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SPACE JAM

Media Conglomerates Build the Entertainment City

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For more than a decade, architects, geographers, and cultural critics have explored the privatization of public space, describing a speculative and spectacular postmodern city built on foundations of grinding inequality. This is, in Michael Sorkin's phrase, the city as theme park, where corporately built public spaces have helped kill the street and cash out democracy (Sorkin, 1991; see also Schiller, 1989: especially 89-110).

The notion of the city as theme park makes rough metaphorical sense of scores of urban transformations and suburban projects, but in this discussion an important question has been overlooked. The urban reshapers are increasingly, and literally, the theme park builders, the conglomerate media corporations that now lead the international economy (Herman and McChesney, 1997). The Walt Disney Company's central role at "ground zero" of the redevelopment of 42nd Street and Broadway in Manhattan is the obvious example, but Time-Warner, Viacom, Seagram's Universal Studios, and Sony are also commissioning, designing, and financing massive real estate projects. So the neglected question: Why are these mega media conglomerates moving beyond the construction of literal theme parks and helping to rebuild city centres, reshaping shopping malls and

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suburbs, and even designing residential and work communities? The same media behemoths that have brought the world a revolutionary and supposedly placeless electronic transnational culture are demonstrating a powerful interest in the problem of space and place. But why, and with what implications for collective and cultural life? . . .

In the first half of the 20th century, the entertainment conglomerates were central in creating a nearly all-penetrating national and international mass culture, first through film and later through animation, popular music, and televised sports. In the second half of the century, they have brought this largely American mass culture thoroughly and extensively into the home, to hundreds of millions of people. At the cusp of the 21st century, they are poised to weave the private realm together with the collective through the creation of dramatic and focused media-filled spaces. In the process, as they further displace smaller businesses and older, heterogeneous uses of the streets, the media conglomerates are changing the relationships between public and private experience. They are in the process of creating public spaces defined by marketing criteria and shaped to the most profitable audiences. These spaces will be devoted to the circulation of well-tested and "safe" media content and will exclude experimental imagery or oppositional ideas. Privately produced collective spaces based on and filled with familiar mass media content can create a kind of seamless world, one in which the home—currently devoted to extensive consumption of conglomerate culture—is tightly knit to and continuous with the outside. The city (or at least certain districts of the city), seen as dangerous in its diverse unpredictability, is being made safe imagistically as well as physically.

◆ *The Scale of the Boom*

"Entertainment is the hottest topic in real estate circles," as many economic analysts have noted, but the reverse is just as true: real estate is now indispensable to an entertainment company's portfolio, its growth, and promotional strategies (Phillips, 1995; *The Economist*, 1994; Hartnett, 1993). While they worry about how the Internet will change their fundamental businesses, the media conglomerates are elevating their corporate vice presidents for real estate and development. These strategists are less visible publicly than executives in charge of film, television, and multimedia, but they are charged with doing more than building offices. They speak of the old-fashioned ideas of place and community as growth opportunities for their companies.[1]

No recent statistics are able to summarize the extent of location-based entertainment projects, but they are ubiquitous (see, for example, Hannigan, 1998). In today's rebuilt city centres, they are important conceptual, architectural, and speculative interventions. In Philadelphia, Denver, Baltimore, Atlanta, New Orleans, Cleveland, San Francisco, and Washington, D.C., these new projects have been born out of the political clout of the developers using state and federal redevelopment funds, the skills of prestigious architects, and tourism promotion policies (Boyer, 1991; on Atlanta see Rutheiser, 1996; Levine, 1997; Smith, 1996). At their core are buildings that integrate product, most predominantly media product, into space more fully than ever before, using architecture to synthesize marketing goals with the creation of awe and personal identification.

