Visual ORDER

in

TIMES SquarE

The Social Regulation of Urban Space

By

Jay W. Shuffield

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Acknowledgments

It is with some regret that I submit this thesis for storage in Avery Library. It is a dingy underground hole that refuses to lend the books, even though it is generally impossible to make photocopies with the broken copy machines. Perhaps that doesn't matter, since so many of the books cannot be found after checking the three separate places where they "normally" might be and spending an inordinate amount of time checking with the librarian. It has been nothing but a source of irritation, aggravation, and general frustration. I hope that nobody every finds it necessary to descend into that pit in search of my work. Perhaps one day Columbia will be enlightened enough to digitally archive theses and dissertations, making them available online.

With the exception of the absolute unacceptability of the Columbia Library system, I have had a great deal of support and help in writing this paper. I owe special thanks to Gerald Suttles and Kirsten Gronbjerg, who hosted me in their home in Indiana to discuss my topic. Professor Suttles looked over the rough draft of my theoretical framework and the first draft of the final paper, providing me with some good direction and support. My advisor Susan Fainstein also deserves special recognition for patiently reading several working drafts of this paper, offering critical feedback until the ideas gradually took more coherent form. She also subtly stressed points during her Advanced Theory course that contributed to the arguments I was trying to make.

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Trading Places (TPL) has provided me with a great many opportunities and memorable experiences, many of which have played into this study in interesting and unusual ways. TPL made it possible for me to see the machine space of 4 Times Square and stand on its roof, and it enabled me to take a unique trip to Tokyo. In Tokyo, Gitti Hermann shared some insightful observations I would have missed, and Matias Echanove engaged me in an ongoing critical discussion of urban space throughout Tokyo and New York. Ann Yamamoto has been a great help to me in this and previous projects by double-checking my impressions of Tokyo. And we have all had a great time together.

INTRODUCTION

While this paper draws heavily from various academic theories, it has fundamentally grown from a curiosity sparked by personal experiences in particular places. Like many other students at the University of Chicago, when I was in college I periodically went out for dinner at the Medici. It is a dark restaurant that capitalizes on what Richard Lloyd (2000) calls "grit as glamour." Individuals have written messages on the walls and carved their names in the tables, creating a gritty and visually interesting atmosphere. While it was apparent to me from the beginning that the graffiti was accepted, perhaps even actively encouraged, I did not give it much thought at first. After the novelty wore off, however, I eventually noticed that the menus and the artwork on the walls had not been defaced. While it appeared that the social norms prohibiting vandalism had been transgressed, a closer look revealed that they had merely been redefined for this space. Social relationships within the restaurant were curiously managed in a way that encouraged creative personal additions that both defined the character of the space and helped tie people to it (on a few different occasions people have pointed out to me where they had written *their* message on the wall or the table).

Gradually this curiosity extended to the city, as I noted the diverse appearances of different districts that were in part a product of different social roles. That different places look different was no revelation to me—the role of local materials, climate, and historical changes in building techniques had been covered in depth in an urban morphology course I took in Spain—but the collective social agency that regulated visual order grasped my attention.

This curiosity was strengthened during an exploration of Tokyo with Trading Places this past summer. Trading Places is an informal network of planning students that fosters the exchange of planning ideas while stressing the direct experience of place. For five days, I

toured Tokyo with Japanese and foreign students and academics, discussing the various planning implications of the many things we encountered. Hijira Morikawa from Waseda University showed us some of the differences in architecture, advertising, and social use between Shibuya and Akihabara. He attributed these to differences between the consumption of European and Asian goods, while some of the foreign students suspected from his PowerPoint presentation that gender also played a role in differentiating appearances.

Planning has always had a concern for the appearance of space. Its emergence as a professional field was largely based on a desire to create order in rapidly transforming industrial cities. This is true not only of land uses, with the desire to separate the noxious effects of industries from homes in residential areas, but also in visual terms. The formal designs of the City Beautiful movement, later replaced by the dictates of "form follows function" that drove architecture and planning through most of the 20th century, and the use of urban renewal "slum clearance," were all part of an underlying demand for the imposition of visual order. While postmodernism may pose a challenge to this movement in academic (Deutsche 1996) and architectural spheres (Tschumi 1996), the desire for order is still strongly rooted in American social relations and continues to influence the organization of space. For planners to adequately deal with urban space, it is vital for them to understand the social interactions that shape it and give it meaning.

Figure 1: The well-ordered "White City" of the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893 became an image and inspiration for the possibilities of planning in America.

(Digital Archive of American Architecture)

Figure 2: Early planning efforts in the City Beautiful movement, like Daniel Burnham's civic center designs, were largely focused on providing visual order in cities that seemed increasingly chaotic as industrial development increased.

(Daniel Burnham, *Plan of Chicago*)

In 1960, Kevin Lynch went beyond the traditional limits of urban planning in *The Image of the City*. He sought to understand the interaction between people and the urban environment in order to better inform planning. "The work was done in the conviction that analysis of existing form and its effects on the citizen is one of the foundation stones of city design," he wrote (p. 14). His study of how visual order

affects people's conception of the city was well received, but unfortunately few planners seem inclined to choose this direction in their own work. Ultimately, planners cannot address spatial problems in cities without first understanding the social milieu and its dynamics.

In recent decades, there has been a great deal of discussion in other fields about the role of social norms in the organization or "production" of space. Much of the discussion has revolved around theory, yet even at the theoretical level the actual processes that translate social norms into physical space have not been adequately described.

This study argues, following from a synthesis of theories and observations about urban phenomena, that regulating visual order is a central aspect of producing place. Visual order stands at the confluence of physical and social space, involving a dialogue with identity and collective consciousness. It is regulated through economics, legislation, and the destruction of space. Politics is important, as it helps determine the agenda for each form of regulation and mediates between the different forms. Groups interact to foster visual order, which seeks a clear definition of the social use for each space.

After elaborating a broad theoretical argument, I will illustrate these processes with the example of Times Square, and will then draw conclusions and implications for planning. The paper is broken into four parts. Part 1 outlines the structure of visual order, Part 2 looks at the processes that regulate visual order, Part 3 analyzes visual order in Times Square, and Part 4 discusses conclusions and their importance for planning.

PART ONE: Visual Order

As used in this paper, "visual order" refers to a regulated appearance that conveys a defined social role for a given space. This is not limited to the built environment; it also includes public activities. Scott (1998; 133-4) has used the term in a much more narrow way to mean "the tidy look of geometric order." My use is closer to Suttles's (1984) "appearential order," although he does not define the term. With my usage, built elements that appear discordant and activities that are socially marked as "disorderly" stand in opposition to visual order. Security measures may help create visual order, as described by Davis (1990), but these can also undermine that order whenever they signal that the space is contested, leaving the defined use of the space challenged. Spaces that use social activities to regulate appearances and maintain control as prescribed by Whyte (1988), on the other hand, may exhibit a stronger visual order, as their use appears to be naturally defined. Put simply, visual order is the coherence of what you see in the sweep of the eye.

Focusing on the connection between physical characteristics and social activities has been common in sociology (Wilson and Kelling 1982, Sampson and Raudenbush 1999), but sociologists have typically left their investigation at the point where visual order is transgressed in the forms of graffiti, streetwalking, or loitering. Sampson and Raudenbush offer the following explanation of *dis*order: "By disorder… we refer not to disorganization but observable physical and social cues that are commonly perceived to disturb the civil and unencumbered use of public space." (p. 611) Conversely, order is an absence of disruptive visual cues.

From a concept first proposed by Albert Hunter**,** Wilson and Kelling developed what is known as the "Broken Windows" hypothesis. They argue that visual disorder encourages criminal behavior, and this concept has become quite influential in both policing and

planning efforts. Although the "Broken Windows" hypothesis attempts to explain how disorder affects social behavior, we should ask how acceptance of this argument directs social behavior to enforce visual order. The "Broken Windows" argument is not complicated. In fact, it can be described as an attempt to explain a socially normative view of marginal spaces as a sort of natural law.

