Chapter 6

The Landscape of Power: Imagineering Consumer Behavior at China's Theme Parks

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As the development of theme parks has become a global phenomenon, theming has been incorporated into many areas of everyday life.[1] The Walt Disney Company refers to theming as *imagineering* and uses it to revitalize urban environments, such as New York's Times Square, and to create planned communities, including Celebration, Florida.[2] Theming has become a dominant business practice in the leisure and service sectors such as themed restaurants, like the Hard Rock Cafe and Planet Hollywood; shopping malls, such as the Mall of America and West Edmonton Mall; sports stadiums like Seattle's Safeco Field; and airports, like Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport and McCarran International Airport in Las Vegas. Currently, theming, as a technology for building and operating an environment for the sake of consumption, is common among many spaces such as theme parks, shopping malls, festival markets, themed restaurants, and planned communities.

To understand theming as spatial technology, a clarification of the notion of space is necessary. Conventionally, space is narrowly viewed as built environment, a resulting product of human building activity, which may include building type (dwelling, temple, or meeting hall), defined or bounded territory (square, plaza, or street), landmark or site (shrine), specific building elements (doors, windows, roofs, or walls), and building subdivisions (living room, kitchen, or bathroom). When considering human interactions that deploy the technology of theming, space is necessarily viewed not only as a product of human building activity but also as a medium of social action.[3] Thus, themed space, as a *product* of building activity,

refers to both the material ground of labor and the result of the operations and in-scriptions of capital in the form of land value and the property regime. Meanwhile, as a *medium* of social action, consumer space structures social interactions in a particular way through technologies of theming.

Theming—the production of an environment as a themed space—is a technol-ogy for incorporating a narrative or story into a controlled movement in a built en-vironment.[4] This spatial technology includes three components. First, an environment is built both as a medium for integrating a story or theme into the controlled movement and as the message of the medium—what is communicated by the medium itself. Here, the storyteller is an engineer rather than a conventional counselor who, according to Walter Benjamin, offers "less an answer to a question than a proposal concerning the continuation of a story which is just unfolding."[5] Second, theming is an economic process that operates on the basis of separating the stage (consumption and the performance of work) from the backstage (pro-duction and surveillance). A key principle of operation is synergy, a mode of capital accumulation based on convergence or cross-promotion within and among media (such as print media, broadcast media, theme parks, and the Internet), entertain-ment, retail, real estate development, and other aspects such as education.[6] Finally, the producer or/and the manager of the built environment is a corporation or an or-ganization, usually a private company or its division.

The significance of theming as a spatial technology is historically situated within the context of neoliberal globalization, the reconfiguration of the global po-litical and economic systems at least since the 1970s.[7] The nation-state system is under significant transformation as national and local governments have system-atically withdrawn from various areas traditionally associated with governmental responsibilities—social welfare, education, communications, and even national security. While alternative political systems like socialism appear to fail, civil so-ciety gains more ground—instead of counterbalancing the government's control, civic associations begin to replace the government in controlling the daily lives of individuals, including homeowner associations. In the realm of the economy, con-sumption has been transformed as a privileged site for the fabrication of self and society, and of culture and identity.[8] Consequently, class has become a less plau-sible basis for self-recognition and action when growing disparities of wealth and power would point to the inverse. Meanwhile, such categories as gender, race, eth-nicity, and generation have become compelling idioms of identification, mobilizing people, both within and across nation-states, in ways often opposed to reigning hegemonies.

Both linking together and explicitly facilitating private controls and consump-tion-based economy, the technology of spatial thematic production normalizes the development of a particular kind of built environment, which is characterized by security (clear, safe, and orderly), excitement (alternative, diverse, and entertain-ing), and control (limited access and private management). This normative space is fundamentally paradoxical. On the one hand, it is used to manage fears and un-

certainties, and control terrors, crimes, and threats. Their diverse sources may include job insecurity, everyday boredom, racial and ethnic differences, illegal immigrants, and mass media crime dramas. On the other hand, the normative space also offers excitement that security and control do not offer. Sources of excitement may include encountering others (marked by gender, ethnicity, citizenship, and class), physical challenges, role-playing, and survival games. Thus, a theme park like Disneyland is not simply a tourist attraction, it also embodies the normative space, an effective themed built environment for managing the contradiction between the desire for experience and the parallel reluctance to take risks.

To address the relationship between theming and the development of this normative space, I turn to China's theme parks, where spatial theming has been clearly appropriated as a powerful tool for inscribing and legitimating a new social relationship in China's neoliberalization since 1978, when the country began its "economic reforms." During this period China witnessed the incorporation of the market as a regulative logic in the economy and the gradual rise of private controls that performed governmental functions. Focusing on the Chinese Ethnic Culture Park in Beijing, a major theme park opened in 1994 to represent China's ethnic minority cultures, I examine the park's construction of an "urban village" (a middle-class ideal of suburban lifestyle), its application of a particular mode of capital accumulation, and its use of consumption to shape visitors' behavior.[9] Through this example, I will illustrate the way in which spatial theming is deployed as a technology for structuring economic, social, and cultural organization of everyday life in China, especially at the historical moment when the Chinese Government shifts its orientation of social development policies towards consumption and leisure.

