Utopia or Euphoria? Six Sites of Resistance in Disneyland and Singapore

EUNICE SENG

Why are the spaces of Disneyland and Singapore, despite their totalizing tendencies, duplicable, or even desirable? In trying to answer this question, this article begins by identifying six shared utopian projects of Disney and Singapore — Island, Garden City, Housing, Leisure, Travel, and Technology — and the collective for whom they were constructed. Then, by seeking out six other spaces which emerged during the realization of these Cold War utopias, it aims to uncover alternative agencies and forms of power which undermine and reconfigure the original projects. Through this analysis, the article demonstrates that despite the academic and ironic parallels between Disneyland and Singapore as totalizing spaces of consumption, Singapore remains a place whose inhabitants must practice everyday life. This work in progress therefore attempts to evaluate the island state beyond the totalitarian frame — as a sustainable place imbued with political discourse, grappling with issues that confront all postindustrial cities.

Not the least unexpected thing about the 1960s was its reinvention of the question of Utopia.
— Fredric Jameson

A review of the utopian projects of Disney and Singapore is imperative and overdue. For years academics and other intellectuals have attacked these spaces, while ignoring the historical, political and economic forces which give them meaning. These attacks are typically launched from an ideological critique of totalitarianism and commodification. Disney Company critiques are often driven by the need to expose the dominant values of the company or the hidden connections between the happy myth of “the wonderful world of Disney” and the ruthless economic logic of its accumulation strategies and totalizing control. Writings on Singapore typically portray the island nation as a totalitarian state whose middle-class citizenry is a repressed and desublimated mass.
Within architectural discourse, the case against utopian projects like Singapore and Disneyland has perhaps been most forcefully presented by Manfredo Tafuri. In the early 1970s he identified the crisis of utopia as a consequence of capitalist development, concluding that the project of the Enlightenment had witnessed its ultimate degeneration in the paper visions of 1960s neo-avant-garde architects. He argued that their overzealous embrace of new modes of production and institutional reform had produced an image which was merely “a decorative enhancement of the metropolitan chaos it once aspired to dominate.” For Tafuri, these new strategies would “remain limited to mere fragments which only marginally affect the global setup.” And by the mid-1980s it seemed his skepticism had been borne out, as such dreams of a global restructuring of cities and territories finally fizzled when it became evident that they offered no real alternatives to the existing social, economic and political structures of advanced capitalism.

Despite the intellectual crisis of utopia and the impossibility of such realizations, it was in America and Singapore that the proliferating technological worlds envisioned by these architects were most extensively reproduced and perpetuated. Guy Debord’s Society of the Spectacle found its ultimate expression in Disneyland; and even Tafuri conceded that Disneyland came closest to the technological utopias envisioned by the 1960s visionaries. Likewise, those who decried the unequivocal totalitarianism of modernism pointed out how the newly independent, modern nation-state of Singapore bore an uncanny resemblance to the repressive society of George Orwell’s 1984.

The symmetry between Disneyland and Singapore was first articulated by Rem Koolhaas when he described Singapore as a “Barthian slate,” and by William Gibson who pronounced the tropical city “Disneyland with the Death Penalty.” But the correspondence between the two environments goes beyond simple shared ironic readings or semiotic parallels. Indeed, amidst the global climate of post-World War II reconstruction and decolonization, both urban paradigms emerged from the double-contexts of state and corporate formation. Thus, Disneyland became a theme park operated like a public state by the Disney Company, and Singapore became an island run like a corporate enterprise by a state government.

Despite a recognition of such symmetries, the aim of this article is not to fixate on rhetorical parallels between the company (Disney) and the state (Singapore). Certainly, both reveal pervasive Cold War ideologies of global economy, technology, and networked communication. Yet while Disneyland is a space in which people willingly suspend their rights to political discourse as part of a consumer experience, Singapore (despite its self-identification as Singapore, Inc.) is a place where inhabitants must practice everyday life. The question therefore becomes why these spaces remain popular among the large number of people who live, work and play in them, while they are simultaneously rejected by intellectual elites and academicians, who lash out at their totalizing tendencies. Why are the urbanisms of Disney and Singapore still duplicable—or even desirable?

A two-fold explanation may underlie the proliferation and sustainability of these environments. The first aspect rests on the way the urbanisms of Disneyland and Singapore were both born out of modernization’s theory of progress and betterment through technology. Simultaneously, the Cold War allowed a dissemination of mass paranoia and provided a pretext for both the state and the corporation to alleviate public fears by propagating utopian images of technology and consumption. Subsequently, in a post-Cold War era defined by the paradoxes of advanced technology and the heightened anxiety of city life, these spaces have continued to offer desirable, protected, and self-sufficient environments.

Beyond the categorical symmetry of the two urbanisms, however, Singapore—as place and political space—also remains sought-after because of its reflexivity to global and local inflections in economy, technology, and body-politics. Thus, the second aspect of the explanation takes its cue on the one hand from Michel Foucault’s notion of bio-power and the biopolitic as exercised on the level of everyday life, and on the other from Henri Lefebvre’s call for a praxis utopia.

SIX UTOPIAS

The 1955 opening of Walt Disney’s planned “new world” coincided with the national project of the “American Century,” an era to be defined by America’s military might and technological prowess. Disney’s role as an exemplary figure in the forefront of this new empire was celebrated in the popular press, which heralded him as an avuncular Horatio Alger, an ordinary man whose career was a living demonstration that the American Dream could be realized.

A decade later, in 1965, following its decision to separate from the rest of Malaya, Singapore emerged as an independent state. From the outset, surrounded by larger and potentially aggressive neighbors, its single-party government, led by Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew, argued that the only way to forge a cohesive nation was to embark on the “neutral” but aggressive project of economic development. The urban paradigms of both Disney and Singapore thus were built on the trope of one man’s dream for a new community free from poverty and the ravages of war. However, they also displayed a number of other ideological similarities that were typical of what other writers have referred to as an island-settler myth. Among these were a belief in an empty and waiting land, or tabula rasa; a desire to tame this wilderness into familiarity and orderliness; a faith in technical solutions to conquer natural problems; a belief that individuals are isolated and self-sufficient; a sense of both being on a journey, yet having arrived; and a sense of the goal of settlement as being
improvement, or progress. At both Disneyland and Singapore these characteristics eventually translated into six forms of utopia: Island, Garden City, Housing, Theme Park, Travel, and Technology.

Despite the power of these visions, during the construction and planning — the dystopian realization — of the six utopian projects, six “other spaces” emerged under the guise of their totalizing processes. One may identify these “other spaces” using Foucault’s six nonhierarchical principles of heterotopia. Thus, one and insurgence. And quite often, the two conditions may aroused by very different, but constant, states of emergency. To pursue the medical analogy, euphoria can be tal. Indeed, it may be requisite to such a heightened form of ciation with pathological mania and fanaticism is not acciden-
in many respects tantamount to a state of euphoria. The asso-
visitors that continue to baffle critics. Such utopian fervor is
ing resilience and the surprising contentment of citizens and
selves as citizens of a magical land. As such, they often feel
(insertion). Writing critically about Disney also seems to offer one
environments despite the regulated conformity. Beyond this
uncover ordinary, quotidian behaviors which persist in Disney

Like Thomas More’s social utopia, Disneyland and
Singapore are islands (FIGS. 1A, B). Both are enclosed urban paradigms, but at the same time economically open territo-
ies operating within the global economy. As key nodes on
the global map, they are destinations — planned, bounded and defined — as well as spaces of transit. They embody
the tensions between openness and closure, which are mirrored by the physical characteristics of their built environments and everyday social conditions.

Disney’s first theme park was intended to be an idyllic, isolated place where there would be no sex, violence, crime, homelessness, or need to work. Any trace of the grittiness of everyday life was to be obliterated. Disneyland was thus the culmination of Walt Disney’s fantasies of transport and hygiene, “a showplace of beauty and magic, filled with the accomplishments, the joys, the hopes of the world we live in.”