Sampson and Raudenbush (1999) criticize the causation of the "Broken Windows" hypothesis, asserting that both visual disorder and criminal behavior stem from ineffective social control within the community. This redefinition is an improvement, as we begin to see that visual character expresses social space and its normative behaviors, such that visual disorder is the result of poorly defined and enforced social uses. Nevertheless, it continues to take a narrow view of the resulting appearance by assuming that it is a naturally negative condition, rather than a condition that becomes negative through its perception. This is perhaps most evident in their treatment of loitering. What may appear to people from many communities to be a sort of criminal shiftlessness may in fact be an aspect of visual order for the local community as an accepted social activity that defines the space.

It is important at this point to resist the temptation to say that people in distressed communities *want* their neighborhoods to look bad. Following Sampson and Raudenbush, distressed communities look bad because their fragmented social space undermines visual order. At the same time, we need to be careful about imposing exterior standards to interpret visual order; some of what outsiders may think looks bad may not look bad to the area's residents.

Jane Jacobs (1961) takes a different approach toward activities in public space, and she has been influential in defining the current practice of planning. Scott (1998) portrays Jacobs as an opponent of "visual order." While her position takes a different approach than

that of the "Broken Windows" perspective, Scott's overly narrow definition of "visual order" causes him to miss a broader picture. He states:

> Diversity, cross-use, and complexity (both social and architectural) are Jacobs's watchwords. The mingling of residences with shopping areas and workplaces makes a neighborhood more interesting, more convenient, and more desirable—qualities that draw the foot traffic that in turn makes the street relatively safe. The whole logic of her case depends on the creation of crowds, diversity, and conveniences that define a setting where people will want to be. In addition, a high volume of foot traffic stimulated by an animated and colorful neighborhood has economic effects on commerce and property values…

Scott's own explanation highlights the importance of maintaining particular visual aspects: architectural complexity, crowds, and colorful neighborhoods. It is visual order, as coherence to this animated neighborhood esthetic (in this case what some—Lewis Mumford comes to mind—would call a Bohemian esthetic) that defines the "setting where people will want to be."

Duneier (1999) makes a similar comparison, contrasting Jacobs to the "Broken Windows" hypothesis:

> Although for Jacobs disorder serves many positive functions and for Wilson and Kelling it does not, their approaches are only superficially different in other ways. Both ask what sorts of unintended consequences flow from particular sorts of publicly visible practices.
> (p. 158)

Jacobs really does not argue in favor of disorder as much as she tries to redefine the dominant social understanding of visual order. I do not mean to reduce Jacobs's work to a mere esthetic position, but rather to note the visual aspects that play a strong role in her concept of good urban neighborhoods. For Jacobs, the appearance of space should be more lively and defined by local community standards, whereas Wilson and Kelling argue for conformance to some sort of mainstream standards. Both cases rely on social control to maintain an appearance, even if the level of desired control, diversity of activity, and the formality of enforcement are different.

The focus on public perception and observable cues is central to our understanding of visual order. To clarify, however, the notion of "unencumbered use" in Sampson and

Raudenbush's definition of disorder cannot be understood as uncontested use, and it is necessary to ask for whom use is unencumbered. As Deutsche (1996) has pointed out, public space is always contested, although it is often controlled in ways that do not attract attention.

Physical and Social Spaces

The idea that space is interdependent with social relationships is not new. The notion has been present in sociology since the inception of the urban ecology theories of the Chicago School. Park (1925) wrote:

> The ground plan of most American cities, for example, is the checkerboard. The unit of distance is the block. This geometrical form suggests that the city is a purely artificial construction which might conceivably be taken apart and put together again, like a house of blocks.
>
> The fact is, however, that the city is rooted in the habits and customs of the people who inhabit it. The consequence is that the city possesses a moral as well as a physical organization, and these two mutually interact in a characteristic way to mold and modify one another. It is the structure of the city which first impresses us by its visible vastness and complexity. But this structure has its basis, nevertheless, in human nature, of which it is an expression. On the other hand, this vast organization which has arisen in response to the needs of its inhabitants, once formed, imposes itself upon them as a crude external fact, and forms them, in turn, in accordance with the design and interests which it incorporates.
>
> (p. 4)

The sociologists at the University of Chicago viewed communities as social formations that were bounded by or coterminous with their physical space. Communities were seen as the cumulative result of individual behavior, and the sociologists soon focused on the competition for resources as the primary formative behavior. (Suttles 1972) Since communities resulted from individual behavior and they occupied fixed physical areas, many physical aspects of community areas resulted from the competition for resources, giving rise to the concentric ring model (Park and Burgess 1925).

The Chicago School has been criticized for accepting "human nature" as a guiding force in social interactions, which led them to undercut the role of social constructions. Their conceptualization of communities as physically bounded has also been criticized as a shortcoming. (Hannerz 1980**,** Venkatesh 2001, De Genova 1998) Nevertheless, the

emphasis on the cumulative results of individual behavior retains relevance, as does the codependence of physical form and social interactions.

Much of the current direction for the discourse on space was set by Lefebvre (1975). He argues that it is not possible to talk about space as some preexisting void that is filled by social activities, but rather that space is created through social actions. Groups are intertwined in their social space, and every group establishes places for itself in physical space. Lefebvre explains that "social relations of production have a social existence to the extent that they have a spatial existence; they project themselves into a space, becoming inscribed there, and in the process producing that space itself." (p. 129) His concern is largely historical, however, rather than in tracing the processes of spatial production, and he does not fully grasp the nature of urban redevelopment. When he states: "The diversion and reappropriation of space are of great significance, for they teach us much about the production of new spaces," (p. 168) he fails to recognize that reappropriated spaces *become* new spaces as they come to embody a different social space and are (at least to some extent) physically destroyed and rebuilt.

While theorists recognize space as socially created, they seem to treat place as some independently existing condition of location. Reading commentaries on the "experience of place," (Hiss 1990) however, it becomes apparent that place is also socially created, emerging from the social definition of space. I do not intend to outline historical processes or transformations in this paper, but a brief explanation will clarify this point. Both place and space are social constructions. Before the emergence of modernism they were largely coterminous, as social space did not extend substantially beyond socially defined places. The dramatic extension of social spaces, however, has outpaced the definition of place.

Ordering Activities

While it may sound unusual, given the typical emphasis on the built environment, social activities are a central element in the appearance of space. Lynch (1960) made this point:

> Moving elements in a city, and in particular the people and their activities, are as important as the stationary physical parts. We are not simply observers of this spectacle, but are ourselves a part of it, on the stage with the other participants
> (p. 2)

And as we have seen through the sociologists' approach in the "Broken Windows" discussion, social activities serve as visual cues. In *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, much of Jacobs's success lies in her ability to deal with sidewalk life as an esthetic phenomenon, using the metaphor of dance. Likewise, in the novel *The Fountainhead* by Ayn Rand (1943), Dominique takes issue with uses that undermine the visual order of the modernist buildings she champions.

Furthermore, Tschumi (1996) explains that social activities become entwined with spaces. Since activities that occur in a given space become part of the space itself, any consideration of visual order will have to include the activities that occur there.

The activities and physical space themselves are linked, both functionally and esthetically. New activities may demand that spaces be reconfigured, thereby altering their appearance. Furthermore, different esthetics approach the relationship between activities and the appearance of space differently. The modernist approach that prevailed during most of the 20th century is most strongly described by the insistence of Louis Sullivan (1901-1902) that the form of a building should reflect its function, while New Urbanists[1] have recently tried to recreate the appearance of traditional neighborhoods to replicate the positive social interactions they observe there.