China's Themed Spaces in a Historical Context

The theme park is often viewed as a recent phenomenon in China because the country's first modern theme park, Splendid China in Shenzhen, was only established in 1989. However, the theme park as a cultural form has a long history in China. The Old Summer Palace—or the imperial garden of Yuanming Yuan—built from 1709 to 1774 and destroyed by British and French soldiers during the second opium war in 1860, may be viewed as a prototype of the modern theme park. It has been used as an excellent model not only for building an ideal garden but also for combing both entertainment and consumption in a built environment. The pre-1860 garden contained architecture (both traditional Chinese and European styles), gardens with pools and fountains, and displays of artifacts from China and other countries, and a wall painting about life in an European town.[10] The garden was built for Qing emperors and their families. A make-believe market town was set up to entertain the emperor and his guests. The town included built streets, squares, temples, halls, markets, shops, courtrooms, palaces, and even a harbor. Eunuchs ran

the market and assumed the roles of shop owners, teahouse keepers, and vendors who sold antiques, books, furniture, silk clothes, porcelain, varnish works, and the like. In order to make them look exactly like merchants in downtown Beijing so as to maximize amusement, the eunuchs loudly shouted the vendors' cries (*jiao-mai*), while busily emulating aggressive salesmen to catch customers by the sleeves to press for sales. To make the common street scene come alive, they even pretended to quarrel and fight among themselves and wait for arrest by security guards, as often happened on the real streets. This market normally lasted for nine days as part of the celebration of the New Year.[11]

In the ordinary lives of urban residents, traditional forms of entertainment and amusement were often combined with shopping. The New World and South City Amusement Parks in Beijing offered entertainment, performances, and games in connection with market days and temple fairs.[12] In Shanghai, the Great World (1916-1949) was the most influential and popular amusement center that included variety shows, food shops, and cinemas.[13] The four major department stores in the International Settlement of Shanghai—Xianshi (Sincere), Yong'an (Wing On), Xinxin (Sun Sun) and Daxin (Sun)—were also entertainment centers that included not only merchandise on different floors but also recreational facilities such as dance halls, rooftop bars, coffeehouses, restaurants, hotels and playgrounds.[14] The practices of combining entertainment and shopping were not systematic and thus limited in their scale and influence in the lives of urban residents in the early part of the twentieth century. From 1949 to the end of the 1970s (the period of socialism), entertainment was disconnected from consumption and was oriented toward political education. Popular theater and performance, for example, only served the purpose of socialism, aiming at representing life as "typical," "idealized," and "universal." Leisure was not differentiated from work, and material enjoyment was not distinguished from spiritual enjoyment.[15]

Although leisure and consumption have become marked as separate categories since the 1980s, they still maintain governmental purposes in shaping everyday life in China. The development of themed spaces clearly illustrates this point. Since 1989, China has witnessed a "theme park" (*zhuti gongyuan*) fever. Hundreds of theme parks have been constructed around major urban centers, and billions of dollars have been spent. The most well-known and most successful theme parks are those focusing on cultural themes.[16] The "world" (*shijie*), for example, is a major theme. Some world parks tend to be smaller and more focused. Chengdu's Wild West Cowboy Street, for example, draws on Hollywood's western genre to recreate the scene of a U.S. frontier town: a ranch-style country house, a cowboy bar, a sheriff's office, a carriage, a corral, and bone-buried desert diorama. However, China's well-known world parks tend to be much bigger and most of them provide a grand overview of countries around the world. Parks like Shenzhen's Window of the World, the Beijing World Park, and the Chengdu World Park typically divide the whole environment into five continents, each of which includes replicas of famous sites, architecture, and urban and natural scenes. From the perspective of

cultural representation, all of these parks tend to provoke a strong sense of West-erncentrism. Europe is usually located at the center of a park. For example, the Hungarian Hero Plaza is placed as the center square at the Chengdu World Park, where the most elaborate and extravagant performances are staged on a daily basis. In the Beijing World Park, Europe occupies the park's center and is the largest space. Two countries are always highlighted—France and the United States. The Eiffel Tower becomes a landmark sign. In Shenzhen's Window of the World, the tower is one-third of the original size, but it is one of the most visible structures both in the park and in the Overseas Chinese Town in the city. A visitor can ride the elevator to the top of the tower.

In recent years, China has witnessed a stunning development of mega-shop-ping malls, as income per person in China has reached the equivalent of about $1,100 a year, up 50 percent since the year 2000. Chinese developers have traveled around the world to learn from famous shopping malls and from Las Vegas, and many of the world's visionary architects have been hired to design the malls.[17] More than four hundred large malls have been built in China in the last six years. Currently, China is home to the world's five largest shopping malls.[18] Golden Re-sources Mall in Beijing (opened in October 2004), the world's third largest mall (7.32 million square feet), cost $1.3 billion to build. It spans the length of six foot-ball fields and easily exceeds the floor space of the Pentagon, the world's largest office building, at 3.7 million square feet. It is a single, colossal five-story build-ing—with rows and rows of shops stacked on top of more rows and rows of shops—so large that is hard to navigate among the one thousand stores, 230 esca-lators, and the thousands of shoppers. According to Fu Yuehong, the mall's man-ager, an average of forty thousand people visited on weekdays, and more than eighty thousand on weekends in 2005.