The government of Singapore, the People’s Action Party (PAP), shared such optimism that everyday life could be improved if the state were to improve people’s environment. In its case, the physical outcome would be a clean, green, orderly urban metropolis with low crime and delinquency rates — a modern version of founder Sir Stamford Raffles’s nineteenth-century social utopia.

In practice, the operation of this mythic element at Disney theme parks involves the issuance of one-day “pass-
ports” to visitors, who are then encouraged to think of themselves as citizens of a magical land. As such, they often feel compelled to stay until they have exhausted the experience, maximizing their citizenship. From meals and shopping to rest kiosks and thrill rides, every care is taken to ensure they are happily preoccupied. Visitor-citizens are also persuaded to become stakeholders, and few ever leave without buying a toy, a t-shirt, a mug, a decal, a piece of the Disney vision.

However, as Chris Rojek has argued, visitors to Disney theme parks are not simply clean slates upon which to write ideology. When they visit Disney sites they may do so nostalgically, or even ironically, rather than as “true believers” — per-
ceiving the parks as “unreliable museums of living facts.” Many of these visitors also do not fit neatly into the category of the ideologically naïve. Indeed, a specific possibility for recogniz-
ing irony arises when “semiotically exhausted” visitors self-
assuredly set themselves apart from the happy masses. David Harris interviewed many such tourists of diverse backgrounds who were experienced in Disney’s “techniques of neutralization.” His study suggested that such knowledgeable visitors uncover ordinary, quotidian behaviors which persist in Disney environments despite the regulated conformity. Beyond this stance, writing critically about Disney also seems to offer one of the last acceptable locations for academics to practice social differentiation and to demonstrate their commitment to non-
popular values. In particular, new class structures appear to have arisen, where certain social or intellectual elitist groups prefer to be set apart from the mainstream by claiming an informed distaste for Disney’s commercialism.

**ISLAND**

*As an island — its territory is known — it is endowed with indispensable elements for the construction of a mythology: it is small, it is threatened, it has to be protect-
ed, it is finite — an enclave — it is unique.*

— Rem Koolhaas
By contrast, postindependence Singapore was chaotic, disorganized, and ridden with crime, homelessness, and unhygienic conditions. However, after strategic assessment of its economy and society, the government decided to reposition the new island nation in the world economy as the financial center of the Far East. Above all, this strategy involved attracting multinational corporations by developing an affordable, well-trained workforce — creating what Lee Kuan Yew called a “First World oasis in a Third World region.”21 Singapore would thus establish First World standards in public and personal security, health, education, telecommunications, transportation and services; and it would become a regional haven for entrepreneurs, engineers, managers and other professionals. To achieve this goal, the reeducation of the population needed to be jump-started around the singular guiding principle of national survival. As the government defined it, this required a more rugged, better organized, and more efficient population than that of neighboring countries. And in exchange for extensive social benefits and interventions, the young citizenry would be expected to adhere to strict political, social and urban codes. The paternalistic PAP insisted that the cohesion of the racially diverse population required such a national ideology.22 Socially, this required the acceptance of state-sponsored family-planning and match-making schemes, national savings initiatives, and campaigns promoting racial harmony and multiculturalism. It further implied a highly censored local media, and a finely calibrated system of punishment was established for “antisocial” behavior.

Such programs have provided ample material for critics. Of these, Koolhaas’s reading of Singapore as a “generic city,” in particular, may be seen as based on an intellectual, elitist stance similar to that of Harris’s “knowledgeable” Disney visitors. Yet, Koolhaas (like William Gibson before him) also unwittingly assumed that Singapore society was little more than an undifferentiated mass under subjugation of the state. Likewise, Michael Haas has identified the Singapore political system as a populist democracy. Supported by a mass society, and governed by a social constitution without limits on the use of power, he argued such a form of government can only lead to a form of state police control.23

What these writers fail to observe, however, is that within this highly planned island nation, other configurations have formed in the interstices of state control.24 With regard to the physical environment, one of the most important was the Singapore Planning and Urban Research (SPUR) Group. Formed in 1965, SPUR’s primary aim was to provide alternatives to the city-renewal efforts of the new government. Comprising prominent independent intellectuals — mostly young architects, geographers, sociologists and planners educated in leading British and American universities — SPUR was hugely influenced by the ideas of Team X, the Metabolists, and the socialism of the journal *Ekistics.*25 Among other things, SPUR protested government policies that showed disregard for public participation.26 And in 1966 its members unveiled their own sketches for the “Asian City of Tomorrow.” These showed urban megastructures, with highrise dwellings and many levels of mixed activities amidst a network of parks and roads (FIG. 2).
SPUR’s fight for an alternative, nonsegregated, hybrid metropolis closely resembled the neo-avant-gardist visions of their Western counterparts. But, more importantly, its numerous proposals provided a counterpoint to the government’s more mainstream urban plans. Eventually, the proposals also provided the origins for such important public infrastructure schemes of the 1980s as the Mass Rapid Transit System and Changi Airport. SPUR’s limited but active local interventions, highly influenced by foreign-acquired ideologies, exemplified an infiltration of ideas into the supposedly closed process by which Singapore was being constructed.

What the SPUR proposals also point out is that despite its carefully maintained social isolation, the Singapore population is still exposed to external influences and ideologies. In 2000 a quarter of Singapore’s population were noncitzens. And besides specialized groups like SPUR, there is today a growing number of citizens with such insidious views. Yet like the seamless but contradictory urbanism of the island itself — for example, the constantly shifting definition of its shorelines — such people are elusive. Indeed, many do not physically reside in the island. Nevertheless, they exist within its political imagination. Thus, in a 1999 speech, Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong attempted to identify two groups of citizens: the “cosmopolitan,” and their less mobile counterpart, the “heartlander.”

Cultural theorist Timothy Brennan has argued that the current period is already substantially cosmopolitan. The cosmopolitan ideal of government envisions an all-encompassing representative structure in which members confer on a global scale. In Flexible Citizenship, Aihwa Ong recently suggested that newly affluent Asian immigrants, who have relocated their families and wealth to North America while continuing to pursue business interests in Asia, represent a new kind of disembedded citizenship. In this regard, Singapore serves as a home base for many pursuing regional and international businesses; and conversely, businesses in Singapore are being pursued from other global bases.

It is further noteworthy that, based on responses within unmediated cyber-forums worldwide, displaced Singaporeans tend to see themselves as “heartlanders.” At the very least, this seems to indicate that a reconsideration of Goh’s citizen classification is timely. Whatever the case, the international community of Singaporeans tends to escape accountability by official census, and at present, can best be described as cosmopolitan. For now, they traverse such global spaces as intellectual academies and financial institutions. Amid such overlapping commitments, the identity of the mobile citizen emerges — a wandering agent carrying superior technical knowledge, and capable of transforming his or her surroundings. Singapore’s mobile, flexible citizenry, far from being a clichéd subjugated postcolonial diaspora, occupies many islands across the globe.

GARDEN CITY

One possible ideological source for the town-planning ideas of Disney and Singapore is Ebenezer Howard’s Garden Cities of To-morrow (1902). Howard’s solution to conflicts between town and country was to bring the town to the country and make the countryside fully available to the needs of the city. The ultimate objective was to relieve the congestion of the city, and by doing so, lower land values there and prepare the way for metropolitan reconstruction. Just as the garden was at once a fragment of a larger organic world and a microcosm of the same — a kind of universal heterotopia — both Singapore and Disney operate according to an internal organization that reflects a larger cultural logic. In both worlds, the intensification of gardens within gardens, theme parks within theme parks, worlds within worlds, is mediated by the ideals of national mobilization and mass social provision.

