

The Systemic Affect of Culture, Power, and Terror in the Southern Public Space

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Objective. We explore how political space is disrupted by racialized politics, and how differentiated affect among racial groups emerge in the political space. *Method.* We use Goodsell's architectural classifications of public space in conjunction with systems theory to ascertain how differing architectural affects of pride and heritage versus terror and oppression are experienced in the post-bellum South. Historic data of lynchings and Klan activity are accompanied by examination of individual narratives and multiple qualitative case analysis of architectural elements of courthouse squares, courthouses, and courtrooms to illustrate racial affect and social meaning in the built environment of the Jim Crow era. *Results.* Hyperlocalism in southern government and racial violence and also symbolism and the elements of courthouse design reinforce white supremacy. *Conclusions.* Individual and collective memory are influenced by the reinforcement of a racial order through systematic design, architectural design, and symbols. To understand community memory requires a more granular and contextual examination to understand the role of the built environment in defining, parameterizing, and understanding systemic racism.

How is state and local political space shaped in an environment of disruption and racialized politics across time? We focus on this specific component of the institutional development of American politics, using courthouse towns from across the South to explore the creation and evolution of the most prominent political spaces, courthouse squares. Kostof (1991:40) suggests "Cities are places distinguished by some kind of monumental definition, that is, where the fabric is more than a blanket of residences. This means a set of public buildings that give the city scale, and the citizenry landmarks of a common identity." But what happens when the public space serves to divide the public, and to create contrasting identities? The disruption events of the Civil War, Reconstruction, Redemption, and Jim Crow racialized public spaces throughout the South. The southern urban landscape changed at the turn of the 19th century to create systematic affects in public space. The politics of racial segregation and the practice of mob lynching shaped the interior and exterior public spaces of the courthouse square, the use of those spaces by the public, and the social meaning they carried to reinforce a dominant political order defined by whiteness in opposition to blackness.

We bring together David Easton's systems model (1957, 1965a, 1965b) and Charles Goodsell's classification of public space (2001), the concept of architectural affect, and the history of Southern politics to draw out the features of the urban landscape responsible for these two competing social meanings in the public square—the affect of community pride and heritage, on the one hand, and the affect of racial terror and oppression, on the other hand. Easton's systems model provides a conceptual lens for treating the courthouse

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square as a landscape with physical, behavioral, and societal processes at work. The spaces within this black box of the public square are differentiated in terms of access and use, as suggested by Goodsell's classes of public space. Bringing these two theoretical models together informs our understanding of the racialized nature of post-Reconstruction local Southern politics. The act of Confederate memorialization on the courthouse lawn and the use of this space for pageantry and civic celebration linked visually and symbolically Southern identity with whiteness, racial supremacy, community sacrifice and memory, and legal justice. The act of public lynching, often on the public square, episodically infused in this same space the visual and symbolic spectacle of dehumanization, marginalization, black inferiority, and mob rule. At the same time but to different publics, the landscape of local politics carried heritage and hate, justice, and injustice.

Theory: The Systematic Affect of Public Space

Recent work in architectural theory provides tools for thinking about the way in which space affects us, but it stops short of showing us how to systematically uncover and interpret the historic district as an ecosystem of public life. We previously introduced Easton's systems approach to map county-level political development and use of public space in Georgia following the Civil War (Easton, 1957; 1965a, 1965b; Gåddie and Evans, 2021). Here, we apply it to consider the "black box" of government as a public space where community members congregate, circulate, and seek governmental action.

Veselka (2000:1) notes that "The county seat exemplifies one of the more self-conscious expressions of American urban design, both spatially and symbolically. The courthouse square was designed explicitly to express community values and to serve as a focal point of community life." Courthouses were built to articulate the aspirations of new counties. As civic temples, they served as the backdrop for public celebration, military reunion, electioneering, protest, and spectacle. Decisions to construct a memorial at courthouses were political statements of community identity, and, as such, had political and social ramifications (see Thrift, 2004 as well as Kraftl and Adey, 2008). These civic squares took shape during a period of reconstruction and later reaffirmation of Southern cultural identity. The courthouse square offered central public space to broadcast a narrative of race-based power relations. Cox notes that the goal of monument construction was Confederate vindication (Cox, 2003). The United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC) "placed them in the most publicly visible locations—on the grounds surrounding state capitols and county courthouses" (Cox, 2003:150). Carving out prominent public space for Confederate memorials insured that antebellum ideals would endure in the creation of a postbellum South (Cox, 2003:150). The choice to place Confederate monuments on courthouse squares was therefore a purposeful statement of power and resistance to change. They marked the perimeter of the central municipal space projecting the dominant community ethos. Figure 1 illustrates the courthouse square as a political system in built form.

