

is no need to copy European urban form. The American city can be the model now: New Orleans Square in Disneyland, CityWalk in Universal City, Hollywood Boulevard or New York Street in Disney World, New York New York in Las Vegas.

### **“Convivial cities” and “insurgent citizenship” in a globalizing era**

Lisa Peattie (1998) has argued that while planners usually seem to be obsessed with creating or restoring a sense of community, they have given very little attention to conviviality as a planning goal. Conviviality, Peattie argues, is more than just feasting and fun, drinking and good company. Using Illich's (1973) original definition of conviviality as “autonomous and creative intercourse among persons, and the intercourse of persons with their environment” (p. 11), Peattie (1998) speaks of sociable pleasures as purposeful activities. And these may include not just singing in pubs, street dancing, or tailgate parties, but also “small-group rituals and social bonding in serious collective action, from barn raisings and neighborhood cleanups to civil disobedience that blocks the streets or invades the missile site” (p. 246). Clearly, many of these communal public actions typically happen in existing public spaces—streets, squares, parks, and other open spaces or in such public buildings as school auditoriums or community centers—thus reasserting the role and sustenance of the public realm. However, one wonders whether Peattie's ideal of democratic conviviality that bonds people in communal public actions is becoming increasing vestigial and episodic in the face of a market propensity to service conviviality needs in the form of a growing number of third places in invented streets and spaces. Is the typical consumer public completely co-opted by the public life of third places and invented streets?

But there is hope still for Peattie's ideal. In a perverse way this hope stems from a globalizing economy that produces several tensions and contradictions. It is reflected in the recent demonstrations against the World Trade Organization meeting in Seattle, the International Monetary Fund/World Bank meeting in Washington, and the Asian Development Bank meeting in Bangkok. The tensions symbolize powerlessness of the local public over global corporate interests; inexorable trends of cultural homogenization; growing income polarization; environmental degradation on a local and global scale; a crisis of cultural, local, and social identities in

multiethnic urban communities; and the like. These demonstrations are expressions of frustration over a lack of local control, which increasingly leads to mobilization at the local and neighborhood level. An example of such local activism is the recent charter reform of the City of Los Angeles, which mandates the formation of neighborhood councils. As such initiatives occur, it can be expected that much of the interest will focus on improving the livability of local streets and neighborhoods and the shared public realm. In some cities, community activism helped convert abandoned or vacant lots into vest-pocket parks or neighborhood playgrounds. In many inner-city neighborhoods, immigrant communities have brought street life back into the community. There is a general growth in the neighborhood-based non-profit groups that are taking charge of community improvements—from affordable housing to small business development—and thus infusing conviviality and creating third places even in poorer neighborhoods that the conventional market sees as too risky for investment. Thus, the claim to local public space can arise from a variety of insurgent citizenship and community initiatives (see Holston, 1995; Sassen, 1995). Could this be the beginning of a movement to reclaim the public realm at the community level?

### **The communication and information technology revolution**

The recent revolution in communication and information technology has made it possible for us to isolate ourselves from the public life and spaces even further. We are now all citizens of cyberspace and cybercommunities (“cyborgs,” according to Mitchell, 1995) where conventional concepts of public space and place are increasingly becoming outmoded. The *terra cognita* of the “City of Bits” has very little bearing to the territorial city of senses, or for that matter our conventional concepts of public and private spaces. What concerns many is whether this cybercity and its cyberplaces may totally obviate the social life of real places and communities. For it is now possible to conduct many of our daily activities—work, shopping, business transactions, socializing—through the Internet, minimizing the need for face-to-face communication or travel. Thus, the transaction costs of living in cities can be minimized by belonging to a network society, which further reduces the need for public encounters in public spaces.