As usual, Manhattan provides striking examples. On the East Side, within the few blocks between East 57th and 55th Streets is a cluster of entertainment retail projects. The Warner Bros. Store features 75,000 square feet of licensed merchandise, 24 video screens, "a giant zoetrope in a moving picture cafe" (Gragg, 1997: 84), and hands-on interactive animation stations. Nearby, NikeTown features a museum of Olympic medals and trophies; films of U.S. hockey, World Cup soccer, Michigan football; and a three-storey screen that descends from the ceiling every 30 minutes to show an inspirational sports film. NikeTown alone claims 10,000 visitors daily, evenly split between tri-state residents and tourists. A Disney Store is just a few blocks south on 55th Street, again filled with giant video, interactive toys, merchandise, and a travel and ticket agency to help customers connect with other Disney products, such as theme parks, cruises, and Broadway shows (*The Architectural Review*, 1997; Gragg, 1997). At Times Square the Disney Company has anchored the area's "rebirth" as a film, theatre, and "interactive entertainment" district. Forty-Second Street is now a showcase for Disney's endless array of family-friendly products, and the New Amsterdam Theatre is not only the stage for Disney's new live theatrical enterprises but also a celebration of the company's vast international cultural power (Pulley, 1995; Roman and Evans, 1996; Berman, 1995). . . .

The same phenomenon of the interjection of media content into shared social space can be seen repeated in many places on a smaller scale. Immediate causes and particular corporate actors may vary, particular projects succeed or fail, but the penetration of public space by media content is decisive. For example, shopping and regional speciality malls around the United States are clustering new media venues and mini theatres near the familiar multiplex to try to create life, light, and a kind of busy, heterogeneous street of activity (Phillips, 1995; Hartnett, 1993). "We are trying to take the best attractions out of the theme park and put them in the cities," says Vito Sanzone, the chief executive of Iwerks, the specialty theatre and film company. . . .

Sega, the mammoth video game company, is engaged in very diverse large- and small-scale location-based projects. Its interactive sites in Yokohama and Osaka are small theme parks that try to "make full use of [Sega's] newest and most advanced technology" (O'Brien, 1996b), that is, they take the Sega game out of the home and transform it into pay-to-enter urban recreation (O'Brien, 1994b; Katayama, 1994). In 1994, after launching a 90,000-square-foot flagship game park in Tokyo, Sega announced that it would build 50 more virtual-reality and video-game parks across Japan. A huge SegaWorld unveiled at Piccadilly Circus in London accommodates thousands of simultaneous, interactive players. Described as "a hybrid between a giant video arcade and a small theme park," SegaWorld arranges the latest proprietary high-tech rides and games across themed zones spread over seven floors in four buildings (O'Brien, 1996b).

Sega is firing up Gameworks, an international software ride-game development in a collaboration with the media theme park conglomerate Universal/Seagram and Stephen Spielberg's Dreamworks SKG studio. Starting in Seattle, Las Vegas, and southern California, Gameworks plans to build a string of as many as one hundred play sites in the United States and to team up with the Toronto-based Playdium Entertainment to build 40 Sega Cities across Canada. The first Sega City, outside Ontario, is a Can$17 million sports and film-themed entertainment complex with "more than 180 video simulators and interactive games" (Zoltak, 1996c: 31-2). On another track, Gameworks is at work with Cineplex Odeon on a project called Cinescape, which will combine Sega game centres with movie theatres and restaurants, again in major retail outlets (*Wall Street Journal*, 1996; Zoltak, 1996a). . . .

At the lower end of the retail market, the media penetration of shared space is just as advanced, though it looks different. For example, *Advertising Age* reports that "marketers increasingly are realizing the potential of in-store entertainment fixtures, such as walls of TV screens, scattered TV monitors, or audio systems" (Cuneo, 1997). Polaroid, for example, recently screened a commercial inside almost 2,000 mass merchandise malls around the United States. In autumn 1998, country singer Garth Brooks debuted a new album via a live concert broadcast exclusively into hundreds of American Wal-Marts. Retailers have discovered that they can sell video or audio time in their own stores, and national mall management chains are currently negotiating similar deals with television networks, as well as local television and radio stations. For example, Wells Park Group, a national mall manager, will offer "media partner[s] space in common areas or in stores in exchange for on-air promotions" (Cuneo, 1997). In such common commercial space, parents and children will take a shopping break to watch commercial television.

Also at the less affluent end of the spectrum are examples of the emerging pattern of turning local public services over to entertainment companies under the guise of partnered community development. To the extent that it is successfully promoted as providing social amelioration—jobs, education, community centres, ways to keep children off the streets—the entertainment-media-retail model of the city is reworking the fragments of an older public sphere.[2] In 1996, Austin, Texas, became the first municipality in the United States to build a publicly owned Family Entertainment Center, "to aid the [largely Chicano East Austin] community in its search to give youth a safe place to hang out" (Waddell, 1996: 24). With city-purchased land, and a federal Department of Housing and Urban Development loan, the facility was constructed by the city but planned and run for a fee and incentives by a major leisure management company. Instead of an old-fashioned public recreation centre, the Central City Entertainment Center is "all entertainment" for a profit, geared to generate the maximum amount of revenue for the concessionaires and the managing company.