The black box includes the public square and county courthouse, a central designated space for local government in action. It is a three-dimensional box with doors and corridors, meeting rooms, and restrooms. But the spaces of this structure are not obscured and walled off to users. They follow patterns in design. Regardless of the county, the courthouse serves clear functions. In it, agents of the law issue warrants, accept fines, host jurors, hear pleas, and hold trials. Clerks of the court issue marriage licenses, while bailiffs escort prisoners to and from their cells. Often the courthouse included the post office, property appraiser's office, and the supervisor of elections office. Each of these functions requires a

FIGURE 1

A Systems Model of Politics with a County Courthouse Square in the Black Box

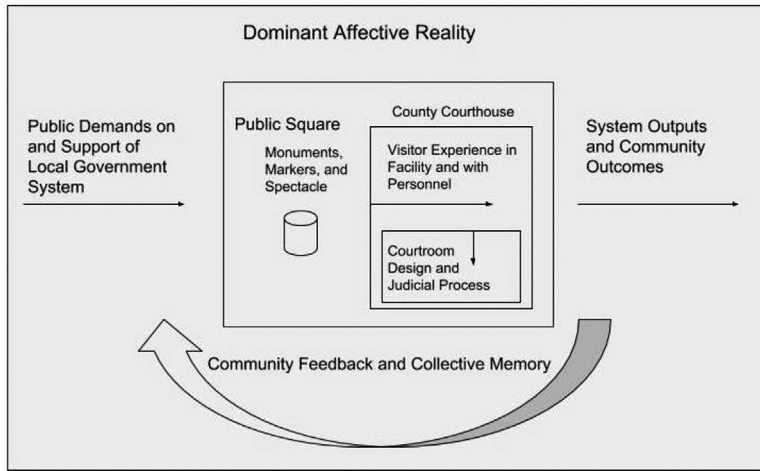


TABLE 1

Goodsell's Classes of Public Space (adapted from Goodsell, 1998)

Classes of Space	Description
Perimeter	Exterior steps, walkways, and grounds encircling the building.
Circulation	Lobbies, vestibules, corridors, open stairs, the rotunda, and public restaurants and restrooms.
Civic	Rooms in which formal meetings are held by governing bodies. Examples are legislative chambers, courtrooms, and hearing rooms. Draws on Goodsell (1988:13).
Audience	Spaces where officials regularly receive visitors individually or in small groups on an invitation or appointment basis.
Operational	Support areas that are of little or no value for democratic scrutiny of the governing elite. Includes staff work areas, storage space, and equipment rooms.
Sanctum	Highly exclusive places in which boundary control excludes nonelite persons entirely.

type of space, including the following: perimeter, circulation, civic, audience, operational, and sanctum (adapted from Goodsell, 1998) (Table 1).

County Courthouse Squares as Racialized Public Spaces

Public space holds social meaning. Those who attempt to shape historical memory understand the importance of public space for engineering and reinforcing collective memory. We see the role of public space in facilitating community protest, dialogue, and celebration. But we also should see the identity markers present in the heritage landscape as instrumental tools shaping community life and collective memory (Brundage, 2005:6).The physical landscape in town centers is the result of struggle over “power, resources, and

values” (Brundage, 2005:6). During Reconstruction, African Americans celebrated their newfound freedom by parading through city thoroughfares on commemorative days such as New Year’s Day, Memorial Day, Juneteenth, and July 4 (Clark, 2019:53). Participation in these events involved radical occupation of public space by southern African Americans. It stood as a testament to new rights of citizenship, the ability to claim public space for the exercise of personal freedom and the demonstration of collective power (Brundage, 2005:6). This is why one of the first major changes brought about by the end of Reconstruction and the reign of Jim Crow was the emergence of large-scale white commemorative events and monumental markers and the disappearance of black commemorative events in civic squares (Clark, 2019:55).

Sites of memory carry significant emotional costs and benefits for different publics. Revealing competing affects requires attention to expressive, behavioral, and societal elements of civic spaces (Goodsell, 2001) as well as analysis of both the urban landscape and the cultural identity of its inhabitants. As Thrift (2004:69) warns, “[I]t is often quite difficult to show what is at stake for the individual or groups in submitting to such institutions and embracing certain affective styles that render them deferential, obedient, or humble—or independent, aggressive and arrogant.” Here, we illustrate the affective reality of African Americans as the “other” in southern public life encapsulated in the county courthouse square.