[1] Not to be confused with the New Urban Sociology.

Foucault (1975) is interested in the ways power makes imposes discipline for social control, and he interprets the regulation of space as such a means of control. This interpretation takes a somewhat narrow view when dealing with space, focusing almost exclusively on the way places are designed to allow public scrutiny, rather than looking at the regulation of spaces through the interaction of appearance and social identification. His is by no means a shallow contribution, and puts into perspective Jacobs's (1961) "eyes on the street," design suggestions by Whyte (1988), and some of the hostile aspects of design identified by Davis (1990).

But groups invest efforts in the design of space in ways that do not contribute simply to visibility or social control; the regulation of appearances helps to both represent and form identity, so we will take an in-depth look at the role of identity.

Identity

Lynch (1960) indicated that community identities are tied to visual characteristics, establishing some connection between identity and place, and between neighborhoods and visual order. His observation that hard edges create separate areas provides some insight into the role of space in the formation of identity. As spatial boundaries divide neighborhoods, and people identify themselves with their neighborhood, spatial boundaries lead to the development of identity. Beyond the ruptures in urban fabric created by major borders, Lynch also noted class differences in decorative elements that differentiate areas (p. 165-7). This suggests that place-based identities may develop through spatial boundaries, while other identities such as class and race may imprint themselves in physical space, although he did not draw it out. Fainstein (2001) asserts the point: "[The] built environment structures social

relations, causing commonalities of gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, and class to assume spatial identities." (p. 1)

We also need to recognize that administrative boundaries play a role in both the creation of identity and the emergence of distinct visual orders. Community identities form through contests over resources, and the administrative bodies develop their own identities based on their organizational structure and the personalities of the people who lead them. The competition between departments within an administrative structure can also lead to differences. (Allison 1971) Thus, in addition to developing its own identifiable landscaping styles, the Parks Department in New York pasts its leaf symbol on all the spaces it maintains.

Drawing on the work of his colleague Morris Janowitz, Suttles explains "[P]eople tend to live in more than one community of limited liability and to have many different adversaries or partners in maintaining more than one corporate identity." (1972; p. 59) Observations of identities supported by consumer items and their associated images have also noted multiple identities. These observations of consumption view shopping as an activity where people try on potential identities as much as they are evaluating the fit of a new shirt. (Shields 1992)

Identity is a combination of conformity and exclusion that enables individuals to situate themselves in relationship to others, generally according to socially defined roles. This is partially a choice, it is also largely a matter of imposition, but it is not static. The characteristics that are relevant differ as context changes. At Oktoberfest, I can assume a German identity that I have loosely inherited from my mother, while on Saint Patrick's Day I can take on an Irish identity, if I care to stretch my father's background. By dressing all in black, smoking a lot, and trying not to let my goofy laugh out, I could adopt the identity of an existentialist. Nevertheless, when I walk around in predominantly black neighborhoods on

the South Side of Chicago, my identity is that of a white man, regardless of the choices I make.

It thus follows that space plays a role in determining the relevant identity for an individual. To some extent this would have to be so; as Suttles noted in a conversation on the topic, you have to go somewhere else to be someone else. Moreover, as varying types of consumer items are concentrated in particular areas, people in different locations may conform to different images, and they may shift from one identity to another depending on the prevalence of whichever image dominates in the immediate context. Furthermore, Suttles has observed that comparisons play a strong role: "[L]ike individuals, cities get to know what they are and what is distinctive about them from the unified observation of others." (1984, p. 285) Conflicts also involve outsiders in the formation of identity: "Identities become defensible by having to be defended." (p. 291)

It is important to recognize that exercising control over the visual character of an area is not simply a case of exerting enough power to subdue contending voices. Rather, areas become specialized and exhibit forms of cooperation. One of Suttles observations in *The Social Order of the Slum* (1968) illustrates this:

> Within the area there area a few business places that specialize in ethnic products that have become popular with members of other ethnic groups. Within these establishments outsiders are treated as "guests" and must take the part of someone who appreciates the product and has come there for that special purpose. Like guests everywhere, however, they must show respect for the establishment and concede to its practices rather than force their own.
> (p. 49-50)

Applied to the question of appearance, this helps explain why many city districts, and ethnic neighborhoods in particular, often maintain thriving tourist businesses, and why they are not subject to the same visual controls as other neighborhoods. Because people enjoy the distinct experiences of contact with other identities, they may be willing to cede control over its appearance and identification to others.

Questions concerning exclusion, however, have been ongoing and have periodically been central to bursts of political turmoil. Because of the importance of exclusion in planning, it is worthwhile to note that this is achieved precisely within the correlation between space and identity. The accepted image of an area may endorse identities, most notably race, that cannot be adopted by everyone. These may be enforced through legal restrictions (similar to other legal controls we will examine later) or through less formal means. Many of these means rely on various visual cues as implicit means of suggestion or enforcement; ultimately, they all seek to control who has the right to be visible within the space in question.

As class or racial identities shape the physical environment, they in turn can become reinforced as place-based identities, bringing social reproduction together with the production of urban space (Lefebvre 1975; Harvey 1985).

Marxists have long expressed interest in the class-oriented organization of space. The appearances of urban spaces controlled by the middle class were a concern for Engels (1845). He described the difference between the unsightly working class districts hidden behind the attractive avenues that carried bourgeois commuters. Engels noted that the bourgeoisie consolidated a middle class appearance within its own space. His concern was primarily in the way that the bourgeoisie exploited the working class, supposedly to maintain this appearance, and he expanded little beyond this observation.

This observation is repeated by Revell (1992), concerning the inception of zoning controls in New York. Talking about the Fifth Avenue merchants, he explains:

> The association was founded in 1908 by a group of merchants and real estate owners seeking to preserve the genteel appearance and economic value of Fifth Avenue – the city's high-class shopping district.… Garment workers, they said, differed from shoppers, from retail clerks, and from office workers, and those differences changed the character of the retail district below Thirty-fourth Street. (p. 29)

The Fifth Avenue Association attempted to regulate the appearance of the street in order to maintain control over it. While they regulated aspects such as the height of buildings

for health and esthetic considerations, the merchants were largely interested in manipulating economics to price out the garment workers, thereby maintaining the exclusive class appearance of the people on the street.

Jager (1986) elaborates further on the Marxist approach, describing gentrification in Melbourne, Australia as a class-motivated process of regulating visual order. Jager indicates that gentrification follows an esthetic norm, or "kitsch," which reflects and enables the formation of an urban middle class. He explains that decisions concerning the appearance of houses are made to demonstrate class standing, rather than to express individual esthetic taste, stating "It is not the esthetic itself but the social distinction it evokes which is achieved in the display of kitsch." (p. 87) This "kitsch" marks entire gentrified areas, producing a visual order of class domination.

Jager further suggests that gentrifiers use the Victorian style in an attempt to control the use of history. I find this interpretation of the stylistic choice too constraining, as it essentially negates the possibility that anyone actually likes the way those houses look. History does play an important role in urban space, though, through the way it is understood in the present, so we will turn our attention to collective consciousness.[2]

Collective Consciousness

Before discussing collective consciousness itself, we should look briefly at its space. Although difficult to rigidly define, there is a difference between collective and individual space. Collective spaces can become more contentious in terms of the identity that they embody, since people must determine how they will be jointly recognized, which is to say

[2] I rejected the term "collective memory" because "memory" is generally associated with latent recollection. I feel it is important to recognize that we are observing current beliefs and attitudes about the past, as well as beliefs about the present and the future. After struggling to find an appropriate substitute, Nick Salas suggested "collective consciousness."

what kind of place they should become. Such a distinction is difficult to make, however, because supposedly individual spaces are often constitutive of collective space; an individual's home may frame a public place, for example. There are externalities to individual appearance, and this is, in fact, one of the bases for the regulation of visual order. This results in an interesting sort of dialog, as individual spaces encompass both personal and collective identities. Additionally, certain important centers of collective spaces—like churches or governmental buildings—are visually regulated apart from the rest of their surroundings.