Similarly, the Battle Creek, Michigan, Parks and Recreation Department sponsored the Full Tilt Entertainment Mall as part of a city centre revitalization project. With a single admission price, Full Tilt contains a small water park, a video arcade, a food court, a gym franchise, a laser tag arena, and a teenage club, among other attractions. Described by its general manager as a "very aggressive private enterprise sort of thing," Full Tilt will operate on its own without city funding (O'Brien, 1997b). A scheme called tax-increment financing, widely used to support private interests in urban redevelopment around the United States, means that taxes on Full Tilt's revenues do not return to the city's general fund for education and services. Revenues are funnelled into a special district account to help expand similar redevelopment projects.

Both the Austin and Battle Creek projects aim to attract and serve young people and families by modelling themselves on the corporately produced theme park, including its concessionaires, leases, and, perhaps later, its pricing structures and promotional and sponsorship arrangements. The main difference is that each has been built almost entirely with public money, rather than by the usual public-private financing blend. Nonetheless, the main effect is to privilege private profit-making.

The Rationale for the Entertainment-Retail Boom ◆

There are several powerful and intersecting reasons for the entertainment-retail building boom. Real estate developers are partnering with entertainment corporations in part because retail and office space were overbuilt in the 1980s and remain so today as speculation runs far ahead of demand. Traditional shopping centres and malls, and even Jon Jerde's elaborate pseudo-cities, are facing tremendous competitive pressure as American incomes "remain flat and retail space per capita increases" (Phillips, 1995; see also Pacelle, 1997). In addition to retail saturation, the development of new shopping media and ways of selling to people in the home via catalogues, cable, infomercials, and Internet shopping is also forcing traditional retailers to be ever more inventive to reach the older, affluent though slower consuming segment of the population. At the same time, these consumers are better understood than ever before—they have been subject to more than a generation of traditional and now computerized electronic and video information gathering. Market researchers now speak of knowing most of the consuming population as niches, each with its particular tastes, habits, and preferences (Gladwell, 1996).

Entertainment retail is a strategy to get people out of the house. From the point of view of landlords, retailers, and especially the vast coalitions of institutional real estate speculators called REITs (real estate investment trusts, essentially mutual funds specializing in real estate), the injection of entertainment content into commercial spaces is a coordinated way to differentiate one retail space from another, to bring people out to shop, and, in metropolitan locations, to capture the important tourists. In this effort, media conglomerates like Disney, Sony, MCA, and Time-Warner—which own the widely familiar film, television, and sports imagery—have a long head start. In the risky and overbuilt retail sector, the already tested media content bolsters investor confidence as do Hollywood's corporate deep pockets. Here Pocahontas, Daffy Duck, and the Tasmanian Devil provide a kind of insurance that the customers will keep coming. Indeed, they provide sure ways to locate and appeal to important groups within the broad population of customers. . . .

Like developers, media conglomerates and theatre chains have a range of good reasons to support entertainment retail experiments. Theatrical film exhibitors feel pressure to get people out of the house, to break down the cocoon of television, cable, home video, computer and video games, and the Internet. The video-game industry sees the problem similarly. One manager of a Seattle virtual-reality centre put it this way: "What we're doing, and what everyone else is experimenting with, is 'What does it take to get people out of the house to spend time with other people?' What is the right mix? In a sense this is an R&D project" (quoted in Goldberg, 1997).