Many mega-malls are explicitly created as themed spaces. South China Mall in Dongguan, the world's largest mall (9.58 million square feet), was built after its developers traveled around the world for two years in search of the right model. This $400 million fantasyland includes 150 acres of palm-tree-lined shopping plazas, themed venues, hotels, water fountains, pyramids, bridges and giant wind-mills. Trying to exceed even some of the over-the-top casino extravaganzas in Las Vegas, it has a 1.3-mile artificial river circling the complex, which includes districts modeled on the world's seven "famous water cities." The southern California sec-tion, marked by a reproduced Hollywood sign, is a giant Imax theater complex that partially encircles this area of the mall. The Paris section is a recreation of the Champs-Élysées with a full-size (85-foot) reproduction of the Arc de Triomphe at its center. And the Venice section highlights Gondola rides on a canal under bridges with a new Shangri-La Hotel on one bank.

Whether theme parks or shopping malls, these themed spaces follow the global trend in the development of hybrid forms of consumption—shopping is in-tertwined with entertainment (through cinema, games, and amusement rides), ed-ucation (through stories and themes), merchandising (through copyrighted images

and logos), performative labor (of front-stage employees), and control and surveillance (of both employees and consumers).[19] Meanwhile, they are also part of the neoliberal globalization in which conventional social relations are uprooted and reconfigured through private means of control. To elaborate how the technology of spatial theming is deployed in a way linking both consumption and private control in China's neoliberalization, I turn to my ethnographic example, the Chinese Ethnic Culture Park in Beijing, which I have studied since 1996.

The Chinese Ethnic Culture Park as a Landscape of Power

The Chinese Ethnic Culture Park, located to the west of the National Olympic Center in Beijing, occupies a total of forty-five hectares of land. It consists of two parts—the south site and the north site. The construction of the south site has been completed. The north site, about 20 hectares, was opened to the public in June 1994. The construction cost of this site was approximately $36.1 million, and 85 percent of the capital for this site came from Taiwan and Hong Kong. The park, as described in the park's brochure, "blends architecture and cultures of Chinese minorities to provide visitors with a unique place to experience the life of the minorities in the metropolitan capital."

The north section includes a group of sixteen life-sized villages, each representing houses and dwelling environments of a "national ethnic group" (*minzu*). The sixteen national ethnic groups are the Zang ("Tibetan"), the Qiang, the Jingpo, the Hani, the Wa, the Miao, the Yi, the Buyi, the Dong, the Hezhe, the Dauer, the Ewenke, the Elunchuan, the Korean, the Taiwan Aborigines, and the Dai. Each village includes displays of daily artifacts, furniture and houses, ethnic performers who may belong to the ethnic group the village represents, and cultural objects such as ethnic food, tea, and souvenirs.

The visitors to the park are mainly Chinese citizens. Although the visitors include those from outside mainland China—such as foreign tourists, overseas Chinese, the Hongkongese, and the Taiwanese—the majority of the visitors are from mainland Chinese cities. They are "middle-class" (*zhongchan*) or "leisure-class" (*xiaofei jiecheng*) consumers whose income level permits them to pursue "leisure" (*xiuxian*) activities such as dining in restaurants, entertaining at nightclubs, driving their own automobiles, owning their own apartments or homes, and conducting other activities distinguishing them from the rest of mass consumers (*gongxin jiecheng*) who calculate, on a daily basis, to make ends meet and pursue their pastime in activities such as watching televisions or movies.[20] This group of visitors is capable of spending their own money on the high admission charge of $7.25.

Building a Themed Space

Within the urban context of Beijing, the park renders itself as a triumphant site of interest by juxtaposing itself with Beijing's most famous national cultural and historical sites. In the park's brochure, one reads: "The park stands by the city's axis: Beichen Road, a northern section of the axis. This road connects the park to a series of national sites: the National Olympic Center (across Beichen Road), Tiananmen Square, and the Forbidden City (only about five kilometers away from the park)." This spatial presentation associates the park with Beijing's triumphant images—the most prominent national sports center that exhibits the physical strength of the nation and the most well-known monumental sites that display the nation's essence.[21]

Three gigantic billboards outside the park link the park to the Great Wall and the Palace Museum, and highlight the important role the park sees itself playing in the national context. One billboard portrays a group of flower-holding ethnic minorities standing in a line and welcoming the visitors. Two lines of Chinese characters are written above the image. The top line reads: "Go to the Great Wall, Go to the Forbidden City, and Go to the Ethnic Park; You'll See History, See Culture, and See the Chinese People." The lower line reads: "The Chinese Ethnic Culture Park Welcomes You." Another billboard portrays a group of ethnic minorities dancing and celebrating "Long Live the Great Unity of All Peoples in the Country." The third billboard reads: "Let the World Understand China; Let Us Understand Ourselves." Following the billboards, messages, history, culture, and people are inseparable. Visiting the Great Wall and the Palace Museum means viewing history and culture correspondingly; and visiting the park means viewing ethnic minority peoples. The phrase "Let Us Understand Ourselves" suggests that not only some Chinese—Han Chinese in the cities in particular—should "understand" ethnic minority Chinese because they do not understand ethnic minorities, but they also may discover and define a clearer sense of the self through understanding ethnic minorities.