Elements of community power, identity, and violence operated in tandem to shape public space in southern counties and thereby shaped the behavior of its users. The construction of a physical architecture of segregation not only imposed division; it also imposed rules that blacks and whites were expected to follow. As much as the “advantages” were designed to be enjoyed by whites, both white and black behavior was the object of architecture as policy. To this end, *architectural isolation* was the act of “constructing and maintaining places that kept whites and blacks apart,” while *architectural partitioning* was the segregating “within facilities that were shared by the races.” Throughout the Jim Crow era, both isolation and partitioning were standard architectural strategies to minimize racial contact “by requiring blacks and whites to inhabit completely separate spheres in the conduct of their daily lives” (Weyeneth, 2005:13). To achieve this goal of total exclusion of blacks from white spaces, the duplication of necessary spaces for blacks and whites in their respective spaces or the use of *temporal separation* was typically employed to maintain racial separation.

Exclusion as an architectural form is remembered because it has been memorialized through photography and endures in the legacy of the built environment. Images of schools, libraries, and businesses which employed signage indicating *Whites Only* and images of racial separation in spaces reinforce the echoes of exclusion. Examples of exclusion include schools, parks, restaurants, gas stations, and other public spaces. Signage often accompanied exclusion spaces, but was not always necessary. Those who have encountered either a Green Book or the movie by that name know that “no black man traveling to a southern city would seek to stay in its major hotels” (Weyeneth, 2005:14). When it was impossible to create exclusive white space while providing necessary services (schools, hospitals), *black space* was provided through “duplication”—the genesis of separate but equal, which was definitely separate but decidedly not equal.

When segregating shared space, the first “solution” was the fixed partition. Separate entrances and separate interior waiting spaces or transaction spaces were common in public facilities, such as in courthouses or railroad stations. The creation of “colored” balconies in movie theatres and courtrooms is another example. One of the author’s mother recounted the surreal experience of sitting in a segregated Alabama movie theatre, watching

the segregated courtroom scene in *To Kill a Mockingbird*—the segregation of the theatre and fictional courtroom mirroring each other from either side of the screen, and capturing the scope of this segregation device.

In examining South Carolina's Greenville County Courthouse, Weyeneth (2005) notes that it is indicative of many Deep South courthouses. Constructed in 1918 "to partition the races during the conduct of public business," the design ably illustrates Jim Crow architecture. "Architects provided a side entry only for African Americans, which led to a separate stairway to the balcony of the courtroom. In some southern courthouses, black attorneys were expected to present their cases from the gallery" (Weyeneth, 2005:28).

The spatial impact on blacks was oppressive and led to a disciplined behavior of prior planning and creative movement to minimize encounters with the architecture of segregation. Termed the creation of *alternative spaces*, strategies included shielding children from white-owned businesses, walking rather than using public transit, or making arrangements for black only cultural events at off-peak hours. Eating, drinking, and attending to personal needs before shopping or doing public business allowed blacks to avoid segregated public facilities. The other solution in towns and cities was the emergence of black business districts and black service providers.

The dominant and subjugated races had different benefits and different strategies for handling the racial structure of the public space, and the relative positions of blacks and whites structured their perceptions of public spaces. For white citizens, the county courthouse represented a place of law and order, a place of memory tracking vital records, a place of identity with state flags and military monuments, and a place of civic engagement in community events and jury duty. For black citizens, the county courthouse represented something quite different. The reflection provided by Ida B. Wells in a speech on lynching made in Chicago in 1900 describes the associations with the courthouse of African Americans living in the postbellum South. She recounts the emergence of "lynch law" in order to convey how antithetical to justice it had become. First it appeared in the West,

It next appeared in the South, where centuries of Anglo-Saxon civilization had made effective all the safeguards of court procedure. No emergency called for lynch law. It asserted its sway in defiance of law and in favor of anarchy. There it has flourished ever since, marking the thirty years of its existence with the inhuman butchery of more than ten thousand men, women, and children by shooting, drowning, hanging, and burning them alive. . . .

This is the work of the "unwritten law" about which so much is said, and in whose behest butchery is made a pastime and national savagery condoned. The first statute of this "unwritten law" was written in the blood of thousands of brave men who thought that a government that was good enough to create a citizenship was strong enough to protect it. Under the authority of a national law that gave every citizen the right to vote, the newly-made citizens chose to exercise their suffrage. But the reign of the national law was short-lived and illusionary. Hardly had the sentences dried upon the statute-books before one Southern State after another raised the cry against "negro domination" and proclaimed there was an "unwritten law" that justified any means to resist it (Wells, 1900).

Southern whites resorted to extralegal action against those accused of violating community standards of decency in part because they viewed the courts with skepticism and felt threatened in some way (see Tolney and Beck, 1995; Brundage, 1997).