New technologies are an important differentiating draw for the game arcades and specialty theatres. The special-format film producers, for example, speak in terms of increasing the difference between their products and both movie going and staying home with a video by intensifying the film experience through technology. As a number of film critics have noticed, the promoters of IMAX and the new mini-ride theatres are trying to recreate filmed entertainment as a kinetic, sensory, aural, and even olfactory experience, and so they are resurrecting the claim to "total cinema," the cinema of advanced and perfected perception, engaging all the senses with complete realism (Arthur, 1996). Special-format film's promoters speak of "total immersion." According to Iwerks's Vito Sanzone: "The core attraction [of the big screen simulator theatre] is that it's a totally immersive, visual and audio experience. . . . You're battered and flabbergasted for five minutes," in a way that breaks through the "inundation" of the rest of everyday life (quoted in Johnson, 1995). So too do the new video and virtual-reality products from Sega and Gameworks claim to offer more intense experiences based on technologies that engulf the player's body and immerse him or her in a whole environment. Here the inundation of everyday life, which must be shattered, means not only the routines of suburb, freeway, and workplace, but also the rest of the media world: video, television, advertising, radio, and print.

Yet, from the media conglomerates' perspective it is not just a question of breaking through the "cocoon" of home entertainment. Oddly—or perhaps not—what is being used to get people out of the house is the material that has been invading it for 40 years. The largest media conglomerates have realized that they need what Disney chief executive Michael Eisner has called an "inside/outside" strategy, encompassing both the inside (media consumption in private and domestic spaces) *and* the outside (traditional and new forms of media consumption in public). The two spheres must work together and be mutually supportive. Eisner "wants to keep luring people out of their homes to see Disney's movies and visit its theme parks, while giving them an increasing number of products to entertain and inform themselves [with] when they do stay home."[3] But now the inside and outside of entertainment culture are interdependent, as, for example, when a successful film's box office drives home video sales, or ABC sports enhances interest in the ESPN Zone restaurants. These companies not only can work on both the inside and the outside; they must. Finding new ways to occupy space gives the conglomerates a new grounding for their mobile cultural products.

◆ *Aesthetic Strategies*

From an aesthetic point of view, location-based entertainment projects face a central and perhaps paradoxical problem. Inserted into standardized and relentlessly exploited commercial spaces, they must create—out of thin air—a sense of place. Place is the product on offer, built up out of the design strategies learned in the theme park industry. The key theme park lessons applied to retail-entertainment are, first, shape and manage spaces to appeal to the most economically desirable customers, making sure to exclude the undesirables through price, marketing, or explicit policy. Because so much retail-entertainment space is entirely privately owned, in shopping malls and theme parks, screening of visitors can be subtle but intense. Most retail-entertainment spaces have developed careful entrance and exit control; set back from the street, they are effectively gated, since visitors enter through a hotel, from a freeway off-ramp or from huge parking garages (for commentary on this see Straight, 1997). They have also developed architectural and security techniques to discourage undesirables—the homeless, who may beg, or teenagers, who will spend little money, for example (Goss, 1993). At the same time, surprisingly detailed information gathered by covert surveillance cameras is fed back into the pool of retail and market research data, to help further refine the design and control of space.[4]

The same spatial control can be accomplished and supported by "themeing," which when successful, applies strong narratives to spaces while eliminating undesirable or conflicting images, ideas, or experiences. Themes themselves—preexisting and well-understood narratives—can help control these spaces by drawing in and confirming the identities of the desired customers. Themed space carefully coordinates design elements, from the shape of open areas and the forms of buildings, to paint, lighting, sound, signs, and sometimes costume, all referring to a cultural story. In addition to creating an attraction, the point of themeing is to achieve as much experiential coherence as possible, even if the theme itself is one of heterogeneity, carnival, or even chaos. So Universal CityWalk's theme is "city," a collage and repackaging of pieces of Los Angeles's mass cultural image, occasionally even including references to grit and danger. This compressed, selected Hollywood gives eating, shopping, and people-watching a charge; they become theatrical experiences, performances in themselves (Goss, 1996; cf. Gottdeiner, 1997). Again, media companies have a long headstart in building themed space; they have spent decades specializing in narratives and the icons that compress narratives. Indeed, they own outright huge banks of these images and stories.