In addition to juxtaposing itself with Beijing's most triumphant sites, the park also presents itself as "a village in the urban setting," providing a space of "nature" in Beijing's urban setting.[22] Contrasted with "the urban jungle" marked by "jammed streets," "dashing crowds," and "noisy markets," the park is "a land of peace" or "the countryside of harmonies." There, one can view "rice fields," "ponds and streams," "wooden buildings," and "stone houses." In conveying the pastoral idea, the park covers 85 percent of its grounds with exotic grass, trees, flowers, and crops. Whether inside or outside the park, one is always able to see the striking differences between the outside "urban" environment and the inside "natural" pastoral setting—a contrast between gray and green, and between concrete structures and wooden buildings.[23]

What this so-called countryside of harmonies constructs is an "ethnic minority region" (*minzu diqu*). The term *ethnic minority region* originally refers to an area where the ethnic minorities live and which is usually separated from where the Han people live. Here, the ethnic minority region is integrated into the lives of the Han people in the urban setting. One visitor recognized:

> The most attractive aspect of the ethnic park [is related to the experience provided by the park]. In visiting the ethnic villages, a tourist has a sensational understanding of these ethnic peoples in a short period of time; [he/she] watches and participates in performances, festivals and games, tastes ethnic food, and buys stuff. During such a visit, one can transcend a sensational understanding to a rational understanding. Because those ethnic minorities working in a village are those represented by the village, visiting the village almost allows one to have an experience of touring the ethnic minority region represented by the village [my translation].

According to a park manager, the planning principle for constructing the "ethnic minority region" is that of "respecting the natural and re-presenting reality." In accordance with this principle, all major construction materials for a building were imported from the area represented by the building; and construction for each village was carried out by construction companies employing experienced craftsmen from the area represented by the village. Like the construction of Disney's Animal Kingdom and the Venetian in Las Vegas—both of which employed workers indigenous of the places being simulated in theming—the park developed what can be called an authenticity of construction. For instance, a dark purple plant used for architectural decoration in the Zang village was transported from Tibet and the village was constructed by a company from Lhasa and was overseen by a Tibetan architect. Everything Tibetan (the design, materials, construction) guarantees "the original flavor" of the Zang buildings. The general manger said that the construction of the ethnic minority villages by local ethnic minority craftsmen was a "rescuing" project because these villages (in the park) will become "the last ones" when "the old ethnic minority craftsmen die and all of the old stuff gradually disappear after ten to twenty years." Therefore, what the park constructs is not only a "countryside of harmonies" but also an "ethnic minority region" in the urban lives of the Han people.

Maintaining "harmonies" and "ethnic" flavor, however, has to confront the adaptability of reconstructed landscapes, connecting to ongoing environmental changes. For example, because many construction and decorative materials as well as artifacts are from a mild and moist environment in southwestern China, the park finds it difficult to maintain the original condition of these materials in Beijing's cold, windy, dusty, and dry environment. From late autumn to early spring, most of the plants in the park, like other plants outside the park, lose their peaceful green color. Many artifacts on display have been damaged as a result of being directly

exposed to Beijing's natural environment. The park regularly replaces these old materials with new ones in order to maintain their original appearance.

Consumption-Oriented Economy

In reinforcing the park's image as a landscape of China's ethnic minorities or establishing the new nature as a continuation of the old nature, the park's operations hide most of the "un-natural" facilities such as restaurants, stores, restrooms, offices, and ethnic performers' dormitories underneath individual village sites, or operates them as part of the villages.[24] Hiding "manmade" facilities intends to maintain the "natural" or "ethnic minority" flavor of the reconstruction, but more importantly, it is directly related to the way by which the company accumulates capital through arranging signs such as artifacts, buildings, corporate logos, souvenirs, food, staged shows, and performers on the basis of selected themes in the built environment. This economic operation of using signs and space follows what the sociologists Scott Lash and John Urry call *reflexive accumulation*, which is characterized by the central role of knowledge in capital accumulation—by the reflexivity of both production and consumption, and by the increasing importance of non-material products such as services, communications and information.[25]

Although the park projects its image as an urban village or city garden for middle-class consumers, it is operated on the basis of consumption. Consumption-orientation drives the park to conceal the production process in the eyes of the public—that is, unnatural aspects of the park. The park's backstage, including planning, operations, management, negotiating, training, and delivery is never exposed to visitors' eyes. The sociologist Anthony Giddens argues that the distinction between the front stage and back stage in professional operations is a strategy to reduce the impact of imperfect skills and human fallibility in order to make laypersons trust an expert system like the air travel or the hospital system.[26] In this case, however, making the backstage invisible to the public does not intend to reduce the impact of imperfect skills or human fallibility; rather, it deliberately separates the sphere of consumption from that of production so that acts of consuming are not seen as productive, or labor intensive.