As a central element of collective space, collective consciousness plays a powerful role in regulating visual order. Individual memories are not entirely separate from collective consciousness, since much of what we remember is conditioned by the contexts in which we have recalled it and how we have heard it explained by others. Nevertheless, strong, individual recollections will obtain. In most cases these are unlikely to affect the appearance of a place, unless they are shared with others (precisely as collective consciousness) or if the individual is in a position of particular power.

The distinction between individual memories and collective consciousness may not even seem to matter in the context of places that are collectively experienced. It would seem that everyone would have experienced the same appearance. That assumption could become problematic, however, as individuals vary in age, and people who were not part of the space in earlier periods bring memories from elsewhere. These may motivate them to approach the appearance of places differently, as well as introducing additional impressions that interact in the creation of collective consciousness.

The concept of collective consciousness has grown from the theories of Durkheim (2001 [1912]), based on his anthropological work on native religions in Australia. His formulation recognized the role of "lasting things" in providing continuity to sentiments and

the role of symbols in bridging the distance between individuals that is necessary for groups of people to form a collective identity. He described the connection between material form and social space:

> Expressing social unity in a material form makes it more tangible to everyone; for this reason the use of emblematic symbols must have quickly spread once the idea took shape. Moreover, this idea must have sprung spontaneously from the conditions of common life, for the emblem is not only a convenient method of clarifying society's awareness of itself, it actually creates this feeling: it is a basic element of this feeling.
> (p. 175)

We can directly recognize the relationship between social space and physical space within Durkheim's observations of collective consciousness. Additional observations by others fill in our outline of the connections between collective consciousness and visual order.

Hartigan (1999) describes a somewhat more nuanced gentrification process than the one provided by Jager, whereby professional whites in a Detroit neighborhood confer to create an esthetic consensus in the rehabilitation of their 19th century homes**.** He further notes that while the black neighborhood residents in the area may also fix up their homes, they do not share the nostalgia for recreating the period of the homes' construction, and the Maltese, who compare it to the history of their homeland, refuse to recognize the period as historic at all. His observations expose class, racial, and ethnic identities shaping the appearance of the neighborhood, and it is suggestive that blacks do not share in the nostalgia for the heyday of the neighborhood, from which they were excluded.

In his study of local community protest in a black community in Queens, Gregory (1998) states:

> [T]he construction of identity is a political process, implicating a range of social, economic, and cultural practices and locations, it is a deeply historical one as well.… People recollect and rework the past through social practices of memory that bring the meanings of the past to bear on conditions in the present. These practices of memory shape the formation of collective identities. (p. 13)

History, which is imbedded and readable in the built environment, plays a role in the formation of identity and affects the regulation of visual order. Gregory elaborates on the role of collective consciousness:

> [I]n reading the signs of neighborhood—the sites of struggle, sacrifice, achievement, and defeat—Hayes was also constructing a community identity: a *we* who organized to get *this public school*, who fought for traffic lights at *this crossing*, who mortgaged our homes to build *this church*.
> (p. 144)

This raises questions regarding the importance of appearance; residents might identify their space through collective consciousness rather than attaching significance to its appearance. It seems more likely, however, that memory and appearance combine as memories are rooted in the appearance of the neighborhood. Williams (1991) noted that communities' demands for historic preservation often favor visible elements in preference to less visible resources, even though the latter may be more historically significant.

Residents evaluate actions affecting the appearance of space in relation to the way they remember and understand it, and when making changes they will consider both its current and previous appearance. It is also important to keep in mind as Williams observed, that collective consciousness may not be based on historical fact, but rather on a shared understanding, or collective myth, of the community's past. Moreover, he explains: "The preservation laws have become part of the tactical arsenal available to residents as they struggle to retain a modicum of control over the character of their neighborhoods." (p. 94)

Likewise, Suttles (1984) argues:

> [J]ournalism, novel writing, politics, and advertising would be impossible arts if our images of cities had to conform closely to their wavering realities. For this purpose, the heyday of local capitalism serves as the fixed line against which contemporary events can be evaluated, interpreted, treated as a trend line, or discounted as an exception. What is said is not lies but a selective reading of the present in the light of an altogether believable past.
> (p. 248)

As activities that bear on the realities of cities, these efforts help to stabilize conditions by encouraging them to conform to set images. And by encouraging conformity to particular images, the community leaders help promote coherent appearances for urban spaces. Past

periods of affluence in particular, which serve as points of reference, play a role in negotiating these appearances.

Suttles also explains:

> Indeed, probably only a few of these collective representations penetrate popular awareness in the sense that they are stored in rote memory. The more likely case is one where people are able to recognize an apt characterization by finding its resemblance to a few others that are known. (p. 295)

Thus, common understandings of the community and its relationship to history help form identity and influence actions concerning the appearance of space. These actions are weighed against memories of changes in the landscape and previous periods of splendor. This allows history to be manipulated to regulate the appearance of space in order to serve other interests. We now turn our attention to focus on the processes that regulate visual order.

PART TWO: Processes

While existing theory indicates relatively clearly that the appearance of space is tied to social use and identity, the actual processes that bind them together have remained obscure. We can identify economics, legal controls, and the destruction of space as regulatory processes, all of which depend on a political process to set their agenda and to coordinate between them.

Economics

The discourse on economics has largely been polarized into neo-classical and Marxist camps, both of which seem intent on highlighting the differences and deficiencies of the other interpretation rather than incorporating its insightful elements. Thus, Marxists inscribe

overly narrow definitions to neo-classical economic theory, while their counterparts have generally failed to account for socially-valued aspects that are difficult to quantify. The observations of class-based interests and collective actions are not fundamentally inimical to the economic framework used by neo-classical economists, however. Economists use utility curves to represent the benefits individuals derive from different combinations of goods and services. While analyses have generally focused in on monetary measures, leading many to criticize economists for their disregard for social questions, utility curves theoretically include all the benefits received, whether monetary, environmental, emotional, or whatnot. By pushing the inquiry into the formation of utility curves (Becker 1974), it would be possible to study how social processes shape demand without losing the analytical power of economics. A rigorous investigation of utility curves is well beyond the scope of this study. Nevertheless, we will look at examples of how social factors influence demand, implying a role in shaping utility curves. Hopefully this will provide a framework for future investigations.

Jager (1986), taking a Marxist economic approach, describes a tension within gentrification between "form and function." While gentrifiers value the Victorian "form," they find the "functions" of modern conveniences necessary, denying the historical purity of the house.

> The Victorian esthetic had its limits; it legitimates but cannot be allowed to compromise the economic investment. Hence the uneasy recognition in housing advertisements themselves that this esthetic can never be fully realized…
> (p. 85)

This description of "the uncomfortable combination of the economic and social functions of urban conservation—the necessity to produce profit *and* social distinction," (p. 87, italics in the original) is inadequate, as it creates an artificial separation between economics and "social functions." When talking about "producing profit," or "economic investment," Jager seems to mean the value from the physical usage of the house as well as

the return from its resale, but excludes the value derived from the social uses of the home. Thus, he includes exchange value, but excludes any portion of the use value he views as supporting class difference. Also, by interpreting economics and esthetics as separate processes, he fails to recognize that esthetics is an element included within the economic process. This is fundamentally a flaw resulting from the Marxist preoccupation with production and class-consciousness, which inhibits it from inquiring into demand.