At Disney sites, the ideology of the garden in the park embraces a number of formal specifics to which the picturesque plan is as indispensable as the strict regulation of
circulation (refer to fig. 1). Sorkin observed that strategies of movement became the ultimate internal rationale and formal arbiter of the garden city. The results in Disney are similar: a single center with a radial plan, united by loops of circulation in picturesque settings. There is even an old-fashioned steam train that circumnavigates the perimeter. To reinforce this picturesque garden quality, visitors to Disneyland are first greeted by an inclined bed of flower topiary in the shape of Mickey Mouse. Located in the center of a square, it is part of a small park-island with lawns, benches, and an American flag atop a tall mast.

Leo Marx has previously identified how the pastoral ideal has been used to give meaning to America ever since the age of its discovery, and he has noted that it has yet to lose its hold upon the native imagination. The dream of a new life in a fresh, green landscape is embodied in various utopian schemes for making America the site of a new beginning for Western society. Disney theme parks are manifest sites of such ideological perfection.

Despite such comprehensive design logic, at least two types of counter-territorialization may be observed in Disneyland — a private park in which “public” amenities are reserved for those who can afford them. One involves the picnicking family which chooses to reject the food selections offered by its multiple restaurants. Any part of a lawn or bench it occupies then becomes a temporary site of defiance to the capitalist logic of the company. Another counter-project involves the amorous couple or thrill-seeker who search out spaces for illicit activities. Such banal appropriations of space disrupt the seamless perfection of Disney planning (fig. 3).

In a similar way, in a bid to solve the problems of an unruly Singapore after World War II, Sir Patrick Abercrombie was appointed town planning advisor in 1948. An advocate of the Garden City Movement in England, his plans for the island bore the imprint of his 1944 Greater London Plan.

Following the end of colonial rule in Malaya in 1963, however, a team of U.N. experts was called upon to propose a new vision of the future, one that would not be tied to the colonial past. The team eventually called for development of the entire island according to a ring-city model, with no delineation between town and rural hinterland (fig. 4). Yet, even though they criticized the parochialism of Abercrombie’s plan, the U.N. experts left its central “Green Heart” intact. And today this central space is the only area of the island that has been spared from state urban-renewal efforts.

From the start, Singapore’s urban renewal has also been accompanied by an island-wide “naturalization” program. Leo Marx’s pastoral ideal has even been embedded in a national slogan, “living in a garden.” In Lee Kuan Yew’s words, “to achieve First World standards in a Third World region, we set out to transform Singapore into a tropical garden city.” Thus, in 1965 nurseries and a 1,700-person park maintenance crew were established, and these steps were augmented in 1976 by the creation of a Parks and Recreation Department to construct an infrastructure of parks and green streetscapes.

The government imagined there would be three major social implications from making greening an inseparable part of the national project. First, greening was expected to raise the morale of the people by providing them with attractive surroundings. Second, it would downplay the differentiation between areas belonging to the middle and working classes. Third, it would provide an instructive and disciplinary tool to produce a society of self-conscious citizens: there would be no littering, no trampling on grass, no pilfering of saplings, and no picking of flowers. Greening has since served as a form of national education, and has yielded a ubiquity of instructions and signage. Thus Koolhaas rightly noted the visually curious “empire of semantics,” though he fell short of comprehending its effects.

**Figure 3.** “La perruque” on the manicured lawn of Walt Disney World. Source: S. Willis et al., Project Disney. Inside the Mouse: Work and Play at Disney World (Durham, Duke University Press, 1995). Reprinted by permission.

**Figure 4.** Ring-city Singapore. Source: C. Abrams, O. Koenigberger, and S. Kobe, Growth and Urban Renewal in Singapore (Singapore: U.N. Program of Technical Assistance, 1965).
Within the limits of Singapore (comparable to Louis Marin’s “neutral space of the limit”) the juxtaposition of state-owned nature reserves with dense urban development represents the ultimate heterotopia. Bukit Timah Hill, four reservoirs, and mangrove forests — also distinct destinations such as the Botanic Gardens, Chinese and Japanese Gardens, Zoological Gardens, Night Safari, and Jurong Bird Park — form fragments within a fully rationalized system that coexists with new towns and business and civic districts. Within this hierarchy, the park-like housing estate can be read as comprising a garden city of another scale. Its common spaces are gardens within the garden-estate; its apartments (typically with potted plants like orchids) are micro-gardens within the garden-block. As early as 1967, one former chairman of SPUR was already writing on the parallels between the environment and nation-building. Greening was already occurring at an unstoppable rate on every scale, producing a hyper-duplication of green utopias — the myth of all garden cities that Koolhaas derides as “Potemkin nature.”

Yet, more than the occasional “playful” disruption of garden space in a Disney park, the inhabitants of Singapore’s government-owned housing estates fight daily territorial battles, using potted plants to stake individual claims on areas of the public space adjacent to their apartments. These may lead to serious conflicts, especially when a single-loaded corridor is shared by as many as ten families. Since the line of demarcation is implicit, aggressors tend to succeed when they can establish a larger “entry garden.” Meanwhile, those unwilling to engage in such battles still find themselves engaged in “rear-yard” contests. In this case, the “front” facade of an apartment block can sometimes become so dense with foliage that an organic aesthetic replaces its original architectural appearance (FIG. 5).

Similar contestations are evident when it comes to foot-paths. In the overall scheme of a planned landscape, pedestrians are meant to use paved paths to walk from one block to another. Yet the presence of well-manicured lawns “balding” along the lines of various alternative routes clearly indicates the everyday negotiations between the inhabitants — territorial citizens — and their planned environments.

**HOUSING**

Since it is connected to all other locations, housing plays a dominant communitarian role both at Disney sites and in Singapore. In Celebration, a Disney-created traditional American town and an example of New Urbanism, residents live in elaborately wired, developer-style single-family houses selected from a pattern book. Meanwhile, the majority of Singaporeans live in highrise blocks more than twelve stories high (FIGS. 6A, B). In both locales the emphasis is on picture-perfect images of community life, which necessitate that residents relinquish a large degree of individuality and privacy and retreat deeper into their units. Nevertheless, residents commonly counteract the state allocation and corporate interventions by “borrowing” or appropriating public property or space for private use (FIGS. 7A, B).

At Disney theme parks, guest accommodations are supposed to complete the “magical experience.” These accommodations are designed with the same principles as the parks — themed public spaces, “democratic” and identical room layouts, and a staff of cheerful “hosts” and Disney characters. The seamlessness of the Disney experience is maintained to such an extent that even the quotidian is anticipated and accommodated in the design. Disney space also acts as a social leveler, since all differences between guests are displaced in favor of the shared pursuit of recreation, thrill and consumption.

Moving beyond such successful but temporary environmental experiences, the construction of the town of Celebration in 1996 afforded people a chance to literally dwell in a Disney world. Opened on the Fourth of July, the town for a planned population of 20,000 patriotically proclaimed a new American way of living as a corrective to sprawl. But it was also designed to maximize the value of 10,000 acres of company land. And with half the site preserved for a wetland “Osceola Multi-Use Development” greenbelt, it also promised to earn the company the reputation of “good neighbor.”

In Celebration, residents negotiate their multiple roles as spectators, Disney players, and residents. The front porch is a site where many of these everyday spectacles are enacted. One resident, Michael McDonough said fondly, “our porches are so close to the street that it makes them like little theater seats [with] our movie screen [as] our front porch [and] the lake as a backdrop.” Not only does the porch frame a carefully constructed “nature” for residents, but it also frames, for visitors, a picture-perfect neighborliness. In such a tableau, the manicured lawn sits silently in the foreground as the guardian of the perfect middle-class American lifestyle.

Shortly before Celebration’s opening, however, critics started to point to its deficiencies. Urbanism professor Witold Rybczynski told the New York Times that “living there is not going to change people [because] you can’t isolate yourself [from the rest of American society].” Writer and Celebration resident Michael Pollan also suggested that

**FIGURE 5.**
The piecemeal greening of the facade of a housing block with front-loaded corridors. Photo by author.
Disney had conjured an ideal it could only partly fulfill. “A real community,” he wrote, “is messy, ever changing and inevitably political.” Even if Disney was “an astute observer of the American character,” in due time its residents would find their political voices, and likely “make a mess of the company’s carefully crafted script.” A community based on a “novel form of democracy” and mere consumerist principles, Pollan argued, was also bound to have problems. Perhaps not surprisingly, Celebration had only managed to attract 8,000 residents by 2003.