At the park, the process of consumption is intimately connected to the knowledge of and about ethnic minorities in China and non-material products such as service and information. This information- or knowledge-based economic practice displays "cultural markers" (*wenhua fuhao*). "Ethnic costumes" (*minzu fuzhuang*), the park's most important "coded stuff*" (*fuhao xing dongxi*), for example, are presented to the public continually by the ethnic minority performers. Wearing them to be identifiable as ethnic minorities, ethnic performers embody positions as code-tellers.[27] The meaning of ethnic costumes is based on existing knowledge of and about the ethnic minorities, a knowledge that has been accumulated by Chinese ethnologists and historians since the beginning of the 1950s when the Chinese state

began to systematically classify ethnic minorities.[28] At all stages of planning and operation, the park maintains a close relationship with experts such as ethnologists, folklorists, and museum professionals; and it consults them for ideas and even hires them as managerial staff. In doing so, the park ensures that it presents authentic and authoritative meanings of displayed objects. Thus, the park's capacity for reconstructing exhibits is determined by an instrumental rationality that guarantees a way of reasoning that depends no longer on a transcendental relationship between the knowing subject and the object of knowing, but on an immanent relationship between the knowing subject and a set of structural interconnections interior to the object of knowing. In other words, all the park's exhibits that are used to illustrate ethnic minorities are subjected to the knowledge system of Chinese ethnology.

Ethnic costumes are not simply markers of ethnic minority groups; more importantly, they function as commodity packaging, what Susan Willis calls "a device for hailing the consumer and cueing his or her attention . . . to a particular brand-name commodity."[29] Ethnic costumes connote ethnic performers as the "ethnic minority" brand. Ethnic minorities representing the performers are incorporated into the process of reflexive accumulation not as an object of knowledge but as a means for capital accumulation. After all, visitors interviewed consider interactions with ethnic performers as their favorite consuming activities. In addition, ethnic costumes as a technical means for packaging ethnic minorities also function to maintain their purity—ethnic performers in costumes are required to be "clean" and "neat." The hygienic and neat costumes ensure contacts between ethnic performers and visitors that are safe and secure. Thus, the park provides an enclaved space for Han Chinese visitors to maintain their own sense of the self while consuming the exotic peoples and their materialized cultures. The hygienic and neat commodity packaging is part of the role the park plays in directing and changing social experience in an ordered way during China's incorporation of capitalism.

Consumption as a Mechanism of Behavior Modification

In his study of Disneyland, the historian John Findlay demonstrates that Disney offers a functional space—clean, safe, and orderly—that contrasts with the outside malfunctioning and chaotic urban spaces in Southern California.[30] Similarly, the Chinese Ethnic Culture Park also offers a successful model for managing social order in a crowded place like Beijing where urban residents are anxious about the potential disorder caused by the inflows of people, particularly migrant workers from the countryside.[31] All the park's service employees, including security guards, salespeople, and sanitary workers, are required to wear uniforms. Their physical appearance ensures that visitors will be aware of the park as a functional space—orderly, safe, clean, and friendly.[32] More importantly, the park deliberately appropriates the built environment to discipline the visitors to behave properly according to a social norm predetermined by the park—a norm of orderly consumption.

The park regulates the flow of the visitors in a prescribed route in order to naturalize the visitors' consciousness for consumption. This naturalization controls the speed of visiting to direct the visitors to pursue time (schedules for shows) rather than forms (objects on display).[33] The park carefully coordinates the following three elements: locations of scenic spots, shops, restaurants and performance sites; daily schedules for performances; and tour routes. In doing so, the park constructs a social order of consumption, manipulating visitors to spend their money at an appropriate site and an appropriate time, determined by the park.[34]

For example, a forty-minute show is scheduled at one performance site (the Dai village) at 9:30, hailing visitors to move to and stay there for about forty minutes; another show is scheduled at a different site (the Miao village) around 10:30, directing visitors to move there after a twenty-minute walk. The purpose of this controlling technique is to direct visitors to move naturally to the park's restaurant site (the Buyi village) where they may spend their money. After watching the second forty- to sixty-minute show, visitors naturally move on to new scenic spots. As they begin to feel hungry at lunch time around 12:00, they find themselves already at the restaurant site. According to my observation in 1996 (from March to August), many visitors stayed to consume the food at the restaurant, although some either carried their own food or chose to continue their visit without having lunch. In addition, this strategy of flow control is also caused by competition between the park and another company that leases a space within the park. Due to the park's management of the flow of the visitors, more visitors consumed food in the park's own restaurant than in the restaurant operated by the other company.