At the heart of the location-based entertainment projects is this paradox: within the context of themed space, they aim to reproduce a sense of authentic space, and this means evoking the diversity and unpredictability of the older city using carefully calibrated recipes. The projects aim to reproduce a life and liveliness that looks like the older commercial town centre, but in order to do this profitably, in order to turn out the right sort of crowd, they must control mixing and reduce real unpredictability. The appeal of Gameworks, Disney Stores, Rain-forest Cafes, and ESPN Zones for mall developers is not just the increased rents and sales per square foot. It is that, when successful, these venues create visible sociability—noise, movement, and the dense presence of people—inside and outside their doors. Whether they are installed in regional specialty malls, shoehorned into redeveloped town centres, or added to the mix of mega-destinations, like Orlando and Las Vegas, developers and investors hope that by combining upholstered lounges, Internet cafes, movie theatres, and restaurants with interactive media content, location-based entertainment can pull in the "destination audience." These are people, 25 years and older, especially couples, "looking for an evening that will combine food, going to a Virtual World, a nightclub, a movie" (Zoltak, 1996a). Destination audiences can be persuaded to open their wallets at more than one attraction, and crowds, the sense of the mixed and heterogeneous city, are part of the attraction. Heavy mall traffic itself, like the crowd at the county fair or theme park, can loosen restraints on spending and overcome the sameness of the suburbs and the dispersal of the automotive city. The recipe results in small and large spaces that are close relatives of the theme park's ideal city, a closed city free from the uncertainty, poverty, and potential crime of the real streets (Goss, 1996). . . .

◆ *Materializing Media*

The most important example of themeing is, of course, the focus on media product as the central story of the retail space. Like the use of high-impact film and game technologies, the integration of Hollywood and television narratives aims to push new energy into a familiar experience and to bring people out. By all accounts the Walt Disney Company has been most far-sighted and aggressive in finding endless three-dimensional and spatial forms for its media products. As is well known, Disney was the first to really undertake (and understand the possibilities of) the meshing of mass media content, merchandising, and promotion in his 1950s theme park. At Disneyland, films and animated cartoons became three-dimensional in the landscape. Robots and rides were media images that customers could touch, just as the park's live performances, parades, and theatre could touch customers. . . .

Making media content three-dimensional and locating it in space has a variety of uses for the entertainment conglomerates. Entertainment merchandise stores—Disney has 700 worldwide and more than 450 in the United States—have become widely familiar in the last decade. They supplement the all-important licensed merchandise sales tied to box office hits (White, 1997).[5] In these stores, media content in the form of merchandise is a profit stream in its own right, contributing enormously to the bottom lines of the licensing and "creative content" divisions, which, in the case of Disney, has contributed more than a third of annual gross revenue in recent years. Just as important, themed merchandise in the form of clothing, books, toys, and collectible knick-knacks gives an added promotional boost to the latest film, television show, or video game. . . .

The stores offer visitors a kind of journey through its world of brand-name concepts; the very concept of Disney (and the power of conglomerate media ownership) is celebrated through products and product histories. These spaces are dedicated to corporate identification. As one Warner's executive put it, the stores create "a presence in the community"—and by this he meant a marketing presence—the more effective because it is so much fun.[6]

Location-based entertainment projects have multiple and overlapping uses for media conglomerates: they help cross-promote media content, intensifying profits and adding new profit streams, even if these streams may also flood the market. They "bomb the brand" and act as walk-through public relations; they provide a place to test new products and gather information about the customers. But beyond this, materialized mass media content paradoxically creates a sense of the local. As the most familiar cultural material of all, transnational media content (originating largely in the United States) not only serves to give spaces stories, it adds in a powerful sense of history, a sense of a shared past that links the family past to the shared social past. And its ability to pull familiar media content into collective space helps spaces communicate authenticity—an all too fragile commodity in standardized, controlled, and centrally designed spaces.

Media content in collective space is also helping to create new commodities. The feeling of the authentic, the connected, and the local is extraordinarily useful in leading the way into underexplored markets. The Walt Disney Company's new chain of branded children's centres, Club Disney, provides an excellent example of how the marketer's exploration of the social importance of space can help uncover a new set of profit nodes. The Club Disney chain represents the absorption of an older world of children's cheap amusements into a standardized conglomerate project, and its adaptation to broad, unmet social needs. On the one hand, Club Disney is a small-scale spin-off of the theme park concept, marketed to consumers who might not be able to afford the time and money for an Orlando or Anaheim holiday. On the other, Club Disney is a canny assessment of the shortage, indeed, the crisis of safe recreational space and activities for American children.