The architecture of separation extended across all classes of space. It was both structural and behavioral, formal, and informal. Table 2 itemizes some of the features of this architecture in Georgia during Jim Crow, which were used to reinforce the segregationist order

TABLE 2
 Goodsell's Classes of Public Space and the Racial Social Meaning of County Courthouses

Classes of Space	Courthouse Spaces	Racial Social Meaning of Spaces
Perimeter	Courthouse square	Confederate iconography (flags, monuments, courthouse names) Civic celebrations of Confederate heritage Statutory exclusion of blacks from parks intended for use by whites Lynching as spectacle on courthouse lawn; acceptance of vigilantism and mob justice and reminder of white supremacy; propagator of widespread hysteria Jails and prisons with separate eating, working, sleeping accommodations
Circulation	Lobbies, staircases, restrooms	Cultural norms of deference to whites in passing ("Jim Crow etiquette"), to reinforce black inferiority
Civic	Courtroom	Separate facilities for blacks, including stairs, restrooms, and water fountains "Black pews" for segregated courtroom seating and restricted seating for blacks to balcony Confederate iconography in courtroom White juries first through exclusionary jury lists, discriminatory jury selection White judges, lawyers, sheriff and police, jailers Separate Bibles for oaths Disrespectful verbal cues to black participants (witnesses, defendants, etc.) and belittlement of black attorneys
Audience Operational	Jury assembly Clerk's office; Post office; Elections office, etc.	Discrimination against black lawyers through exclusion from law schools and ill treatment in courtroom Segregated witness boxes White juries first through exclusionary jury lists, discriminatory jury selection
Sanctum	Judge's chambers	Administration of white primaries Denial of voting rights for most blacks via poll taxes, voter registration requiring information on racial ancestry, and selective administration of literacy tests Recognition of marriage with statutes prohibiting interracial marriage Excluded

SOURCE: Typology adapted from Goodsell (1998) and McFarlin (2015).

and provided the key elements of the architecture of separation and the white dominance it reinforced.

The Lynching Pattern in the Context of Confederate Memorialization

Evans and Sims (2021) geolocate Confederate iconography throughout the South, and Gáddie and Evans illustrate the frequent placement of Confederate monuments on the lawns of courthouse squares in the state of Georgia. Both instances of memorialization and placement of monuments track with the population distribution of African Americans in the South.

Memorialization spans the South, with the greatest concentration tracing the arc of Black Belt counties running from the Piedmont and Low Country of Virginia, through the Deep South to the Mississippi Delta—the areas with the highest concentrations of black population. Numerous memorials also appear in major urban centers (Nashville, Memphis, New Orleans), and in counties with few blacks. After the early 20th century, relatively few new memorials appear, most are outside the five-state Deep South (with the exception of Louisiana). Recent memorials to appear are all in the states bordering the Deep South, often in areas with very low historic black populations.

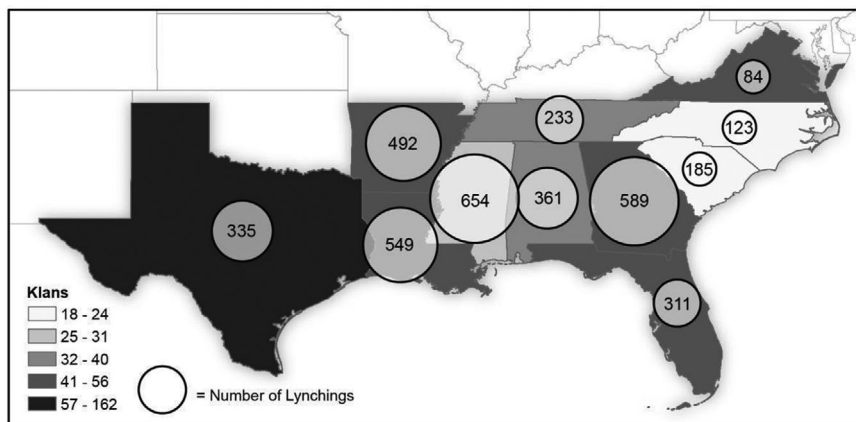
Review of the construction of Confederate monuments shows a peak from the early 1890s through the end of World War I (Cox, 2003; Southern Poverty Law Center, 2019). Southern whites reasserted dominance lost during Reconstruction by attempting to thoroughly shape public memory through physical symbols in cemeteries, on courthouse lawns, and in town squares (Bishir, 2009:8–10). They focused on “social rituals and public rhetoric, which they adorned with carefully polished silver and phrases” (Bishir, 2009:8). “Memorial zeal” added hundreds of monuments to the landscape, leaving a pattern of courthouse squares “guarded by Confederate monuments” (Brundage, Mills, and Simpson, 2003:66). Without resources at their disposal and with limited access to the public realm, southern African Americans watched as a white public memory became enshrined and perpetuated throughout the region.