Besides directing visitors to arrive at the park's own restaurant around lunch time, the park also employs a few ethnic minorities in costumes to receive visitors outside the restaurant. In early 1996, park managers hired a few Qiang from Sichuan Province and trained them how to receive guests. At lunch time, female Qiang employees regularly sang and danced outside the restaurant to attract visitors' attention while a male Qiang employee also regularly toasted guests at their lunch tables. Thus, ethnic minorities in costumes are employed to guide tourists not only to visit the Han's nationalist representation of ethnic minority peoples but also to behave according to a capitalist order of consumption.

In sum, the Chinese Ethnic Culture Park as a landscape of capital accumulation and social order is shown by three important aspects of spatial practice. First, the park is a themed built environment. The building of a "natural" environment in the urban context of Beijing involves both constructing a landscape of the ethnic minorities and associating it with Beijing's most well-known national sites such as the Palace Museum and the Great Wall. In this way, the socially reconstructed "ethnic minority region or space" is closely tied to wider social forces. This leads to the second aspect of spatial practice. The park appropriates the built environment as an important resource for capital accumulation. This mode of accumulation is mainly characterized both by separating consumption from production and by incorporating existing knowledge of and about the ethnic minorities into systems of

consumption. Finally, the process of accumulation is also a process of disciplining visitors to follow a social order structured by spatial and temporal arrangements of exhibits and performances. In the process, tourists are guided not only to visit the exhibitions of the ethnic objects but also to behave properly according to the spatial order of these objects.

Theme Parks and the Imagineering of Government

Chinese theme parks function as an institution of social engineering in the broader context of China's social transformation in the past two decades. They represent an efficient and flexible economic system in which the production of cultural commodities, moving between economic and cultural circuits, increases the economic value of investment capital.[35] As illustrated by my ethnographic example, representing the Chinese nation through displaying ethnic minority objects and ethnic minorities themselves is an economic process in which cultural symbols and commodities are made to float in relation to one another. An ethnic costume, for example, is not only an ethnic marker for the nation but is also a commodity. The Chinese Ethnic Culture Park concretizes the abstract idea of the nation in the form of the commodity, encouraging a cooperation between the symbolic and the material.

In making economic calculation cooperate with the construction of social norms, the theme park also ensures its representation of China's ethnic minorities will have concrete social effects. The themed environment is built as a highly efficient space for managing behavior and manners. The company that operates the space exercises as a de facto governmental authority, making visitors become citizens by guiding them to consume properly. The visitors become subjects of the authority as soon as they enter the theme park—they are guided to plan their visit around the schedules of performances and to purchase food and drink, souvenirs, and costumes according to a prescribed order. As Chinese citizens, their obligation to the institution is logically anterior to their own rights. Meanwhile, the theme park provides an enclaved space for preventing the social experience associated with China's "marketization" (*shichanghua*) in the 1990s from being out of order. In drawing a sociocultural boundary between the Han and the ethnic minorities in China, the park highlights the cultural difference as an important factor in the establishment of a proper social order necessary for China's social transformation.

Although I focus on China, my argument about the social engineering function of theme parks has broad implications. Built as a landscape that combines a thematically coordinated environment, knowledge available after the completion of the technical work of collecting and classifying, and an ideology of consumption, the theme park provides theming as an "imagineering" technology, a spatialized signifying practice of institutionalized knowledge in the form of images of social engineering.[36] This technology draws from expert systems of knowledge (such as

ethnology, archaeology, folklore, and history) and deploys various media and objects (such as artifacts, clothing, and architecture). Not only does it construct a coherent meaning for a themed space, but it also guides activities within this themed space to follow a prescribed speed. Thus, in producing social experience associated with a themed space, theming is fundamentally a technology of speed control through private means.

Notes

1. On Europe, see Miles Orvell, *After the Machine: Visual Arts and the Erasing of Cultural Boundaries* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1995), 147-159, 181-183; and Andrew Lainsburg, *Once Upon An American Dream: The Story of Euro Disneyland* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2000). On South Africa, see Jean Comaroff and John L. Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution, Volume Two, The Dialectics of Modernity on a South African Frontier* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997). On Japan, see Aviad E. Raz, *Riding the Black Ship: Japan and Tokyo Disneyland* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center, 1999); and Joy Hendry, *The Orient Strikes Back: A Global View of Cultural Display* (Oxford: Berg, 2000). On Indonesia, see John Pemberton, "Recollections from 'Beautiful Indonesia' (Somewhere Beyond the Postmodern)," *Public Culture* 6 (1994): 241-262. And on China, see Ann Anagnost, "The Nationscape: Movement in the Field of Vision," *Positions: East Asia Cultures Critique* 1, no. 3 (1993): 585-606; and Hai Ren, "Economies of Culture: Theme Parks, Museums and Capital Accumulation in China, Hong Kong and Taiwan" (PhD diss., The University of Washington, 1998).