This can be better understood by introducing some concepts from neo-classical economics. In this case, it would be more accurate to explain conflicts between esthetics and modern conveniences by saying that other characteristics of the house are valued more highly than the esthetics, or that the marginal increase in convenience is valued more than the marginal increase in social status.[3]

With this approach we see that value is derived from social uses as well as the inherent material use. It is the socially derived portion of the value that interests us in the regulation of visual order. As different appearances gain different values priced along social lines, the economic system will help regulate the appearance of space along both cultural and class lines, as people who value a particular appearance, and are able to pay the price, pay some additional amount for that appearance. This economic mechanism will only produce visual results to the extent that people are willing and able to pay for the appearance.

Architects Duany et al. (2000) make practical observations about the interaction of economics, legislative controls, and esthetics. Among the practices they employ in their New Urban developments are restrictive codes, which place extra requirements in addition to the local zoning. Explaining their experience at Seaside, they write:

[3] Additionally, when reading a draft of the paper, my classmate Cuz Potter wondered if the houses may in fact rely on a Postmodernist esthetic that plays on the different esthetic systems between the inside and outside of the house.

> Colleagues who complain to us about Seaside usually have two criticisms. The first is the restrictiveness of the architectural code, and the second is the significant number of overdecorated "gingerbread" cottages there. They are usually surprised to learn that the gingerbread houses at Seaside demonstrate not the requirements of the (largely style-neutral) code but the code's inability to overcome the traditional tastes of the American housing consumer. The only way to wipe out the hated traditional architecture would have been to tighten the hated code.
> (p. 211)

According to Duany et al., the traditional homes in Seaside are a manifestation of the dominant esthetic norm. There are several interesting things to note here concerning both economics and legislative controls in the form of development codes. The visual order is produced through the "traditional tastes of the American housing consumer," which work through an economic process. By attributing the result to consumer tastes, they indicate that architects and developers are bound in their efforts to determine the visual character by what buyers are seeking and willing to accept. By referring to "the American housing consumer," Duany identifies those seeking to purchase a home as a coherent group with a collective esthetic preference. At least some architects and developers, then, generate their designs to conform to the perceived preferences of their target consumer group.

However, developers and architects also market the spaces they produce, helping to change preferences for different types of spaces. While marketing provides information that enables buyers to find products they seek, it also creates images that influence social values for spaces. When Duany writes a book like *Suburban Nation*, or makes a presentation ("preaches to the masses" as my friend Dave Kantor described him after seeing him in Sarasota, Florida) he tries to replace support for subdivisions with enthusiasm for New Urbanist developments. Likewise, Lefebvre (1975) theorized:

> We may be sure that representations of space have a practical impact, that they intervene in and modify spatial *textures* which are informed by effective knowledge and ideology. Representations of space must therefore have a substantial role and a specific influence in the production of space. Their intervention occurs by way of construction—in other words, by way of architecture…
> (p. 42, italics in the original)

While social preferences direct the appearance of space through consumer decisions, architects and developers are able to exert some control over appearances by increasing

demand with representations of space in the form of advertisements and publications that change social preferences.

When discussing identity, we noted that the uneven distribution of consumer goods through the urban landscape played a role in identity formation. This presents us with the importance of another economic mechanism: economies of agglomeration. By grouping similar uses together, economies of agglomeration both provides a form for existing social distinctions, and can help to define additional ones as new consumption patterns are spatially produced.

Economic constraints, such as the price discounts of purchasing from the same supplier, can introduce visual distinctions between different administrative areas. Government funding can also provide a powerful dynamic that works to regulate visual order. As we previously discussed, administrative bodies will tend to develop their own identities and their standard operating procedures will impose aspects of standardization. Providing funding adds an additional component, as projects are required to involve the cooperation of different groups and are subject to public review, drawing them inline with any strong social norms for appearance.

Social dynamics operate on and through economics, but it is important to keep in mind, as Park explained with the city's physical form, that while social dynamics shape economics, economics is imposing constraints on social actions. Thus we can look at how social values and representations of appearance condition the economic process, but we need to be careful to recognize the limits that economic exchange places on considerations of appearance and, perhaps, how appearances with economic rationales might influence esthetic tastes. Making a profit can outweigh appearance; to the degree that visual nonconformance does not undermine profit, appearance will not be regulated by economics (although the other

mechanisms may still hold sway). When efficiency comes to serve as an esthetic in its own right, however, visual order is recovered.

Legal Controls

Jager (1986) offers a Marxist explanation of the use of legislative controls by gentrifiers, claiming that they are tools used by the gentry to regulate visual order.

> Traditional middle-class mechanisms of status defense, such as the procuring of titles, National Trust classifications and historic zoning, have been accompanied by the securing of local-government posts and offices by the new gentry. The estheticization of the environment, "saving the inner areas," has been their historical mission.
> (p. 90-91)

We can interpret "estheticization" as the imposition of a set of regulated esthetic standards, resulting in visual order if successful. Any group effort for esthetic improvement will require a commonly recognized set of visual criteria and some means for enforcing them. Jager claims that the middle class does this through historic zoning and affiliated building protections, achieved through political means.

Revell's (1992) example of the Fifth Avenue merchants use of zoning to economically exclude garment factories (and their workers) is another, albeit indirect, means of using legislation to regulate visual order.

Much of Willis's (1995) explanation of the form of skyscrapers involves zoning controls. Although she gives economics credit for determining critical aspects like height, she shows that the form is essentially constrained by the zoning envelope.

New Urbanist critics (Duany et al. 2000, Kunstler 1996) claim that zoning does determine the form of communities, but they argue that it prevents the creation of areas that have the visual characteristics that people want and is thus opposed to social norms concerning the appearance of space. Given that legislation is socially produced, this seemingly creates a paradox; if social norms claimed certain types of appearances, they would amend the zoning codes to that end. Assuming that the zoning codes *do* oppose social

norms of appearance, this would have to result from a conflict with other social interests in the built environment, political domination removed from popular opinion, or an unmovable municipal bureaucracy. Serious safety concerns, for example, could potentially lead to the creation of spaces that are unattractive. The regard for property rights also erects barriers, as the judiciary prevents incursions that reach too far into the regulation of private property. If narrow interest groups or overly difficult regulations prevent zoning changes, it may also be possible that zoning does not represent the social preferences of either the majority or any particular group.

The assertion on the part of the New Urbanists that (neo)traditional neighborhoods conform more closely to social preferences is not correct, at least not entirely. The lush green lawns of the suburbs embody a powerful esthetic that cannot be simply dismissed. There is no single "social preference." While some people would prefer the esthetics of a New Urbanist neighborhood, others would favor a broad front yard with pink lawn flamingos.[4]

In practice, New Urbanists rely on legal controls to achieve and protect visual order. While the codes may be "largely style-neutral," as Duany asserts, their essential function is to create and enforce visual order by prohibiting designs that might threaten, undermine, or challenge the visual character of the neighborhood. I have been asked if their real function isn't protecting property values. That is quite likely the case, but as we see in the discussion of economics, property values can only be threatened if an undermined visual order is less valued by potential buyers.

Fancaviglia (1996) has noted a case that applies more directly to the appearance of commercial space. Attempts to preserve the Main Street in many American towns have resulted in sign ordinances:

[4] For an interesting article about lawn flamingos, see Lasansky (1997).

> the goal being a return to the more "tasteful" or less "obtrusive" signage of the days when, paradoxically, there were no sign ordinances whatsoever and the streetscape was, in reality, often marked by rather garish signs that vied for people's attention.
> (p. 59)

Here we note an intersection between collective consciousness (which in this case is not founded on historical fact) serving as support for legal controls over the appearance of space.

