

Introduction

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Locality as dwelling and imaginative horizon can be seen as an expressive metaphor for the distinctiveness of cultures shaping and shaped by the global urban landscape. It is now widely recognized that globalization as a process has given rise to creative forms of social life and political activism located in and around cities. These are conjugated by the recognition that the local is an intrinsic aspect of cosmopolitanism and internationalism. Artists, activists, and social theorists increasingly engage with the local and localities through an orientation towards, and circulation of, actions grounded in immediacy, ephemeral events, “interventions,” and lived situations. Locality is the immediate and the everyday, the fluid, the evanescent, as well as the frames and forms of the urban environment; it is the dynamic play of city structure, symbolic interaction, and critical intervention. To think through localities is to address the specificity of place as fixed and fleeting, general and particular; it is to speak from the spaces of promiscuous attachment and precarious dwelling.

This emphasis on the local is not the means to some new ontological essentialism, but provides a pragmatic way of materializing experience, making meaning and alterity among other things, in a world of increasing movement and concomitant virtuality. At the same time, the local is easily appropriated to serve capitalist ends and conservative mandates; it risks reinforcing reductive notions of identity and thrives off easy identifications. The promotion of the local sits well with neo-liberal agendas promoted under the guise of the “Creative City.”

This issue of *Public* approaches the concept of locality in a dialectical fashion - seeing in it new possibilities for translocalism, diverse coalitions, and critical engagements as well as new reactionary articulations of market fundamentalism, and commodified difference.