[S]outhern whites diligently strengthened their grip over the public realm in the late nineteenth century until expressions of black memory eventually were marginalized or altogether suppressed (see Clark, 2019). This competition between white and black southerners over the meaning and memory of the past was never equal. White southerners created a physical landscape and social ritual of power through memorialization and civic commemorative events (see Cox, 2003). African Americans established days of celebration and patterns of pageantry, but they relied on the social and legal protection of the Reconstruction effort. Once this effort waned, whites enjoyed an overwhelming advantage in establishing the materiality of their memory (Brundage, Mills, and Simpson, 2003:71).

The greatest wave of memorialization occurred in the last decade of the 19th century and early part of the 20th century. Throughout the South, this period was marked by intense efforts at commemoration of the Civil War and reification of the Lost Cause narrative, intense exertion of white power through formal and informal racial segregation, and a contagion of racial hysteria and mob violence through public lynching. Courthouses often served as impressive architectural statements of community power and identity, and their lawns proved ideal for iconography. Half of the Confederate monuments located on courthouse grounds in Georgia were erected between 1907 and 1917 (see also Evans and Gáddie, 2021; Evans and Sims, 2021).

FIGURE 2

The Second Wave of Ku Klux Klan “Klaverns” and Documented Lynchings by State (Graphic by Katherine Sims)



Monument placements also track with the rise of the second-wave Klan and episodes of mob lynching. Figure 2 shows the approximate count of klaverns created in the second wave of the Klan from 1915 to 1940. The Klan reemerged on November 15, 1915, announcing its return when William Simmons and a group of hooded klansmen set afire a cross atop Stone Mountain in Georgia. Klaverns were most numerous in Texas, with the fewest being created in the Carolinas. Billboards demarking territory as “Klan Kountry” as late as the 1950s “declared the proximate boundaries of southern localism” and attested to the extralegal institutions of community identity and justice (Gilmore, 2008:2). Within the boundaries of “Dixie,” according to Gilmore, southern whites controlled public space and conversation through racial oppression, “[W]hite Southerners had always known that Dixie depended on localism, on their right to be left alone to manage their unique ‘Negro Problem’” (Gilmore, 2008:3). Racial violence took many forms and served to terrorize those who challenged white supremacy.

Figure 2 also reveals the patterns of lynching. The practice was most frequent in the Deep South states of Georgia, Mississippi, and Louisiana, followed by Arkansas and Alabama. The Atlantic states (Virginia, the Carolinas) had relatively few incidents (see also Evans and Sims, 2021). Cutler (1905), writing amid the lynching era, placed the popularity of lynching in the South as a direct consequence of republican democracy. In *Lynch Law*, he observed that, unlike a monarchy where authority is in the hand of a sovereign, “the people consider themselves a law unto themselves. They make the laws; therefore they can unmake them. Since they say what a judge can do, they entertain the idea that they may do this thing themselves. To execute a criminal deserving of death is to act merely in their sovereign capacity, temporarily dispensing with their agents, the legal administrators of the law” (Cutler, 1905:269).

Lynching became the means to “terrorize and restrain this lawless element” in the black population, because among “Southern [white] people the conviction is general that terror is the only restraining influence that can be brought to bear upon vicious negroes” (Cutler, 1905:274). It was, to Cutler’s analysis of his contemporary time, the only means to craft a new hierarchical relationship of whites over blacks to replace the lost master/slave

relationship. And, the tool of execution was always deemed as both necessary and deserved by the victim.

Racial Violence and the Use of Public Space to Reinforce Community Identity

With the conclusion of the Civil War and the abolition of slavery, the South suffered a labor shortage. State legislatures responded by instituting “Black Codes” to restrict the employment opportunities, dictate labor standards, and structure social behavior of African Americans. In response, Congress passed legislation to guarantee citizenship rights to African Americans—an act that posed a clear affront to southern states and the racial caste system they ardently fought to maintain (Tolney and Beck, 1995:4–5). From 1866 to 1876, racial violence terrorized the South. Mass interracial violence (“riots”) occurred in Tennessee (1866), Louisiana (1866 and 1873), Georgia (1868), South Carolina (1870 and 1876), Alabama (1870 and 1874), Mississippi (1871, 1874, and 1875) (Tolney and Beck, 1995:5). These events sparked the first wave of white terrorist groups “dedicated to mastering the African-American population through psychological and physical intimidation” (Tolney and Beck, 1995:6).