The aspects of zoning, collective consciousness, and economics we have been discussing are all intrinsically tied. While there may be efforts to alter zoning for visual purposes, zoning is also subject to claims by economic interests. I argue that these are effectively reconciled in most cases through attempts to make economic interests coincide with visual preferences. Ultimately, decisions are made through a political process that gives weight to the different processes. Perhaps no process in the regulation of visual order is more politically contentious than the destruction of space.

The Destruction of Space

In San Francisco, Castells (1983) noted the emergence of a gay neighborhood in San Francisco. Political organization to oppose a highway project that would destroy the area combined with a conscientious stylistic renovation of the Victorian homes. While the consolidated image achieved through the renovation of the Victorian homes is yet another example of regulating visual order, the unsuccessful attempt at demolition raises the question of the destruction of space. The destruction of space seems strangely absent in most of the literature on spatial theory. Lefebvre discusses the creation of *new* spaces, but does little to address the destruction of the spaces that preceded them. He presents the example of the street grids of Latin and North America as tools for the destruction of the previous space:

> The main point to be noted… is the production of a social space by political power… A social space of this kind is generated out of a rationalized and theorized form serving as an instrument for the violation of an existing space.
> …
> [I]n both these cases the pre-existing space was destroyed from top to bottom; in both the aim was homogeneity; and in both that aim was achieved.

(p. 151-152)

Lefebvre further elaborates on this while discussing what he calls the "domination" and the "appropriation" of space:

> In order to dominate space, technology introduces a new form such as a meshwork or chequerwork.[5] A motorway brutalizes the countryside and the land, slicing through space like a great knife. Dominated space is usually closed, sterilized, emptied out. The concept attains its full meaning only when it is contrasted with the opposite and inseparable concept of *appropriation.* (p. 165, italics in the original)

His contrast between domination and appropriation can be illustrated by the differences between the militarized spaces described by Davis and the socially controlled spaces of Whyte. One set of spaces is controlled through the means of physically imposed divisions, while the other is regulated through social activities. Thus for Lefebvre, the physical divisions imposed to control space require the destruction of space. Overlooked, however, is the role of visual cues in both "dominated" and "appropriated" spaces. If "dominated" spaces are physically divided, they are visually cleaved as well, while "appropriated" spaces demonstrate their social uses through the regulation of their appearance.

It is perhaps important to discuss here Marx's "annihilation of space through time," given the similarity of the terms. Marx describes the use of technological innovations to increase the speed of transportation of goods and delivery of services. As transportation time becomes divorced from physical distance, and takes on primary importance, space is "annihilated" according to Marx. This leads to conclusions that as place loses a unique hold on production, generic patterns of (capitalist) consumption and culture emerge, leading to generic cities. In this regard, the boundaries of space dissolve.

Harvey (1990) attempts to nuance the "annihilation of space through time" by introducing a distinction between space and place. This allows him to discern both a

[5] It is perhaps interesting that both Park and Lefebvre are fascinated by the interaction between regular street patterns and social interactions.

specialization within places and a homogenization between them. His distinction, however, leaves place as some independently existing form of locality, rather than recognizing it as a form of socially-constructed space.

This allows him to mirror other observations of the globalization of capital (Sassen 1996). While capital flows may bring about many aspects of standardization, they also create areas of specialization. The "division of labor," occurs within space, which itself becomes divided and specialized by capital. Harvey (1989) in a previous book notes that

> Capitalism, after all, "establishes its residence on the land itself and the seemingly solid presuppositions given by nature [appear] in landed property as merely posited by industry" (*Gundrisse*, 740). The value embodied in such use values cannot be moved without being destroyed. Capital thus must represent itself in the form of a physical landscape created in its own image, as use values created through human labor and embedded in the land to facilitate the further accumulation of capital.
> (p. 43, brackets in the original)

Moreover, Debord claims: "This society which eliminates geographical distance reproduces distance internally as spectacular separation." (quoted in Knox 1993, p. 18) Thus, while capitalism may reduce the barriers to movement through space, visual means serve to define separate spaces.

Nevertheless, trying to fit this into Marx's "annihilation of space through time" is too great a stretch. It is precisely because social space has extended, rather than being annihilated, that these observations about places have emerged. If anything, as we note in the quote from Debord, it is distance, rather than space, that is annihilated. The concept of "creative destruction," as elaborated by Harvey, is much more useful. With broader scope and minor modifications on Harvey's use, primarily concerning the points I have discussed about the distinction between 'space' and 'place,' I will talk about it as the "destruction of space."

Continuing to build on the spatial aspects of Marx's work, Harvey begins a conceptualization of the destruction of space with "creative destruction," capitalism's need to destroy fixed capital when it begins to constrain the movement of capital. He focuses his

attention on the production of additional capitalist space to deal with the problems of uneven accumulation, rather than fully addressing the process of the destruction of space necessary for this reorganization. He looks at how the bourgeoisie capitalizes on the destruction of space, but the actual process of destruction—the manner of targeting particular spaces and the arguments that serve to motivate their demise—is not really described.

Some broad foundation does emerge from a close reading of Harvey's description of the destruction of much of Paris during the Second Empire (1989). Harvey implies that Haussman justified demolitions as ridding the city of "slums," and explains that "Haussman tried… to sell a new and more modern conception of community in which the power of money was celebrated as spectacle and display..." (p. 163) Portraying an area as a "slum" is to impose on it a profoundly negative identity that is associated with particular visual qualities. Offering "spectacle and display," on the other hand, explicitly refers to the creation of visually ordered spaces. Thus, from Harvey's account it appears that Haussman relied on social marginalization using visual means and the promise of visual order to destroy space.

From the more recent experience of slum clearance sponsored by the federal government in the United States, Weiss (1980) shows that regulating visual order factored into the motivation to destroy space through urban renewal. He explains:

> [M]ost housing reformers were middle class people who placed a high value on the elimination of slums as an end in itself. Their concern with tearing down unsightly buildings often took precedence over their concern for the welfare of the people who lived in them."
> (p. 71)

While he does not draw this out, regulating visual order is evident in "tearing down unsightly buildings," while the destruction of space occurs both in the demolition of the structures (physical space) and in the detriment to the "welfare of the people who lived in them" (social space).

A distinction should also be made between the destruction and the fragmentation of space. When space is fragmented, its constituent parts remain in that place. The connections that hold the space together are broken, resulting in a series of different spaces. Such a breakdown of connections necessitates a change in collective consciousness, as the spaces come to be recognized as separate. The destruction of space, however, involves the obliteration of the elements that formed that space. In these terms we can distinguish between aspects like neighborhood decline through disinvestment or a rise in crime on one hand, and the practice of slum clearance or rapid ethnic change or gentrification on the other. The former is an example of the fragmentation of space, where households that once formed a cohesive community (social space) have lost their ties (although in some cases the adversity of living in poverty might foster strong social ties), while the latter involves the loss of the social elements of the space. In the case of slum clearance, the physical elements of the space are destroyed as well. While fragmentation may occur without resulting in the destruction of space, it is often is a precursor. The example of ethnic change illustrates this, as there is always a degree of fragmentation in such neighborhood transformations; ethnic groups redefine neighborhoods as the former social space is breaking down.

PART THREE: Times Square

Times Square is in some ways a difficult case to illustrate the theoretical argument that I have outlined. In addition to the two thoroughfares that make it the "Crossroads of the World," Times Square is intersected by myriad social spaces. The various groups that make use of it, its role in representing New York and America, and the multiplicity of jurisdictions all complicate the picture. Its tourism functions also complicate things, as many of its users are not directly represented in political determinations about Times Square. Largely because of its representational value, however, Times Square has commanded a great deal of

attention, and has been well documented. The conflicts over its appearance can therefore be explored through the literature in the absence of an opportunity to conduct an extended ethnographic study.

The research for this paper consists of a review of the academic literature and the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the 42nd Street Redevelopment Project, as well as a content analysis of newspaper articles. Field notes of the physical space and its use have served to help evaluate the sources and to make additional observations.

