

UNDERSTANDING SPACE IN AN ORDINARY CITY

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ABSTRACT

In this dissertation, I emphasize the ordinary city (Robinson, 2006) as a place for building social justice, a place of possibility, and a place where we can see the tensions and frictions (Tsing, 2004) between the stability of social structure and the fluidity of human action. In this context, the ordinary city emerges as a site of innovation and a point for connecting, synthesizing, simplifying, and grounding concepts of space and participation as I move through the lenses of perceived, conceived, and lived (Lefebvre, 1991) in a discussion of the City of Columbia, Missouri.

I work to develop a story of the *processes* that have led to the City of Columbia as it currently exists and how these and other processes can lead us into the future. Embedding this study of the processes of city creation within both the theoretical and practical paradigms of democratic practice has helped me toward a broader understanding of political participation and more inclusive concepts of cityspace and I have made it one of my goals here to renew or recreate some of the bridges between the work done by academics and the needs of the community.