The old kiddy land and its successor, the family entertainment centre, were often modest family businesses or small franchises, featuring a mix of miniature golf courses, games arcades and redemption games, a playground, a snack bar, a go-kart track, and perhaps some small carnival rides. In the last decade, fun parks have been absorbed into national companies; more recently they are being pulled into (or displaced by) much more elaborate chains of pay-to-enter indoor playgrounds.[7] The Discovery Zone franchise, which aims at families with small children in a resident market, is the best-known intermediate development. Founded in 1989 by a Missouri gymnastics coach "who figured harried parents—particularly on rainy days—would happily pay for a clean, safe, indoor play area filled with games, mazes, and climbing areas" (Gubernick, 1996: 66; Miller, 1993), Discovery Zone sells safety and insulation from tough playgrounds and dangerous streets, a real appeal in many places. "We offer a safe secure environment," said Chuck Gelman, vice president of marketing for Discovery Zone. "Let's face it, you can't go to an outdoor playground in a lot of areas. It's a treat for the kids, and it's a hell of a value. Think about the price of mom taking her three kids to the movie" (quoted in Miller, 1993: 19). Discovery Zone admissions are about US$6-7 per child, and adults go free.

In the late 1990s, Discovery Zone and its competitors [branched] out, seeking sites near anchor stores in regional malls, for example, and offering a new product. The pay-to-play-grounds are doubling as commercial baby-sitting centres for parents in need of time to shop. There is some mass media content in these zones. Movies, videos, computers, and computer games are available to divert the children, and Discovery Zone claims it is looking ahead to offer educational and social services as "music, dance, and computer classes at the centres; hosting parties for Christmas, Halloween, and other holidays; even sponsoring parent groups" (Davids, 1996: 20-1). Tests are under way to see if older children and preteens will use Discovery Zone centres at weekends. "We see ourselves in the future as a paid for community center," says Donna Moore, the company's president and chief executive (Davids, 1996). Again, these location-based products are designed to draw the right customers. Retail developers consider playgrounds, family entertainment centres, drop-off baby-sitting, and chain day care centres "desirable because they attract a coveted market," help these customers stay longer at the shopping centre, and can occupy large, difficult to lease spaces, such as former supermarkets (Phillips, 1995). Many of these chains are providing personal services once performed in the home, usually by women. These include help with homework, haircuts for children, frozen dinner selections, birthday cake ordering, dry-cleaning drop-off and pick-up, chauffeuring, and loans of car seats and pagers (Caminiti, 1993; *Advertising Age*, 1992).[8] Clearly, Discovery Zone and its competitors are showing that the potential for businesses to fill in the gaps in the sagging familial and social support systems is enormous, although their focus is on upper-income groups.

Discovery Zone had a partnership with Blockbuster Video in the early 1990s, and although this venture fell apart, it suggested the potential of tying in neighbourhood-level commercial space for children with branded mass media content. The Walt Disney Company, always alert to make connections between families, media, and merchandising, apparently watched Discovery Zone carefully. In 1997, Disney entered the children's recreation arena with its own ambitious prototype. Its first 24,500-square-foot Club Disney premiered in Thousand Oaks, California, in the spring of 1997 (O'Brien, 1996c; Martin, 1996). The Club contains "more than a dozen play areas in four intensively themed sections based on Disney characters." It is geared for "parental interaction with children ranging in age from infants to 10-year-olds," around such features as a mirror maze filled with stuffed Dalmatians, a "Goofy golf" course, gear to climb the walls, painting, and costumed play acting (Martin, 1996). The Club has differently gauged activity areas, ranging from active play, to creative play, to interactive play.

With its nearly universal name recognition and its middle-class, family-oriented brand identity, Disney profits wildly from parental anxieties about sex and violence in mass media content. With Club Disney, the company will also profit from parents' fear about public space. Fear, rather than real danger, is the emphasis here: so far, the Clubs are being built only in affluent suburbs. As usual, Disney is also offering added value, incorporating self-improvement, education, and new technology into its safe media spaces. Disney understands that parents can be efficiently reached if their children's recreation is themed "educational" and its clubs are themed to look much more rational than the traditional video arcade or go-kart park could ever hope to appear. Its centres will offer "multimedia and science workshops and parent-child art classes" (Rasulo, quoted in O'Brien, 1996c: 19).[9] The Clubs also feature "banks of computers for Internet surfing and CD-ROM game playing" connected to (and, doubtless, testing) Disney's growing multimedia and cyberspace products.