Newspaper articles were researched primarily using Lexis-Nexis, which keeps full articles from major newspapers. Full articles from the *New York Times* begin June 1, 1980, with abstracts back to 1969. Articles from Newsday begin from March 1, 1995. Online articles searched through the *Village Voice* website go back to about 1997. The analysis also included newspapers from outside New York stored in Lexis-Nexis.

Newspaper articles were searched by combinations of the keywords "Times Square," "planners," "planning," and "aesthetics." After reviewing the CUNY Graduate Center study, I also added the keyword "ghetto." Scholarly sources were researched by suggestion from academics, references in other academic work, and keyword searches in academic databases and on the internet. Planning documentation was limited to the text and comments on the 1984 Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) and the annual reports of the Times Square Business Improvement District.

A great deal of the public record on Times Square is found in the pages of the *New York Times*. While newspapers can never be considered objective sources, and in part because they are not, they play an important role in creating collective consciousness. To the extent that we are interested in identifying collective consciousness, the accuracy of the reports is not really at issue. When we move to identifying how social groups attempt to use

collective consciousness to regulate visual order, however, it becomes important to understand how they represent the appearance of space. As a landholder in Times Square, and the source of the area's name, the *New York Times* has been suspected of taking a partisan role in supporting redevelopment. So while we will begin by relating the recurring statements that illustrate collective consciousness, we will come back to take a closer look at how these work to regulate appearance.

Figure 3: Although the area is defined in varying ways, Times Square is a socially defined and recognizable place.

To begin an investigation into the recent transformation of Times Square, it is necessary to look at its context. Urban spaces rarely have clear boundaries that are universally agreed upon, but they continue to be socially recognizable. "Times Square" generally refers to the entire area characterized by illuminated signs beginning in the streets in the low 40s and running up into the 50s, between Broadway and 8th Avenue. Some uses

confine it more narrowly to the "bowtie," and officially only the southern triangle of the intersection bears the name "Times Square" (the northern triangle is "Duffy Square"). Forty-Second Street is identifiable, and it will be important to this study to look specifically at 42nd Street at times. Nevertheless, in general usage and in terms of the overall picture of the social space, 42nd Street will be regarded as a specific portion of Times Square. The "Theater District" constitutes a largely overlapping, although slightly different, space that is defined around the "legitimate" theaters and the restaurants associated with their patrons. This paper makes use of the broad definition of Times Square as the space roughly defined by the large, illuminated signage, which is roughly the area covered by the Times Square Business Improvement District (BID).

First, here is a brief description of its redevelopment. Times Square was redeveloped through joint City-State planning efforts. The first suggestion for redeveloping 42nd Street through the City's use of eminent domain was proposed by the Broadway Association, which hoped to capitalize on preparations for the 1964-5 World's Fair. Despite drawing some attention, this proposal never got off the ground. The Ford Foundation supported a sociological study in 1978 that culminated in the City at 42nd Street plan. This proposal ended when it failed to gain acceptance by the City under Mayor Koch, who changed it for a similar plan put together by the state's development branch, then called the Urban Development Corporation, now Empire State Development Corporation, with support from the City. The plan fought through various court challenges, only to find itself further delayed by a stagnant real estate market. Finally in the mid 1990s, as the real estate market recovered large media corporations, most notably Disney, moved into the area, transforming its image. In 1992 the City and State planners were joined by the BID, which implemented a project of security, litter removal, and sign restoration, in addition to advocating various legal controls for the area.

Collective Consciousness

> If you study the history of Times Square, it's amazing to see how pervasive nostalgia is as an organizing force for visions of the place.
> — Marshall Berman[6]

A common narrative, both expressing and creating collective consciousness, explained the situation in Times Square from the late 1960s through the early 1990s, and was repeated endlessly in newspaper articles and other accounts. The opening description from an article from *Newsday* ("Halo for Times Square," October 16, 1989) is a good example:

> An evening stroll down 42nd Street between Seventh and Eighth avenues is like a surrealistic journey to the home office of sleaze. Fluorescent light from store windows mixes with illumination from neon signs to bathe the sidewalks in a ghostly glow. Salesmen huddle in the street's eerie shadows hissing to passersby: "Marijuana! Marijuana!" Entranceways to some shops smell of urine. Cameras, junk food and casual clothes are available to the 42nd Street shopper, as are an astonishing variety of porno books, X-rated videotapes and, it is said, not-so-casual sex.
>
> But "the Deuce" (as the police call it) is known for more than tawdriness; it may well be the most crime-infested place in the city.

Combined with descriptions of other aspects, there is an insistent emphasis on the visual characteristics of a degenerate 42nd Street, which extended to the rest of Times Square. Generally of greater concern than the actual appearance of Times Square, however, was the perception of crime. Although these might seem to be quite distinct aspects, they are intrinsically bound. As we can see in the example above, the visual character is intimately tied in representation to the negative characteristics of Times Square. It is worth noting that 42nd Street became the representative space within Times Square, particularly when describing the bad conditions in the area.

Throughout the redevelopment process, competing groups attempted to influence and leverage the collective consciousness of Times Square. In these attempts, the visual character of the area provided justification for the various proposals. Sagalyn (2001)

[6] Berman 1997, p. 78.

provides an explanation of the way the groups she identifies leveraged and attempted to regulate the visual order of Times Square:

> Throughout the twenty-year development period, symbolism was used by all of the drama's players to shape the debate and promote alternative visions of what the new 42nd Street should be. For the project's promoters, it served as a rationale for advancing a large-scale development… designed to return the street to its former legendary glory. Promising that the midblock historic theaters would be preserved, city officials used symbolism as political leverage to build a coalition of support among preservationists, culturally minded civic groups, and performing artists. Developers too, fearing a return to the days of porn, evoked symbolic as well as real images of the past as an argument against allowing movies on the street. The argument against demolition of the architecturally defaced former Times Tower rested solely on symbolism: It was revered not as architecture, but as an irreplaceable icon of the place, of New York. Civic groups in pushing forth their agenda for strong urban-design controls in Times Square vociferously argued in terms calculated to evoke symbolic meaning: Don't let corporate culture dull and dim the Great White Way. And finally, the project's planners evoked the razzle-dazzle visual images of the Great White Way to promote *42nd Street Now!*
> (p. 26)

It was not simply a matter of manipulation, however, as the actors were influenced by collective consciousness too. William Stern (1999) was head of the state's Urban Development Corporation (now Empire State Development Corporation), which had jurisdiction over the redevelopment of 42nd Street. He noted, "All of us involved in the redevelopment project were New Yorkers, born and bred. We remembered a better Times Square."

Sagalyn draws distinctions between symbolism and visual images that I do not make. Whether the images are simply reproduced or conflated with ideology, they refer to, and attempt to regulate, various visual characteristics in the area. Sagalyn may perhaps be too rigid in her distinction between architecture and icon, if we look at it in terms of urban design, since the tower is a central point of the electric signage that defines the area. Nevertheless, the iconic quality that she notes is important; the New Year's Eve celebration, for example, which is centered on the ball that drops on top of the building, is central to the collective consciousness of Times Square (and the United States). The Times Tower, thus, is higher in the hierarchy of collective space than other structures in Times Square, which gives it a privileged position in the regulation of visual order.

The discussions of Times Square bring out additional comparisons that organize collective consciousness that would not have been apparent to Suttles during the 1980s, when cities seemed to be at their worst. Not only are spaces measured against their past heydays, they are also compared to their worst periods of infamy. As Times Square is being redeveloped, discussion has placed possible futures in a framework structured by both the golden age of Broadway and the era of neon sex. Thus, Michael Musto writing in the *Village Voice* (Dec. 3, 2001) can jokingly say about the Ferris wheel in the new Toys 'R' Us store: "[I]f Times Square plunges economically, the ride will become a gigantic porno wheel!"