While the viability of Celebration is still unproven, to its critics, Singaporeans on the other hand live in what seems like a conglomeration of Celebrations. Yet, despite the convenient rhetorical parallel, Singapore is also a place imbued with political discourse.

Adopting an ideology of “helping you help yourself,” the national government originally tackled the problem of housing by assuming a comprehensive role as planner, architect, entrepreneur, landlord and developer. Since it claimed “to know what was best,” it saw no need to consult the population. And in the years since, the state has never doubted its own creative but severely pragmatic approach, citing as evidence the significant improvement in people’s quality of life.

Taking lessons from the contentious experiences of Western countries, particularly the United States, the Singapore government decided early on to maintain owner-
ship of all housing. By doing so, it hoped to depoliticize it, so housing could no longer be a site for class struggle. Indeed, Singapore’s early leaders saw collective dwelling as a perfect way to eradicate class and racial divides.

Immediately after independence, however, it was a shortage of housing that was the government’s most important concern. The manifestly pragmatic and utilitarian high-rise slab block both solved this problem and introduced uniformity into the urban fabric. Stripped of colonial traces, the government also hoped its neutral, modernizing image would create a sense of belonging to the new nation. Construction of such buildings was further coupled with the “homeownership for the people” scheme of the Housing Development Board (HDB), which included heavy subsidies to systematically rehouse slum dwellers. Since the only affordable housing in Singapore consisted of such highrise flats, their social acceptance was “automatic.”

Lefebvre has observed that “the everyday is covered by a surface: that of modernity.” Indeed, by the 1970s half the Singaporean population was living in such highrise housing estates, which also provided comprehensive recreational and civic facilities. And when postmodernist aesthetics were introduced in the late 1980s, the HDB only needed to “re-dress” the modernist blocks to keep up. Such cosmetic additions were deemed appropriate to imbue different neighborhoods with safe and politically viable identities. Thus, by the 1990s 80 percent of the population lived in housing estates distinguished by fruit motifs or colors, even though an aerial perspective revealed the striking parallel between Singapore and Corbusier’s modern city.

The government’s commitment to such comprehensive schemes has shown no signs of abating. In 1993, Tampines New Town won the United Nations World Habitat Award for outstanding contribution toward human settlement and development. And as part of the Concept Plan 2001, the Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA) and the HDB recently held an international design competition to redevelop a 2.5-hectare site at Duxton Plain — the site of the very first public housing blocks in the country (fig. 8). The symbolism embodied in the winning scheme coincided with the changing face of public housing in Singapore, indicating a new synthesis of state social and economic provision. In particular, the competition marked a new phase of the modern cosmopolitan project: a focus on life and lifestyles for a civilized Southeast Asian nation.

Beneath the dwelling configurations in Singapore’s housing estates, however, residents routinely “borrow” or appropriate public property or space for their own private use. The détournement of prefabricated architectural elements and spaces arises from creative adaptations made by the residents within the planning grid. Thus, unprogrammed, “empty” spaces within the housing block are used daily as waiting and pickup points for school children, and the elderly bring lounge chairs and potted plants to create their own social enclaves (fig. 9). Chess, table tennis, badminton and break-dancing are not excluded. Funeral wakes and wedding banquets are equally welcomed and tolerated. These affairs are always loud and colorful. Most Chinese funerals hire bands of retired musicians and amateur trumpeters; other families may prefer a modest concert with local or Malaysian popular singers. In the early years, even neighbors would join in such festivities. These practices persist today, with certain variants and technological enhancements. In a reflexive way, the HDB has even learned from some of these practices and incorporated them into later planning strategies.

Delving into the effects of the everyday, de Certeau has described the conditions of subjugation and marginality even in routine existence. Claiming it as “technology’s limit,” he has urged that more attention be given to practices “beneath technology” that disturb its operations. Engineers have long
been familiar with forms of resistance which disturb func-
tionalist calculations and their underlying elitist bureaucratic
structure. But he has argued they tended to be insensitive to
the fictive character — the imaginative citizen — and its rela-
tionship to everyday reality.65
Likewise, the governing power in Singapore is a highly
organized and technically competent structure which has the
capacity to quickly absorb anomalies and marginalities into
its strategy of organization and surveillance, turning them
into “signifiers” and “objects of exchange.” Yet despite these
systems of classification, certain protected activities such as
racial ceremonies and cultural practices can occur “above”
the limit of technology. Peculiar habits, religious practices,
and other unpredictable personal reactions prevent easy
detection or classification.66 And even if technically compe-
tent structures of surveillance succeed in absorbing these
unknown entities or practices, the technological is always
one step behind. Perhaps this is how the “weak” appropriate
from “the strong.”

LEISURE

Disney and Singapore share a belief that tourism is all-
comprising.67 With tourism as a central focus, conven-
tional divisions between work and leisure, citizen and tourist,
thus recede to the background. But a theme park also
embodies the conflict between producers and consumers,
where aestheticized happiness and leisure is superimposed
over a larger societal grid of control governed by the punch-
card regularity of work. Indeed, part of the Disney
Company’s strategy is to make itself an indispensable part
of American life. Sorkin has described the experience within
Disneyland as “the redemption of the industrial metropolis:
hygienic, staffed with unalienated workers apparently enjoy-
ing their contributions to the happy collectivity.”68 In this
way the empire of leisure is differentiated from everyday life.
But the separation means that the recuperating body can
receive only temporary relief.

As temporary citizens, tourists enjoy home-like ameni-
ties in Disney parks. Themed food kiosks, cafes and resta-
 rant s are located throughout, and there is no lack of seating,
rest stations, or bathrooms. Visitors seeking a reprieve from
the rides can also stroll among the picturesque gardens and
lawns. There they will find visual relief in the virtual worlds
of fictional characters and the juxtaposition of highly con-
trolled landscapes. Where else can one feast one’s eyes on
desert grasses, ivy topiary, tropical orchids, cherry blossoms
and coconut palms all in one place? Where else can one
care a rattlesnake without the real hazard of a bite?

Familiar with the operations of both work and play, how-
ever, there is a class of tourist-citizens which is engaged in a
form of reprogramming — not unlike de Certeau’s notion of
“la perruque.”69 Such people disguise their own work as work
within a larger organization, an appropriation often over-
looked by the “establishment.”

It was under such conditions in 1991 that the first annual
Official Unofficial Gay and Lesbian Day at the Magic Kingdom
was launched. Activist Doug Swallow first proclaimed the
event as “a day to have fun, to stand up and be counted.”66 Yet,
as Jeff Truesdell of the Orlando Weekly later observed, Gay Day
“became the lightning rod critics needed to challenge that cor-
porate strategy.” Ironically, he also wrote, “by refusing to dis-
courage the gathering, Disney condensed it.”67 Today, beyond
its economic impact, Gay Day has become an indicator of the
cultural landscape of the Disney Company itself — caught as it
is between its heavy-handed interest in profits and its self-
appointed role as guardian of “family values.”

Meanwhile, in Singapore, leisure has been transformed
from a segregated activity into one that infiltrates almost every
part of everyday life. In the two decades leading up to World
War II, the island witnessed the construction of numerous
leisure complexes which followed the example of develop-
ments such as the New World in Shanghai. Opened in 1923,
New World Amusement Park in Jalan Besar was followed by
Great World, Happy World (later renamed Gay World), and
Greater East Asia Amusement Park (open during the
Japanese occupation, and later renamed Beauty World). The
cabarets, boxing arenas, gambling dens, trade fairs, and eating
stalls of such complexes appealed primarily to the immigrant
working class. In the early 1950s such spaces were so impor-
tant that Happy World Sports Stadium served as the site for
high-profile international events such as the Thomas Cup
badminton tournament.68 Such was the proliferation of a
kind of Bakhtinian carnivalesque, where the leisure operators
and seekers built their own worlds alongside the official
world, their own states versus the official state.

