theories and practices. Similarly, the quality of writing and depth of analysis varies widely throughout the collection.

Despite these issues, the collection is frequently thought-provoking and even exciting, sparking new ideas about the creation and use of public spaces. The examples described include a variety of interventions: from temporary night markets, to experimental housing, to the creation of a digital archive of urban ephemera. Throughout, the authors focus on the importance of diversity, highlighting a key feature of the guerrilla urbanist movement: ensuring that the public has access to space in the city that meets their needs and interests, with an expansive and inclusive definition of that “public.”

Throughout the collection, planners are frequently lumped in with the political power structures that these projects circumvent, and little attention is paid to the basic safety and legal concerns surrounding many of these projects. However, the collection does have relevance to planners – particularly those who are struggling to define their role and manage public participation in projects. These cases offer another model for municipal governments: where possible, allow the public to set the agenda in rethinking underused spaces.

While the focus of the volume is more descriptive than prescriptive, a few essays begin to delve into techniques that readers could adopt or adapt in working towards this new model: Merker’s essay on the Rebar design collective’s practices is particularly helpful, giving would-be guerrilla urbanists a theoretical framework within which to locate their actions, and Villagomez’s typology of “residual space” (including rooftops, pieces of redundant infrastructure, etc.) encourages reflection on the underutilized corners of one’s own community. For the reader open to rethinking the nature of public space, *Insurgent Public Space* is an energizing read.

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