Brundage (1993:3) notes that by the end of the 19th century, race relations in the South had become distinctively defined by mob violence, with lynching regularly used as a tool of racial oppression. This is not to say that motivations for racial violence were static over time or throughout the region of the South. It is also true that the agents responsible for this violence varied by incident. However, there were patterns to the practice. African Americans suffered violence at the hands of terrorist mobs (including, among others, “night riders” and members of the Klan), private mobs, posses, and mass mobs (Brundage, 1993:19). By the early 20th century, lynching had taken on qualities of spectacle, and periodic waves of clustered racial violence broke out across the nation, but especially in the South. Meyers (2006) has explored the history of Georgia’s notorious Brooks County, recounting the brutal and perversely civic nature of lynching in public space.

Lynching behavior developed a pattern as ritual. The event gathered the community together for a performance that affirmed racial dominance by whites. It then staged a scene of extreme violence, according to Harding (2017:1), involving a choreographed episode of “the chase, capture, public identification, announcement of the upcoming event, [and] selection and preparation of the site” (Meyers, 2006:233; see also Hale, 1998). The climax was the spectacle itself. After participating in the mutilation, torture, and execution of the victim, members of the crowd would collect souvenirs from the body and space for a lasting memory of the event (Meyers, 2006:233; see also Hale, 1998). In Brooks County, Georgia, “hundreds and probably thousands of people from surrounding counties viewed the remains of several victims, who were left hanging in public display” (Meyers, 2006:233). “The actual killings of the victims were not public events, but the fact that several of the bodies were left hanging made the lynchings public spectacles” (Meyers, 2006:233).

Lawrenceville, the seat of Gwinnett County, Georgia, provides an illustration of the gruesome public nature of lynching. In a photograph from 1911 (not reproduced here), a large crowd gathers to memorialize the display of a lynched man, Charlie Hale. The photo includes the presence of bloodhounds, a common device popularized in dramatization of the hunt of escaped convicts and fleeing criminals. This spectacle of gross mob violence and dehumanization was put on at the corner of the courthouse square. The location, now the home of the Gwinnett Council for Seniors, bears no marker or indication of the event.

The historical context of race relations in the South in the early part of the 20th century further contributed to this unique understanding of popular sovereignty. The Civil War led to the dismantling of the institution of slavery in the agrarian South. It disrupted the organizing power relationships of the region but did not fully and effectively establish a lasting substitute. As Cutler described in 1905, "In the process of adjustment to a new order of things there has been constant friction between the two races, and when an offense has been committed upon a white person by a negro, particularly if an assault has been made upon the person of a white woman or child, the exasperation of the whites has known scarcely any bounds" (Cutler, 1905:275).

In his speech "Why Is the Negro Lynched?" published in 1895, Frederick Douglass conveyed the power of fear in fueling the passionate cruelty of the lynch mob. In three phases, whites explicitly or implicitly justified lynching of African Americans (Douglass, 1895). First they feared conspiracy and insurrection among newly freed blacks. Then they feared an assault on defenseless white women and children. Then, with nothing to fear but the exercise of full citizenship (including the vote) itself, white mobs brutally attacked African Americans outside the confines of the justice system. Specifically addressing the charge of black assaults on white women, Douglass articulated the precarious nature of due process in the South:

This new charge, once fairly started on the wings of rumour, no matter by whom or in what manner originated, whether well or ill-founded, whether true or false, is certain to raise a mob and to subject the accused to immediate torture and death. It is nothing that there may be a mistake in his case as to identity. It is nothing that the victim pleads "not guilty." It is nothing that the accused is of fair reputation and his accuser is of an abandoned character. It is nothing that the majesty of the law is defied and insulted; no time is allowed for defence or explanation; he is bound with cords, hurried off amid the frantic yells and curses of the mob to the scaffold, and there, under its ghastly shadow, he is tortured, till by pain or promises, he is made to think that he can possibly gain time or save his life by confession—confesses—and then, whether guilty or innocent, he is shot, hanged, stabbed or burned to death amid the wild shouts of the mob. When the will of the mob is accomplished, when its thirst for blood has been quenched, when its victim is speechless, silent and dead, his mobocratic accusers and murderers of course have the ear of the world to all themselves, and the world, hearing only the testimony of the mob, generally approves its verdict (Douglass, 1895:3–4).

Whites were ready to take the law in their own hands at a moment's notice, and local law enforcement was complicit in letting it happen. Rather than dispersing lynch mobs from the jail house or public square, they often facilitated mob violence through negligence. Elected by white men, sheriffs were either ineffectual or complicit agents of the crowd. Douglass noted, "In its thirst for blood and its rage for vengeance, the mob has blindly, boldly, and defiantly supplanted sheriffs, constables, and police" (Douglass, 1895:3). For this reason, some argued at the time that the only way to eradicate lynch law would be to change public opinion on the "race question" and simultaneously socialize the citizenry toward a greater formal administration of the law. Cutler cautioned that "Lynch-law will not cease to exist in this country until there is a strong and uncompromising public sentiment against it in every community" (Cutler, 1905:279).