In addition to being educational, Club Disney is cast as therapeutic. Disney spokespersons assert that "Club Disney will set a new standard for family entertainment" (Rasulo, quoted in Martin, 1996: 2) as its interactive structure goes beyond parents watching kids jump in rooms full of plastic balls to "nurture the bond within families." Indeed, "children will learn and the bonding within family elements will be rewarding for all" (Rasulo, quoted in O'Brien, 1996c: 19). This mawkish public relations talk signals that the Disney touch adds value to time spent with the children, thus producing that much sought-after American commodity, quality time. . . .

Conclusions ◆

We have seen how energetically the entertainment space designers are moving beyond architecture and decoration to discover ways that desirable persons can be encouraged to enter and participate in products, undesirables kept out, and, generally, how every niche of space can be turned to promotional or marketing purposes. . . . The explosion of experimentation with the built environment is evidence that the mass media corporations are joining the suburb builders, urban redevelopers, and shopping mall magnates in sculpting the physical world we move about in and the social space we share with neighbours and fellow citizens.

If entertainment-retail projects were only monumental, like CityWalk, NikeTown, or 42nd Street, these reconstructions of space would still be evidence of a deep, continual reworking of experience. After all, in the past, monumental architecture has celebrated national identity, historical events, memories of suffering, narratives of loyalty, and sacrifice. Now the most striking architectural points of pilgrimage cultivate awe for the brand and the magic of belonging through the corporation. Like the old-fashioned monuments and memorials, they are sites where people connect with core cultural ideas and stories. But in these new spaces, the core cultural ideas are not only embodied by products, they *are* products. Citizens are collapsed into consumers, and loyalty is a technique that expands the bottom line. . . .

◆ *Notes*

1. Strategic thinking about the location of entertainment is nothing new, as the history of 42nd Street illustrates. There, between the end of the 19th century and the Great Depression, entertainment entrepreneurs helped create an extraordinary district that embodied American commercial culture's world dominance. Broadway was a space that promoted, tied in, and cross-promoted the plays, musicals, sheet music, celebrities, and films of the entertainment industries; it also was shaped into an extraordinarily liberated space for sexual minorities and sex workers of all kinds, and so both moved and marked the boundaries of respectability (see Agnew, 1991). On real estate forces creating Times Square, see Blackmar (1991) and Hammack (1991); on sexuality and space, see Chauncey (1991) and Senelick (1991).

2. The developers and promoters of the entertainment-retail projects rely heavily on financial and political help from state and local governments. As is well known, city governments, redevelopment authorities, planning commissions, state and local tax codes, tax abatements, and zoning ordinances all play an important role in smoothing the way for large-scale commercial real estate projects, and so they actively promote the high-consumption, and now retail-entertainment, redefinition of social space, as they have for less flamboyant real estate developers for decades. In California, current state law makes it much easier to issue public debt to build a shopping centre than to build a new school, a massive privileging of the interests of private speculation over the provision of public education, goods, and services (Lipsitz, 1998). As Thomas Hanchett (1966) has shown, since the late 1950s, vast tracts of today's hyper-consumption landscape have been built in part with public financing and public subsidies in the form of tax subsidies, and often at the expense of projects that would meet basic housing, schooling, and open space needs for a broad public.

3. For Disney, Internet-based cyber-entertainment will shortly join the ESPNs and Disney channels, increasing its in-home presence (Orwall, 1998).

4. Paco Underhill's research firm, Envirosell, has pioneered the research uses of video cameras in stores (Gladwell, 1996; Underhill, 1994).

5. Licensed merchandise sales now account for more of the profits from a blockbuster film than do box office ticket sales.

6. Similarly, NikeTown on 57th St., New York, was designed to be a "brand bomb," "the face of the brand," "to educate consumers about product design, research and sports in general," by "exploding Nike's image in the hottest retail district in the world" (Gragg, 1997: 84).

7. Family entertainment centres are divided into product for several different niches or special markets. They are hard to count, since their overlap with other amusement industries (like game arcades) is extensive, but they number in the thousands nationwide (O'Brien, 1997a).

8. On the commercialization of formerly domestic functions, cf. Hochschild (1997).

9. Jay Rasulo is vice president of Disney Regional Entertainment.

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