2. For a systematic explanation of Disney's conception of imagineering, see Karal Ann Marling, ed., *Designing Disney's Theme Parks: The Architecture of Reassurance* (Paris: Flammarion, 1997). On urban revitalization, see Charles Rutheiser, "Making Place in the Nonplace Urban Realm: Notes on the Revitalization of Downtown Atlanta," in *Theorizing the City: The New Urban Anthropology Reader*, ed. Setha M. Low (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1999), 317-341. On an ethnographic study of Disney's Celebration, see Andrew Ross, *The Celebration Chronicles: Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Property Value in Disney's New Town* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1999), and Douglas Frantz and Catherine Collins, *Celebration, U.S.A.: Living in Disney's Brave New Town* (New York: Owl Books, 2000).

3. This understanding draws on the French philosopher Henri Lefebvre's work on the social production of space, which considers three elements: land as a territorial formation, built environment as a resource, and space as a medium of human interaction. Rob Shields, *Places on the Margin: Alternative Geographies of Modernity* (London: Routledge, 1991), 50-51.

4. Current understanding of theming is not only narrow but only focuses on the effects of theming. Mark Gottdiener, for example, regards theming as an effective technique for "the transfer of value from the commodity to its realization in sales." *The Theming of America: Dreams, Visions, and Commercial Spaces* (Boulder, Colo: Westview, 1997), 45. My use of theming is broadly defined as I illustrate below.

5. Walter Benjamin, "The Storyteller," in *Illuminations* (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), 86.

6. John Hannigan, *Fantasy City:Pleasure and Profit in the Postmodern Metropolis* (London: Routledge 1998); Constance Balides, "Jurassic Post-Fordism: Tall Tales of Economics in the Theme Park," *Screen* 41, no. 2 (2000): 139-160; and Janet Wasko, *Understanding Disney* (Cambridge: Polity, 2001).

7. David Harvey, *A History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

8. Consumption, as Jean Comaroff and John L. Comaroff point out, has replaced production to become "the moving spirit of the late twentieth century." See "Millennial Capitalism: First Thoughts on a Second Coming," *Public Culture* 12, no. 2 (Spring 2000): 291-343.

9. This essay is part of a book-length study of China's themed spaces. I focus on this park for three reasons. First, it is one of the largest theme parks in China that is devoted to the representation of ethnic minority cultures. While ethnic diversity is represented, ethnic minority workers—mainly young women from poor rural areas in Western China—are incorporated into three interrelated processes: making the cultural identity of the Han majority, transforming cultural representation as capital accumulation, and shaping the behaviors of consumers. Second, this park has been developed as a result of China's neoliberalization, especially in the real estate sector where privatization of land is tied to commercialization in the name of development. Third, although the park operates as a commercial institution, it is treated as a nonprofit organization and is registered officially as a museum. The park represents the dilemma of balancing between the commercial form of operation and the nonprofit form of organization. This dilemma is faced by the majority of China's museums that are in the process of transforming themselves to incorporate market mechanisms in their operations.

10. Carroll B. Malone, *History of the Peking Summer Palaces under the Ch'ing Dynasty* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1934).

11. Malone, *History of the Peking Summer Palaces under the Ch'ing Dynasty*, 136; and Young-Tsu Wong, *A Paradise Lost: The Imperial Garden Yuanming Yuan* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2001), 126-127.

12. Yue Dong, "Memories of the Present: The Vicissitudes of Transition in Republican Beijing, 1911-1937" (PhD diss., The University of California, San Diego, 1996), 328.

13. Frederic Wakeman, *Policing Shanghai 1927-1737* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 105-106.

14. Leo Ou-fan Lee, *Shanghai Modern: The Flowering of a New Urban Culture in China, 1930-1945* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999), 13.

15. Shaoguang Wang, "The Politics of Private Time: Changing Leisure Patterns in Urban China," in *Urban Spaces in Contemporary China: The Potential for Autonomy and Community in Post-Mao China*, eds. D. S. Davis, R. Kraus, B. Naughton, and E. J. Perry (Washington, D. C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1995), 152-156.

16. Examples include Splendid China, China Folk Culture Villages and Window of the World in Shenzhen, the World Park and the Chinese Ethnic Culture Park in Beijing, the World Landscape Park and the Wonderland of the Southwest in Chengdu, and Yunnan Nationalities Villages in Kunming.

17. Jon Jerde (based in Venice Beach, California), for example, has designed Minnesota's Mall of America, the Las Vegas Bellagio Hotel, a Disneyland-like CityWalk in California, Fukuoka's Canal City Hakata, Kawasaki's La Cittadella, Osaka's Namba Parks, and Tokyo's Caretta Shiodome, among others. In China, his projects include Guangzhou's

Tianhe Plaza, Shanghai's JointBuy City Plaza and Concord World Mall. For more information, see Jerde Partnership International, *The Jerde Partnership International* (L'Arcaedizioni, 1999). Also, see Jon Jerde, "Capturing the Leisure Zeitgeist: Creating Places to Be," in *Architectural Design: Consuming Architecture*, ed. Maggie Toy (West Sussex, UK: John Wiley and Sons, 1998), 69-71; and, Michael Hong, "Interview with Michael Hong from The Jerde Partnership," in *Stripping Las Vegas: A Contextual Review of Casino Resort Architecture*, eds. Karin Jaschke and Silke Ötsch (Germany: University of Weimar Press, 2003), 91-96 .