In sum, white mob violence against African Americans wrecklessly and thoroughly undermined due process because its aim was not justice but terrorism. The level of violence and brutality was grossly incommensurate with the punishment called for by law. As Crabtree (2014:6) observes, "lynching was meant to send a message to the entire black community about staying in 'their place' and not transgressing the etiquette of black deference to

whites.” Here, we interrogate the tools of dehumanization provided by physical space to better understand affective reality of courthouse squares throughout the South. If blacks were to know their place, where was that place in the public realm and how did it shape their experience of justice contra white experience?

Social Meaning and Affective Architecture: The Affective Reality of the “Other” in Southern Courthouse Space

Conceiving of the public square as a visible manifestation of government at work provides rich ground for exploring the social meaning of public space. And Goodsell’s (1998) differentiation of classes of public space provides a blueprint for considering the ways in which community identity and governance take on physical and behavioral form in the town center.

Elsewhere, we focused on county government in a single state to give tangible shape to this theoretical idea (Evans and Gaddie, 2021), outlining the contours of Georgia as a state in the Deep South with power devolved to the county level, with institutions and mores reflecting strong community identity, and with a history of racial segregation and oppression through formal and informal institutions. The county government in built form placed the courthouse and courthouse square front and center as the stage of formal and informal power, commemoration, celebration and protest, and all forms of civic engagement. In the years following the Civil War and Reconstruction, these spaces became the sites of Confederate memorialization as well as mob lynchings. Though racial terror by lynch mobs might have been sporadic in communities throughout the South, the grotesque violation of human rights and the public spectacle around lynchings “left the cultural landscape charged” (Larsen, 2003:112). Figure 1 paints a picture of the courthouse square as a system of public demands and supports for a governing regime, and it captures only the political reality of the dominant public—the white public.

Figure 3 illustrates the ways in which this governing order systematically oppressed African Americans in and around its civic spaces, spaces which in turn took on a racial social meaning. A more accurate depiction of county government as a political system would conceptually account for the differing affects of its public spaces. As Larsen observes, “landscapes of urban segregation are landscapes of conflict....[T]hey are the locations for struggle and pain. There are clearly two established sides to the conflict: those who are among those who belong and those designated as the ‘other’” (Larsen, 2003:120).

Intentional elements of design of southern civic spaces, actual behavioral patterns around and through these spaces, and the societal meaning inherent in these spaces all carry affect (Goodsell, 2001). The result is a cultural landscape of community power (decentralized to the county level with physical centrality given to courthouse squares), identity (white supremacy enforced through Confederate commemoration and memorialization as well as racial segregation and oppression), and violence (Klan activity and mob lynchings). The design of government expressed through physical buildings and state statute was reinforced through cultural mores and racial discrimination in actual practice. African Americans were excluded from white spaces, marginalized in and by civic events, terrorized by violent mobs, and in execution made the subject of public spectacle. This took place outside the courthouse, often on the square or nearby. African Americans faced systematic exclusion from juries, disrespect and harassment during court proceedings, segregation in accommodation, and disenfranchisement at the polls. This took place inside the courthouse facility (See Figures 4 and 5 for illustrations of systematic exclusion from

FIGURE 3

A Systems Model of Politics Accounting for the Affective Reality of African Americans in the South During Jim Crow

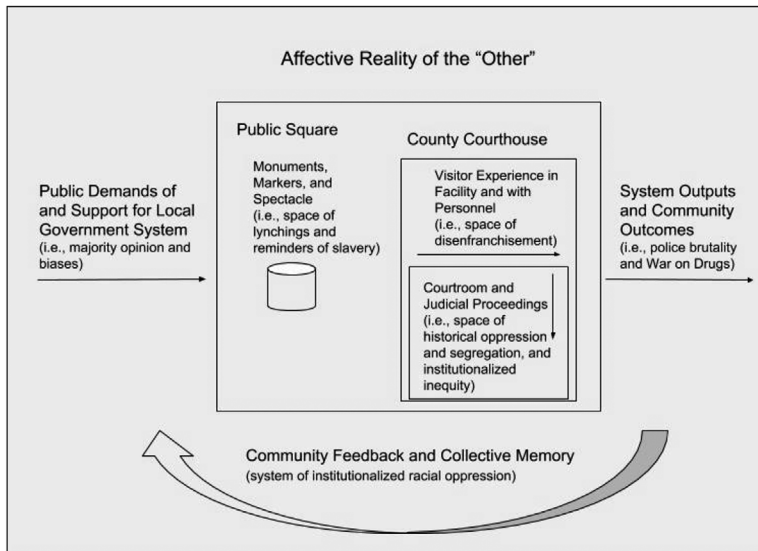


FIGURE 4

Confederate Veterans Reunion in Front of Colquitt County Courthouse, Moultrie, Georgia, ca. 1902–1905 (Vanishing Georgia, Georgia Archives, University System of Georgia, image clq086)



