The Politics of Small Things
The Politics of Small Things: The Power of the Powerless in Dark Times

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In memory of Michael Edward Asher
June 7, 1948–September 11, 2001
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Acknowledgments

When I started my career, I wrote primarily for my teachers. I wanted to show them that I understood their lessons and could make something of them, that I could contribute. Then my attention shifted, and I primarily addressed my peers. Sometimes this was done in the spirit of competition, more often, I hope and think, in the spirit of collaboration. I tried, along with many different colleagues, in a number of different fields and from many different places, to develop critical social theory, thinking about new alternatives to modern tyranny, rethinking the promise of social movements and civil society, reflecting on the experience of the developing democratic movements in Eastern and Central Europe and their meaning for comparative inquiry. Teachers and colleagues are still on my mind and have continued to help me as I embarked on this project, the study of the politics of small things, and as I completed this book, the project’s first phase, addressing the power of the powerless in dark times. I acknowledge for their lasting contribution to my foundational education Arnold Foster, Alicja Iwan- ska, Paul Meadows, Maurice Richter Jr., Howard S. Becker, Morris Janowitz, Donald Levine, Barry Schwartz, and Edward Shils. And I thank my colleagues who have particularly helped me in this endeavor through their writings and in conversations and criticisms, especially Talal Asad, Jose Casanova, Paolo Carpignano, Janos Kis, Xolela Mangcu,