However, leisure as rehabilitation and community bond-
ing for working citizens took an institutional turn in
Singapore the 1970s. That was when the government began
to systematically administer leisure activities in controlled
doses within the community centers of its brand-new devel-
opments. And, despite the complete disappearance of the
older “New Worlds,” in 1972 it also directed that a self-
enclosed city as resort be built on the neighboring island of
Sentosa. The Sentosa Development Board (SDB) was
charged with the development, management and promotion
of this space. Marketed as an affordable family getaway, it
provided part of a continual redefinition of the idyllic picture
of escape, resulting in a hyper-duplication of itself — a get-
away within a getaway (fig. 10).

Beneath this spatial text of leisure, reflexive to the needs
of the escaping body of the tourist-citizen, there has always
been a coincident specter of violence. Thus, the remains of
British World War II fortresses on Sentosa became a further
opportunity for museum spectacle. Even the detention of a
political dissident on the island for three years did not appear
incongruous.69 Here, the temporality of escape has juxtaposed
a blend of golfing, house arrest, and mourning — except that the very notion of escape (liberation) is really an oxymoron when considered within the nation’s panopticon of leisure.

However, even Singapore’s premier resort has now become the site of counter-activities that undermine its original purpose. This first occurred when profiteering entertainment companies added a technological dimension to previously spontaneous foam parties at the beach. Then, on August 8, 2001, the day before National Day, the Asian Web community Fridae initiated the first annual Gay Foam Bath Party on Sentosa. The event generated so much discomfort within the government that in less than two weeks Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong issued a “gentle” warning against such activities. Specifically, he maintained that greater political freedoms would have to come slowly.70

Nevertheless, empowered by a common solidarity and knowledge of their growing strength and expertise, the homo ludens continue to negotiate the territories they have become familiar with.71 Meanwhile, the government, trying to catch up with its well-traveled and restless citizens, has remained always one step behind in devising new planning principles to regulate the use of newly appropriated spaces. For example, for beach revelers, it has now designated small parcels of land as sites for “Zouk-Out” — “spontaneous” large-scale parties organized by Zouk, the most popular dance club in Singapore. But its overarching efforts to create an island resort and workplace that will satiate and contain the increasing demands and restlessness of its citizenry is a project that continues to be challenged.

TRAVEL

The only way to consume [the utopian] narrative is to keep moving, keep changing channels, keep walking, get on another jet, pass through another airport, stay in another Ramada Inn.

— Michael Sorkin72

Disneyland and Singapore enfold the acts of traveling and arriving. Marc Augé has argued that spaces of travel, of “relative anonymity,” are a refuge from the usual scrutiny and responsibility demanded of places with a particular identity and locality. This temporality can be liberating, as travelers need only to keep in line and follow instructions.73 Naturally, a sense of arrival is crucial, because it reaffirms that Disney is a definitive place. Specifically, it must overcome the suspicion caused by its seemingly easy duplication — not just in Florida, Los Angeles, Tokyo, Paris, and Hong Kong, but in ubiquitous television space. Born at the same time as the television series Mickey Mouse Club, Disneyland has always been conceived as a “non-place.” Thus, Disney’s deliberate place-making challenges the imagination — nowhere, but “there.”

Against this experience, there remain certain figures who skew Disney’s utopian social fabric, from which it has attempted to remove class, race, status, and all other potentially destabilizing factors. To the chagrin of the management, the Gay Day reveler and the occasional working-class Hispanic family resist the company’s capacity for such rationalization. For three days a year, 32,000 gay revelers take over these spaces of control and class oppression. Likewise, for capitalism’s racially disenfranchised, the need to make full use of the expensive day pass may mean a mix of drifting and “poaching” — sneaking in bologna sandwiches for lunch, for example.

Another wanderer class in Disney is the lone visitor, especially one with an academic agenda.76 Since Disney’s basic social unit is the family, the loner is always an anomaly. Disney conveyances are constructed to hold various breakdowns of a nuclear family, in two, three or four.77 It was precisely from such an outsider position that lone researcher Susan Willis was able to conduct fieldwork “inside the Mouse,” yet purposefully detached from it.

A parallel space in Singapore is Changi International Airport. Since its completion in the early 1990s, it has catered to as many as 44 million passengers a year. Not surprisingly, the arrival and transit spaces were taken very seriously by its planners, just as such spaces were taken seriously at Disney.78 Indeed, for many travelers, the hours spent in Changi Airport may mean a mix of drifting and “poaching” — sneaking in bologna sandwiches for lunch, for example.
In 1993, in further pursuit of this goal, officials announced the expansion of the airport based on concepts of an “airtropolis” — a city in an airport. Not surprisingly, this plan involved fitting its arrival and transit spaces with advanced surveillance devices, to carefully observe both errant behavior and spending tendencies. In a fantastic synchronicity of purpose, therefore, the same technology may be used to placate the fear for flying, process the identity of the traveler, verify boarding passes at duty-free stores, screen the body, predict meal options, and so on. The business of travel thus doubles as a system of control (Fig. 11).

The airport, by its very nature, is the privileged space of the traveler. But Changi’s connectedness to city services and transportation networks has also unwittingly opened it to other transitional figures. The activities of these people may be seen as akin to those of de Certeau’s ordinary practitioner, who appropriates the spaces of a city simply by walking and shopping in them. Likewise, they can be compared to the actions of the nineteenth-century flâneur, characterized by detachedness and freedom.

At Changi, this figure takes the form of a wandering student — attracted to the amenities of the airport mall and its always-open policy. Twice a year around examination periods, the numbers of these student loiterers increase. They even create private enclaves with books, plug-in music devices, and occasional sleeping mats. After several years of such occurrences, the authorities, unable to deter their practices, began to provide rooms in designated areas of the terminal, which they equipped with amenities conducive to studying.

Since the early years of Changi, a whole generation of transitory, anonymous “others” has come and gone, and even the strict code of surveillance has not been able to identify them. After the completion of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill’s Changi Airport MRT Rail Station (2006), other “uninvited” guests will undoubtedly enter this private-public space. It will be fruitful to observe the extent to which their presence has been anticipated and addressed in the design.

**FIGURE 11.** Travel utopia. SARS infrared thermal imagers at the arrival hall, Changi International Airport. Photo by author.

### TECHNOLOGY AND THE ENDO-COLONIALS

EPCOT will be an experimental city that would incorporate the best ideas of industry, government, and academia worldwide, a city that caters to the people as a service function. It will be a planned, controlled community, a showcase for American industry and research, schools, cultural and educational opportunities.

— Walt Disney

With world-class biomedical sciences, infocomm technology and media facilities next to green open spaces, private homes, a lively culture and community spirit, One-North . . . offers an open and stimulating atmosphere where you can work, meet and share ideas at the very frontiers of science and technology within five minutes of where you live — not only as colleagues, but as friends and neighbors.

— One-North Community

On February 2, 1967, Walt Disney Productions announced that it intended to build the world’s first glass-domed city in central Florida, which it called the Experimental Prototype Community of Tomorrow (EPCOT). EPCOT would be a carefully detailed project of social engineering and infrastructure — an enclosed climate-controlled environment with an advanced garbage-disposal system, ordered according to a garden-city radial plan where the “pedestrian will be king.” The plan envisioned that workers would be housed in low-density green-belt residential areas and be transported by monorail to a central business and cultural district, where they would travel by people mover. EPCOT was also to have a futuristic transportation hub, an educational center, and a technology hub to showcase advanced American industry and research. A conference and hotel hub would allow visitors and researchers to exchange ideas freely. And in their free time residents could attend cultural and professional sporting events. Most importantly, there would be no dirt, crime or poverty; EPCOT would be the ideal city for the future.