18. See David Barboza, "The Great Malls of China," *New York Times*, 25 May 2005.

19. For a systematic study, see Alan Bryman, *The Disneyization of Society* (London: Sage, 2004) and George Ritzer, *The McDonaldization of Society*, rev. ed. (Thousand Oaks, Calif: Pine Forge, 1996).

20. For a study of how the Chinese spend their private time, see Wang, "The Politics of Private Time," 149-172.

21. For a systematic anthropological study of sports in China, see Susan Brownell, *Training the Body for China: Sports in the Moral Order of the People's Republic* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995). On the monuments on Tiananmen Square, see Hung Wu, "The Tiananmen Square: A Political History of Monuments," *Representations* 35, Summer (1991): 84-117. On the Hong Kong clock, see Hung Wu, "The Hong Kong Clock: Public Time-Telling and Political Time/Space," *Public Culture* 9, no. 3 (1997): 329-354.

22. The quotes are from the park's guidebook (printed in 1995). Unless specified, the quotes below are also from the guidebook.

23. Some Beijing residents told me that they went to the park because they found a sense of relaxation there.

24. For theoretical background on this issue, see Susan Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1989), 110-116.

25. Scott Lash and John Urry, *Economies of Signs and Space* (London: Sage, 1994), 60-61.

26. Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1990), 86. See also Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (New York: Anchor, 1959).

27. According to a chief consultant of the park, although a performer may not voluntarily tell what ethnic group the costume he or she wears signifies, he or she is often asked by tourists to do so.

28. For detailed discussions of this process, see Dru Gladney, *Muslim Chinese: Ethnic Nationalism in the People's Republic* (Cambridge, Mass.: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University, 1991); Gregory Eliyu Guldin, *The Saga of Anthropology in China: From Malinowski to Moscow to Mao* (Armonk, N.Y.: M. E. Sharpe, 1994); and Stevan Harrell, *Cultural Encounters on China's Ethnic Frontiers* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1995).

29. Susan Willis, *A Primer for Daily Life* (London: Routledge, 1991), 1.

30. John Findlay, *Magic Lands: Western Cityscapes and American Culture after 1940* (Berkeley: the University of California Press, 1992), 52-116.

31. Local newspapers such as *Beijing Youth Daily* and *Beijing Evening News*, for example, often linked urban problems to rural migrant workers.

32. For more on the control of workers, see Scott A. Lukas, chapter 11 of this volume.

33. By examining the aesthetics of disappearance, Paul Virilio establishes a link between the control of speed and the development of consciousness. He suggests that the development and the disappearance of consciousness results from the control of speed for recognizing what he refers to as *picnolepsy* or frequent absences. For instance, the rationalization of the real or the establishment of its laws and its models (in cinema) "redistribute[s] methodically the occasional eliminations of picnolepsy." In other words, rationalization of the real can be regarded as "a trick whose purpose is to deny particular absences any active value." Paul Virilio, *The Aesthetics of Disappearance* (New York: Semiotext(e), 1991), 31.

34. The same feature is found in the Orlando, Florida theme park known as the Holy Land Experience. For the connection, see Scott A. Lukas, chapter 15 of this volume.

35. Sharon Zukin, *Landscapes of Power: From Detroit to Disney World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 260.

36. By "knowledge available after the completion" I am referring to the body of ethnographic knowledge that is used to produce the representations in theme parks.

The Imagineering Story is a documentary series about the history of Walt Disney Imagineering and the Disney theme parks directed by Leslie Iwerks and narrated by Angela Bassett. Originally announced in 2013 as a 90-minute feature, it was expanded into a six hour miniseries for the Disney+ streaming service when it became apparent that the scope of the story and the wealth of archival material at their disposal would be better served in a longer format. Theme park â€" the main concept of tourism industry development. Dridea Catrinel Raluca. Â Theme parks attempt to create an atmosphere of another place and time, and usually emphasize one dominant theme around which architecture, landscape, rides, shows, food services, costumed personnel, retailing are. 635. orchestrated. Â The modern day techniques for reproducing landscape, buildings, and arte facts can create a reality in theme parks that has been previously the preserve of film and theatre. Through changes in transportation technology and social attitudes, downtown industrial and residential land has become redundant. The Landscape of Power Imagineering Consumer Behavior at Chinas Theme Parks. 97. Theming Mythical Africa at the Lost City. 113. Leisure Space Thematic Style and Cultural Exclusion in Casablanca. 137. How the Theme Park Gets Its Power Lived Theming Social Control and the Themed Worker Self. 183. BehindtheScenes Spaces Promoting Production in a Landscape of Consumption. 207. The Experience of a Lifestyle.