



# City Publics: The (Dis)enchantments of Urban Encounters (Questioning Cities)

*Sophie Watson*

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Some cities have grown into mega cities and some into uncontrolled sprawl; others have seen their centres decline with populations moving to the suburbs. In such times, questions of the public realm and public space in cities warrant even greater attention than previously received.

Concerned with the borders and boundaries, constraints and limits on accepting, acknowledging and celebrating difference in public, Sophie Watson, through ethnographic studies, interrogates how difference is negotiated and performed. Focusing on spaces where to outside observers tension is relatively absent or invisible, Watson also reveals how the boundaries between the public and private are being negotiated and redrawn, and how public and private spaces are mutually constitutive.

Through her investigation of the more ordinary and less dramatic forms of encounter and contestation in the city, Watson is able to conceive an urban public realm and urban public space that is heterogeneous and potentially progressive. With numerous photographs and drawings *City Publics* not only throws new light on encounters with others in public space, but also destabilizes dominant, sometimes simplistic, universalized accounts and helps us re-imagine urban public space as a site of potentiality, difference, and enchanted encounters.

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