Walt Disney died in December that year, and EPCOT was never realized as he had envisioned it. However, many of its ideas were implemented in various ways at other Disney sites. The climate-controlled experimental gardens were built in the Land Pavilion in Future World. The WEDWAY People Mover and Monorail were constructed at the Magic Kingdom. The showcase of technology took form in the World Showcase and Future World. And even the Swedish-built Automated Vacuum Assisted Collection (AVAC) was installed in Walt Disney World. Of course, the garden city radial plan was realized in the organization of various Disney theme parks, while visions for a new residential community and alternative techniques for learning were realized in the new town of Celebration and the Celebration School, respectively. As Disney had envisioned, these environments today are clean, green, and dirt and crime free.
Both Singapore and Disney’s unrealized EPCOT vision share an emphasis on community values and an interest in physical and mental well-being through technological advancement (figs. 12 a, b). However, not only is Singapore already a technologically driven nation — where citizens work, live and play in a clean, green and low-crime environment — but it has also created a plethora of electronic-controlled self-sufficient poleis within the city. Single-use buildings have been systematically replaced by self-enclosed interior cities with interconnected passages.

In particular, following the precedent set by Airtropolis, Zaha Hadid’s competition-winning master plan for North-One Biopolis was introduced in 1999. Plans call for the 200-hectare zone for business, industry, research, development and education to be completed in three phases through 2020. Within North-One, there will be three specialized areas: Vista Xchange, a business and transportation hub; Central Xchange, a center for InfoComm Technology (ICT) and media industries; and Life Xchange, for biomedical R&D laboratories, residential units, retail and commercial activities. Built with a distinct “uptown” vibrancy, phase one of ICT will include Kisho Kurokawa’s state-of-the-art Fusionpolis. To maintain the nation’s productivity and progress, the aim is to provide an environment for live, work and play, “inspired by scientists, researchers and technopreneurs.”

However, identifying the Singapore citizen as a mass subject can be a simplistic and self-fulfilling critique. The citizen embodies the simultaneous selves of the postcolonized, the excolonized, and the endo-colonized. The postcolonial body embraces and reworks traces of the colonial — for example, Indians’ love for cricket. The excolonial rejects and is averse to nonindigenous impositions. Meanwhile, the endo-colonial, as Paul Virilio has defined it, is the modified technologized body that has undergone, and is still undergoing, modification, likened to a form of training or drill. This sensitized and informed body is an inhabitant within the perfectly disciplined Singapore.

In social terms, this class of citizens exhibits the “biopolitical nature of the new paradigm of power” that is still governed by capital. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri have noted that a certain self-disciplinary body can possess a form of “biopower” that regulates social life from its interior, an idea they extrapolate from Foucault. This notion of “biopolitics” implies that the task of policing will be left to the individual, who has been disciplined and is expected to exercise correct judgment in the politics of daily life.

However, this post-discipline body is also an empowered subject — highly reflexive to the changes and innuendos within a world completely governed by global capital. Not yet identified and studied as a collective, this “free agent” traverses within and across various “Disneys” and “Singapores.” The highly mobile endo-colonial is just now coming into its own.

**LIFE (AS RESISTANCE), IN LIEU OF CONCLUSION**

Heterotopias are disturbing, probably because they secretly undermine language, because they make it impossible to name this and that, because they shatter or tangle common names, because they destroy syntax in advance, . . . desiccate speech, stop words in their tracks, contest the very possibility of grammar at its source; they dissolve our myths and sterilize the lyricism of our sentences.

— Michel Foucault

The utopian projects of Disney and Singapore share the modern universal ideals of technology and progress, though their actual realizations reveal multifarious appropriations of
culture. Social and spatial resistances that emerged during the construction of these utopias today mandate serious reconsideration of Marshall McLuhan’s “global village” and Guy Debord’s insistence on the homogenizing spectacle of culture. The transplantation of these utopias into the lived realities of the everyday, however, has produced “other spaces” beneath the scripted texts of their controlling powers. These other spaces reproduce the interactions and antagonisms between the state, the corporation, and the individual. They also produce identities which continually reconfigure the everyday spaces of inhabitation. These heterogeneous identities engage in territorial negotiations within the urbanism of the city, and at the same time operate within the global landscape of capital and consumption.

From this brief analysis, roughly four such overlapping counter-identities can be mapped: the intellectual, the sexual (deviant), the marginal poor, and the practitioner of everyday life. Of these four groups, the intellectual can be seen moving between the thin lines of academia and public politics, and across the borders of local and global discourse. Such an identity is systematically gaining force, as indicated by the various groups and ad-hoc think tanks that have formed in recent years.

The politics and economics of sexuality have likewise found their way into the popular imagination. In Singapore, the intrusional tactics of its advocates have provoked reconsiderations of public and private policies. Thus, two years after warning against a too-hasty handing over of greater political freedom to the individual, Senior Minister Goh disclosed in an interview with *Time Asia Magazine* that gays are now given equal employment opportunities in civil service. This look at thornier cultural changes is a major aspect of the government’s two-prong agenda to address the economic downturn, which took its toll on the city-state after the Asian financial crisis of 1997. Not surprisingly, it has been accompanied by a review of economic policy changes. Thus, the biotech industry has been promoted at the same time as alternate lifestyles — Biopolis juxtaposed against the bohemian enclave.

While a precise account and mapping of their territorial strategies is beyond the scope of this article, the importance of the marginal poor, or economically disenfranchised, should not be discounted. Within Disney space, they can simply be excluded and planned out of sight. But in Singapore, the presence of this left-behind class has injected uneasiness into the island’s otherwise perfect urban landscape. Despite the fact that public-assistance schemes seem to have temporarily relieved these individuals and families, an unaccounted number of self-employed individuals, such as karang gunis (neighborhood rag-and-bone men) and newspaper vendors, fall between the cracks of economic classification and blur the definitions of poverty in affluent Singapore.

But perhaps it is the last group, encompassing all the others, which could most significantly “threaten” the totalizing forces of such planned environments as Disney and Singapore. Lefebvre has argued that the rhythms of daily life are able to find ways to inscribe and prescribe themselves within the texts of the city. The undermining presence of these other spaces then challenges the authoritarianism of master plans, presenting an alternative schema for understanding how culture produces different types of subjects and spaces. More pertinently, with life (and lifestyles) as the new object of power, Deleuze’s evocation of Foucault rings loud. “When [sovereign] power becomes bio-power, resistance becomes the power of life, a vital power that cannot be confined within species, environments or the paths of a particular diagram. Is not the force that comes from outside a certain idea of Life, a certain vitalism, in which Foucault’s thought culminates? Is not life this capacity to resist force?”

Since the end of the Cold War, notions of freedom and democracy have been continually redefined. For example, Arjun Appadurai has described the United States as the prototype of a new globalism constructed on a society of diasporic identity. In this same sense Disney sites and Singapore are supported by conditions of an endless diaspora. But the forces behind this phenomenon are the same ones behind the increased occurrence of global terrorism in the years since the millennium. Given these conditions, it has become necessary to recast the 1960s euphoria of individual freedom in light of the civilizational and religious tensions between different regions in the world. Indeed, the global euphoria of cosmopolitanism, as it is today juxtaposed with local economic and social exigencies, will perpetuate other dystopias, forging evolving identities and subjectivities.

Confronted with these new social contingencies, even the Singapore government has begun to recognize the inadequacies and growing irrelevance of its blanket state-of-emergency strategies. The present lack of major policy recommendations, accompanied by social measures that can only be likened to acupuncture treatment, indicates the Singapore dilemma: the efficient central planning that made the island such a success has now become a millstone. A review of its body-politics and technocratic policies is timely and unavoidable.

The gradual shift from patriarchal management to a more freewheeling atmosphere is evident in Prime Minister Goh’s words: “So let it evolve, and in time the population will understand that some people are born that way . . . but they are like you and me.” In other words, Goh recognizes the need for the government and the people to be open to shifting sexual and behavioral tendencies among the populace.