FIGURE 5

Courtroom Scene in the Ware County Courthouse, Waycross, Georgia, ca. 1940–1959
(Vanishing Georgia, Georgia Archives, University System of Georgia, image war098)



civic engagement facilitated by county courthouses both on the square and inside the building).

The affective reality of African Americans as the “other” in public life is encapsulated uniquely within the construct of the county courthouse square. As McFarlin (2015:248) notes, “segregation in the courtroom augmented, confirmed, and approved those dominant social norms of white supremacy outside the courtroom walls.” Structural and behavioral discrimination at the courthouse stood as powerful symbols of the legitimacy of racism in society. Race-based segregation outside and inside the house of local government further signaled the appropriateness of racist behavior on the part of those charged with administering justice. And racism in the courthouse was a symptom of broader societal norms. The system was a “symbol, signal, and symptom” (McFarlin, 2015:249).

The narrative Crabtree (2014) paints of Jesse Washington lynched by a white mob in Texas in 1916 illuminates this dynamic vividly.

Jesse Washington knew he was going to die. Waiting for the all-white Texas jury to return with what would undoubtedly be a guilty verdict and a death sentence, he looked out at the sea of hostile white faces in the courtroom, his gaze placid, as though the certainty of his impending death somehow muffled the terror in his heart. The jury left the courtroom just long enough to ‘deliberate’ – a mere four minutes – and during those tense moments, the seventeen-year-old farm hand must have wondered if this sham trial would pacify the growing mob of over 2,500 that spilled out of the McLennan County Courthouse onto

the streets of Waco. He knew all too well that if the law did not hang him, these people would (Crabtree, 2014:13).

Work within the discipline of political science in the fields of democratic theory and public administration have contributed to our understanding of the form and function of public space in a democratic society. Yet much of this literature is either quite theoretical and abstract or quite technical and process-oriented. We find great value in considering broadly the conceptual framework of systems theory and the recent work on affect in architectural theory to give shape and social meaning to the everyday experiences of citizens with their government. Hayden (1997) argues that the public realm, both in terms of space and architecture, shapes community memory and thereby identity. It shapes memory on a personal level, and it shapes memory on a collective level, “Urban landscapes are storehouses for these social memories, because natural features such as hills or harbors, as well as streets, buildings, and patterns of settlement, frame the lives of many people and often outlast many lifetimes” (Hayden, 1997:9). We should pay attention to the everyday architecture of government, and we should consider not just its physical form but also its social and political meaning (Hayden, 1997:12). Scholars in fields outside of political science argue that public space holds the power “to nurture [a] more profound, subtle, and inclusive sense of what it means to be an American” (Hayden, 1997:9). We find value in exploring the ways in which public space might be structured to serve this end.

The county courthouse in American political life serves as the physical infrastructure for municipal government and citizen engagement. In the South, these spaces are replete with community memory. We propose a more granular analysis of courthouse towns, many of which were created after the Civil War in areas with substantial black populations. Treating these spatial contexts as landscapes enables us to think in terms of both place and space. It also focuses our attention on the way in which the urban landscape refers to “something lived or dwelled in,” a “relational context,” and a “process” (Larsen, 2003:113–114).

We too must engage a more systematic effort to connect what we know of the architecture of Jim Crow, the legal process of Jim Crow, and the extralegal practices such as lynching and other racial terror. There are common threads of behavioral affect which link from the architecture of separation and exclusion which we described above, and the nature of Jim Crow justice. McFarlin (2015) notes that the general exclusion of southern blacks from public life left them as the subjects of law, and also with a sense that life and justice were uncertain and arbitrary as well as unequal.

Additionally, we must recognize that a focus on historical work on white lynching culture excludes the essential perspective of African Americans and the unique legacies of memory of place and power. Crabtree (2014:5) pointedly observes that lynching studies privilege white perspectives and experiences, “by studying the ritual of a lynching, the spectacle of lynching, the imagery of lynching, lynching culture, and the commodification of lynching.” In so doing, African Americans are objectified even if inadvertently.

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