Though it may be premature to interrogate this new embrace of organic diversity, the early euphoric urbanism (utopias) of Singapore’s first decades has now taken a somewhat unknown and different turn away from the usual preemptive strategies. Perhaps behind the reactionary problem-solution mentality of the state is an intuitive awareness of these “other spaces” between utopia and euphoria. Life, in its ordinarieness, has a way of seeking them out.
NOTES


2. The commodification of culture in the twentieth century has been discussed extensively by Theodore Adorno, Herbert Marcuse, Guy Debord, Henri Lefebvre, Jean Baudrillard, and others. Such work underlay the emergent postmodern discourse of the late 1960s, which intensified in the early 1980s. In artistic discourse, postmodernism was first construed as an attempt to reclaim what remained of the historical avant-gardes. But by the 1980s it was finally acknowledged that the sites of activism against the onslaught of mass culture had shifted irreversibly to local cultural fields and specific identity politics. For a synthetic overview, see A. Huyssen, After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986).

3. With regard to postindustrial societies, Herbert Marcuse’s concept of repressive desublimation stems from his reaction to the relentless logic of capitalism and its technological engine. He argued that the progress of technological rationality inevitably subjects advanced contemporary society to a process of desublimation, which implies the repression of sexuality and aggression. The consequence is a condition of “happy consciousness,” which reflects a belief that the real is rational, and that the established system will deliver prosperity. For a detailed discussion, see H. Marcuse, One-Dimensional Man (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964).


5. M. Tafuri and F. Dal Co, Modern Architecture 2 (New York: Electra/Rizzoli, 1986), p.363. See chapter 20, “The International Concept of Utopia.” The authors argued that the utopianism of the time was derived from belief in technology as a means of achieving a future perfect society. And they pointed out how the 1960s avant-gardes espoused such belief in the inevitability of progress, and the assumption that progress was precisely technological. While their megaprojects were not realized, images of these schemes were widely disseminated in cultural institutions and artistic academies.

6. The word “utopia” is derived from the title of a novel published in 1516 by Sir Thomas More. The word itself means both “good place” and (literally, in the original Latin) “no place.”


10. Disneyland opened six months after three Boeing B-52 bombers made the first round-the-world nonstop jet plane flight in 45 hours. That year, Around the World in 80 Days won the Academy Award for Best Picture.

11. R. Schickel, The Disney Version: The Life, Times, Art and Commerce of Walt Disney (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1968), p.317. Schickel claimed to have written the first analytic biography of Disney, with the hope of creating a balanced perspective on the man, his works, and the society that created him and which he influenced.

12. P. Redfield, Space in the Tropics: From Convicts to Rockets in French Guinea (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), p.8. In particular, Redfield has analyzed Dope’s memoir of the marooned adventurer, Robinson Crusoe, and summarized the key elements of the settler myth. From his analysis, I have extracted five elements which are applicable in discussing the frontier spirit embodied in the development of both Disneyland and Singapore. To these I have added a sixth characteristic: the simultaneity of being on a journey, yet having arrived. In Singapore and Disney this last mythic element would be translated into planned utopias which are at once destinations and spaces for transit, resulting in the dialectic between program and circulation, stasis and flux.

13. M. Foucault, “Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias,” in Architecture Culture 1943–1968: A Documentary Anthology, ed. J. Ockman with collaboration of E. Eigen (New York: Rizzoli International Publications, 1993), pp.419–26. Foucault’s prior acknowledgement of heterotopia is solely textual. Comparing utopias with heterotopias, he said, “utopias afford consolation: although they have no real locality there is nevertheless a fantastic, untroubled region in which they are able to unfold; they open up cities with vast avenues, superbly planted gardens, countries where life is easy, even though the road to them is chimerical. Heterotopias are disturbing, probably because they secretly undermine language...they destroy ‘syntax’ in advance, and not only the syntax with which we construct sentences but also that less apparent syntax which causes words and things...to ‘hold together’.” M. Foucault, The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), p.xviii.


18. Ibid., pp.121–35.
20. A professor at the College of St. Mark and St. John in Adelaide, Australia, Harris is currently working on a publication Fifty Key Concepts in Leisure Studies.
22. Ever since 1965, Singapore has been a parliamentary republic, where parliamentary authority rests with the prime minister and his cabinet.
23. Michael Haas has argued that the island republic of Singapore is a totalitarian mass society. The argument is an extension of William Kornhauser’s identification of two types of democratic society: liberal democracy supported by a pluralist society, and populist democracy supported by a mass society. The main difference is that the social constitution of a mass society does not limit the use of power against individuals. Thus, populist democracy may involve direct action by large numbers of people, which may result in the circumvention of institutional channels and the violation of individual rights — a form of police control.


24. The need to plan the future city is the prerogative and obsession of the Urban Redevelopment Authority of Singapore. This planning practice simultaneously legitimizes the actions of the state and the power of capital.
25. *Ekistics* was founded in 1954 by Constantinos A. Doxiadis and Jacqueline Tyrwhitt during the first U.N. International Symposium on Housing and Community Planning in New Delhi. Tyrwhitt was the director of the symposium, and Doxiadis was a participant. They agreed that there was a need to keep architects and planners in developing countries up to date with relevant professional expertise from the rest of the world. The first issue was published in 1955, though for the first two years it was called *Tropical Housing and Planning Monthly Bulletin*. Architect William Lim of SPUR was the Singapore correspondent for *Ekistics* in the 1960s.
27. Spearheaded by architects William Lim (a student of Tyrwhitt at Harvard) and Tay Kheng Soon, two publications were the products of several meetings: *SPUR* 65–67 and *SPUR* 68–71. After these efforts SPUR was disbanded in 1971.
28. The MRT was first introduced in an *Asia Magazine* article, “The Future of Asian Cities,” in 1966. It was republished in *SPUR* 65–67 the following year. That same year, the Singapore government and the United Nations Development Program began a four-year feasibility study for the MRT. The study included a Harvard team, and lasted until 1981. The first trains started running on November 7, 1987. Changi Airport was inaugurated in 1981, based on a 1975 decision to replace the smaller Paya Lebar Airport. Though SPUR was never publicly acknowledged, a SPUR statement of February 23, 1971, contained a proposal to locate a new airport at Changi. E. Cheong, C.T. Seng, et al., *SPUR* 68–71 (Singapore), pp.11–12.
29. SPUR’s seemingly marginal influence on the country’s grand scheme of nation building was reinforced by a lack of official recognition of the research and planning proposals it submitted to the government — relegating their public visibility to sporadic and poorly circulated publications. However, in the private sector, members of SPUR did succeed as individuals in obtaining building commissions, through which fragments of their proposals were realized. And with the young government eager to recruit talent in order to put the city on the world map, a handful of SPUR members were eventually absorbed into the government in various capacities. Many of the members became consultants for government advisory boards. Chan Heng Chee became Singapore’s Permanent Representative to the United Nations from 1989 to 1991, and in July 1996 she was appointed Singapore’s Ambassador to the United States.
30. According to the 2000 census, of the four million total population 7.2 percent are permanent residents and 18.8 percent are nonresidents <http://www.singstat.gov.sg/papers/2000/censuscount.pdf>. In 2003 some 70,000 foreign professionals resided in Singapore. Indeed, foreign-born residents make up one-quarter to one-third of the entire population, a demographic unmatched anywhere except in a few rich Persian Gulf emirates. The Japanese are the biggest expatriate community, with more than 20,000 nationals; there are about 16,000 Americans. Many of the rest are workers from Asia and the Southeast Asia region <http://www.singapore-window.org/sw02/021224re.htm>.
31. The straightening of the coastline — and in particular, island expansion — was a deli- cate issue between Singapore and Malaysia. The latter raised multiple protests against what it saw as a territorial encroachment on the part of the island nation. Meanwhile, on its existing territory, the island became a completely urban landscape, an image constructed by private enterprise but based on visions for the city designed by the Urban Redevelopment Authority of Singapore.
32. “Keynote Address” by Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong at the Community Development Council (CDC) Seminar, March 19, 2000. “The cosmopolitan is the one who has the skills and the global outlook that enable him to do well almost anywhere in the world. The heartlander, on the other hand, has a more domestic outlook.” This polarity assumed a fixation of labels and may produce an unnecessary class divide.
33. Brennan has observed that historically, cosmopolitanism has combined two distinct significations. One the one hand, it designates an enthusiasm for customary differences; on the other, a new singularity (polis) is created which blends and merges multiple local constituents. T. Brennan, “Cosmopolitanism and Internationalism,” in D. Archibugi, ed., *Debating Cosmopolitics* (London: Verso, 2003), p.41.
35. The following are some examples of

38. L. Marx, The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), p.3. Marx noted that a favorite strategy, validated by marketing research, assumes that Americans are most likely to buy cigarettes, beer and automobiles they can associate with a rustic setting.

39. G. Teyssot, “The American Lawn: Surface of Everyday Life,” in G. Teyssot, ed., The American Lawn (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1999), p.15. According to Teyssot, the eye-soothing lawn that prepares the spectator for a barrage of design spectacles is also a surface for the inscription of ideologies. It is the site in which the everyday, class structures, and territories are negotiated and displayed.


41. Abercrombie had earlier presented two high-profile plans — the County of London Plan (1943) and the Greater London Plan (1944). His trademark idea was that open space should be coordinated into a park system to provide easy flow from garden to park, park to parkway, parkway to green wedge, and green wedge to green belt.

42. C. Abrams, S. Kobe, and O. Koenigsberger, “Growth and Urban Renewal in Singapore: Report Prepared for the Government of Singapore,” United Nations Programme of Technical Assistance, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, November 1963. In the report, the team was critical of the existing Abercrombie Master Plan, last revised by the British in 1955, for its lack of vision. “It is a plan for a medium-sized town with a rural hinterland, not a plan for a metropolis,” they said. In its place, they recommended a citywide urban-renewal program.

43. Ibid., pp.63–71. Notably, such an idea was already in place in numerous Dutch cities — e.g., Amsterdam, Utrecht, Rotterdam, Delft, The Hague, Leiden, and Haarlem — where the city encircles a “green heart” or center void.

44. Lee, From Third World to First, p.175. On a regional scale, greening became a frontier in which many international political debates were carried out. Other Asian countries were said to be caught up in the competition of “out-greening” and “out-blooming” one another.


46. L. Marin, Utopics: Spatial Play, R.A. Vollrath, trans, (New Jersey: Humanities Press Inc., 1984), p.242. In Singapore, there is a near-identical comparison with Marin’s analysis of Disney’s spatial planning. The “neutral space of the limit” is within a zone that is neither utopian nor everyday. There are three such equivalent areas in Singapore, each having a precise semiotic function. The outer limit is constituted by geographies beyond the island, the immediate one being the physical hinterland of Malaysia. The entry ports — airport, harbor, and bus terminal at the causeway to Malaysia — constitute the intermediary limit. The mass rapid transit system and light rail system form the inner limit, like Disneyland’s steam train.

47. Set on forty hectares of dense secondary tropical forest, the Night Safari is the world’s first wildlife park built to be viewed at night. Through the use of subtle lighting techniques, guests are able to view more than one thousand nocturnal animals from one hundred species in vast naturalistic habitats.

48. T.K. Soon, “Environment and Nation Building,” SPUR 65–67, pp.43–48. Unfortunately, it was not until the 1980s that the entire profession caught on to the significance of greening as an ideal that could set each built environment apart. A strong advocate of ecological issues, Tay continued to produce his own visions for a tropical green city, even after SPUR had disbanded.

49. Inhabitants find shortcuts from one point to another, and soon an entire band of turf will be completely trampled, leaving barren earth. Some planned paths are hard-ly used, because their internal logic does not correspond to the routes taken by inhabitants.

50. Celebration can be seen as the contemporary answer to Disney’s original vision for the Experimental Prototype Community of Tomorrow (EPCOT), a high-tech model city for 20,000 residents.


54. According to Pollan, so long as the interests of the corporation and the consumer are one, the consumerist democracy holds. This has been largely the case so far, he writes, because all the community’s “stakeholders” have dedicated themselves to the proposition of maintaining high property values.

55. Housing and Development Board, “Annual Report 1985,” p.52. By 1990, almost 90 percent of the population lived in highrise public housing. Sociologist Chua Beng Huat has described HDB’s housing policies as being to eliminate class-based politics, manage ethnicity, and foster the idea of a “normal” Singaporean family. For example, HDB qualification policies ensure that different social groups are matched by corresponding housing types: two- to three-room flats for starter families; four- to five-room flats for established families; and studios for retirees.


58. Before the new town came into being,
Tampines was a place of forests, plantations and small kamponds. The name “Tampines” was derived from the Malay word for the Riau ironwood tree, which grew abundantly in the area.

59. D. Cohn, “ARC plans Mega-Structure for Singapore,” World Architecture July/August 2002, p.19. Located adjacent to the central business district, the winning design consists of seven, 48-story towers in a large park above lush landscaping, with the utilitarian garage tucked beneath the ground. The towers are connected by two continuous “sky parks” on the 29th floor and roof. The parks, reached by express elevators, contain recreation and communal facilities required by the newer breed of inhabitants. The jury included Fumihiko Maki, Moshe Safdie, and local architect Raymond Woo.

60. Chua, Political Legitimacy and Housing, p.83.


62. Ibid., p.xi. According to de Certeau, an “operational combination” is a collection of practices that accumulate to compose a “culture.” This concept was examined across a series of practices — from reading and talking to dwelling and cooking.


70. Goh C.T., The Straits Times, August 20, 2001. Citing Gorbachev’s opening up of the Soviet Union under glasnost, he warned that should the PAP hand over greater political freedom to its people too rapidly, the country would risk “collapsing with a big bang.”

71. Homo ludens refers to the man-at-play in Constant’s New Babylon. “The Homo ludens of the future society will not have to make art, for he can be creative in the practice of his daily life.” Cited in Ockman, Architecture Culture 1943–1968, p.314.


73. Ibid., p.101.

74. Marin, Utopics, pp.238–57. Using Disneyland as an illustration, Marin posits a linear trajectory for the degeneration of utopia through its representation and subsequent transformation to myth. This assumes that all visitors to Disneyland are actors of the utopian text upon arrival.

75. Sorkin, Variations on a Theme Park, p.231.

76. E. Wilson, Disneyland Hostage: A Liz Auston Mystery (Toronto: Harper Collins, 2000). This mystery novel for teens portrays the unwelcome Hispanics as terrorists who kidnap some American hostages in Disneyland. This alludes to the popular class stratification and self-selectivity in Disney sites.


78. Willis observed that the most family-affirming aspect of the site seems to be the way that queues for its rides serve as a place for family members to negotiate who will ride with whom.

79. Fong K.W., “Air Transport Industry in the Asia-Pacific: Changi Airport beyond 2000,” paper delivered at the 1993 Global Super Projects Conference. Fong was the Deputy Director of Engineering, Civil Aviation Authority of Singapore.


85. M. Hardt and A. Negri, Empire (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), p.23. Hardt and Negri suggest that Foucault’s “disciplinary society” is one in which social command is constructed through a diffuse network of apparatuses that produce and regulate customs, habits, and productive practices. After assimilation, the same society transforms into Gilles Deleuze’s “society of control,” in which “mechanisms of command become ever more ‘democratic’ and are distributed through the brains and bodies of the citizens.” Deleuze’s “society of control” proves more apt as a description of a class that has graduated from Foucault’s “disciplinary society.” See also Deleuze, Foucault, S. Hand, ed. (London: The Athlone Press, 1988), pp.70–93.
90. Goh is referring to the emergent homosexual population. It is not surprising that an economic motivation (to avoid excluding “talented foreign talents who are gay”) is behind the change in policy toward non-heterosexuals.