Boyer (2001 [1996]) claims that following World War II, most people no longer directly experienced Times Square, and it increasingly became an abstraction defined by representations. This observation of the role of representations is apt, given the constant references to films.

Boyer takes the argument farther, however, claiming:

> Times Square, by now, is known only through its representations, its sign systems, its iconic cinematic presence; and pleasure is derived from experiencing the illusion of the Great White Way, by marveling at its Lutses, by planning its unplannedness, by foregrounding the apparatus that produces these manipulated representations.
> (p. 48)

This part of her explanation (what she dubs the second "erasure" of Times Square) is lacking because of its confusion with the term "representation" and its claims about past entertainment in Times Square. Boyer apparently equates the representations of Times Square with its signage, although a representation of Times Square is *not* the same thing as representations within Times Square. Hers would be an unusual history indeed if she were to suggest that the representations within Times Square somehow erased the place, rather than creating it! Moreover, people have always gone to Times Square to experience its bright lights. And although the spectacular signs in Times Square were not previously actively planned, they were planned nevertheless by the benign allowances of the zoning code, which

prohibited them elsewhere, helping to create city districts with different identities and structuring an outdoor-advertising market in Times Square that supported spectacular signs.

In more focused terms, her complaint seems to be that Times Square is losing authenticity by becoming a simulacrum that replaces the original that inspired it. The design of the space itself is recreated as a representation of its former self, wiping out the "real" place in the process. While the aspect of destroying the old Times Square to create the new is essentially correct, it seems difficult to characterize the outdoor portion of the new Times Square as a simulacrum. Several of the interiors: the video arcade on 42nd with recreated street signs and old subway station motifs, another subway station motif in the ground floor of the ABC studio, and the stylized art-deco skyline design of the concession kiosk and old Broadway posters in the Loews E-Walk could fuel such a discussion, but it cannot be adequately applied to the exterior appearance of Times Square with its new modern buildings, even if they incorporate spectacular signage.

Returning to the issue of representations of Times Square, the film "Midnight Cowboy" played a particularly strong role in structuring collective consciousness, and has served as a common reference point in much of the discussion of Times Square. Produced in 1968, "Midnight Cowboy" depicts male prostitution in Times Square, showing scenes of (off-camera) homosexual sex in a theater, and long sequences of the "cowboy"/hustler protagonist walking down the crowded sidewalks under the illuminated signs of Times Square through the day and night.

Martin Scorsese's "Taxi Driver" from 1976, although not as frequently referenced as "Midnight Cowboy," likewise made an impression on the collective consciousness of Times Square, and marginal city districts in general. The film has become such a symbol of the grim, gritty inner city, that it has been integrated into an urban esthetic. (Lloyd 2000)[7]

[7] Observing the creation of an artists' community in Chicago's Wicker Park neighborhood, Lloyd noted:

These representations did more than influence the general impressions that people had of the area, they motivated action. We can speculate on how they altered the choices of individuals to visit the area (thereby regulating its social space); decision-makers certainly did. William Stern (1999), who previously headed the state's Urban Development Corporation (now the Empire State Development Corporation), which was the parent corporation for the 42nd Street Development Plan stated:

> The mayor recently told me about how, during the 1970s, he watched Martin Scorsese's film *Taxi Driver*, which depicted Times Square as a hellish nightmare, and wondered how adversely it might affect tourism.

This raises the question of the balance between individual actions and collective consciousness. After all, Fainstein (2001) stated:

> As I have studied the large projects that have changed the faces of London and New York, I have been struck by the extent to which they have been driven by individual male egos that find self-expression in building tall buildings and imprinting their personae on the landscape.
> (p. 4)

According to most accounts, it was Koch's rejection of the identity that the City at 42nd Street represented, and his own ambitions for rebuilding 42nd Street as a public project, that ended that proposal. Collective consciousness, as perceived by Koch, was central to rejecting the project and proceeding with an alternative. Moreover, there appears to have been a general acceptance of Koch's characterization of the appropriate identity of New York and 42nd Street.

We also note the central role of Robert A. M. Stern in Times Square. Stern, who was on the board of Disney, brought the CEO Michael Eisner to see the New Amsterdam theater on 42nd Street. Stern was also the architect for the "42nd Street Now!" plan, and by combining these roles he was able to bring about implementation of his plan.

> It was once a home to light industry but now houses artists' lofts and hipster bars. In a second floor window of the Flat Iron is an oversized poster, a still from the now classic 1976 film *Taxi Driver*. In the still, Robert De Niro's character Travis Bickle, the taxi driver, has completed his descent into madness.

Given his traditional designs, series of books on the history of architecture in New York, and his tenure in historic preservation, it would be hard to argue that his efforts are not closely tied to collective consciousness. Perhaps more so than with Koch, who was directly responsible to public opinion, it might be possible to ask whether Stern was influenced by it, or simply tried to use it to influence others. This is to some extent a false question, as I suggested with Koch. Unless people were willing to accept anything Stern told them, his designs and acceptance of the designs were constrained by collective consciousness, even if he was able to play some role in shaping it. Moreover, even academics are subject to collective consciousness, as they inevitably accept some assumptions and are often dependent on the same limited set of primary sources.

The *Times* They Are A-changin' Times Square

> Come writers and critics
> Who prophesize with your pen…
> — Bob Dylan

In addition to films and the characterizations of decision-makers, collective consciousness of Times Square has been largely influenced by newspaper accounts, and the *New York Times* was at the fore. Sorkin and Reichl accuse the *Times* of advancing its real estate interests through newspaper articles, which were perceived to be objective sources of information, and through their editorials. Criticism of the *Times* as an interested party in urban development politics is not new; in 1976 Molotch charged it with supporting urban growth to enhance its circulation.

Sorkin and Reichl split over the independence of the architectural critics working for the Times. Sorkin (1991 [1985]) wrote an article in the *Village Voice,* "Why Paul Goldberger Is So Bad," accusing the *Times* critic of bending to the development interests of

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Sporting a Mohawk, Bickle grins maniacally, pointing two guns out onto the street. Over the still is a sign, reading "Welcome to Wicker Park."

the newspaper instead of providing an honest architectural assessment of Johnson's design. Reichl, on the other hand, sees the architectural critics as somehow immune to the pressures that he sees drawing the reporters into a common narrative that supported redevelopment.

The dominated-by-real-estate-interests approach does not sit particularly well with me. While it may be possible to cow the reporters into supporting redevelopment, it seems more likely that as people who work in the area, they would have perceived potential gains of their own from redevelopment. Redefining Times Square around a middle-class, professional identity would make the area conform more to their own identities, and would likely make it a more comfortable place for them. Moreover, newspapers outside the area that stood nothing to gain in real estate or circulation were similar in terms of their negative portrayal of 42nd Street.

Part of what was unique about the *Times*, however, was its level of coverage. Articles about this redevelopment project seem to have been given much more attention than the *Times* typically gives to other projects in the city. More importantly, the editorial page was constant in its support for redeveloping Times Square. While the journalistic reporting can be considered as generally representative of the current collective consciousness, the editorial board proactively tried to motivate visual order in support of the project, and when visual order turned against the towers in collective consciousness, they used economic arguments and fragmentation. The project would provide jobs and revitalize the west side. The towers were necessary to rehabilitate the theaters; some visual deficiency in the towers may be necessary if visual order was to be achieved along 42nd Street.

The editorial page helped provide a general impetus for redeveloping Times Square, but could not counteract the opposition that had formed in the collective consciousness against the proposed towers. At the same time, the architectural critics writing in the *Times*

rejected the towers, and supported efforts by elite civic groups to define a visual order for Times Square.

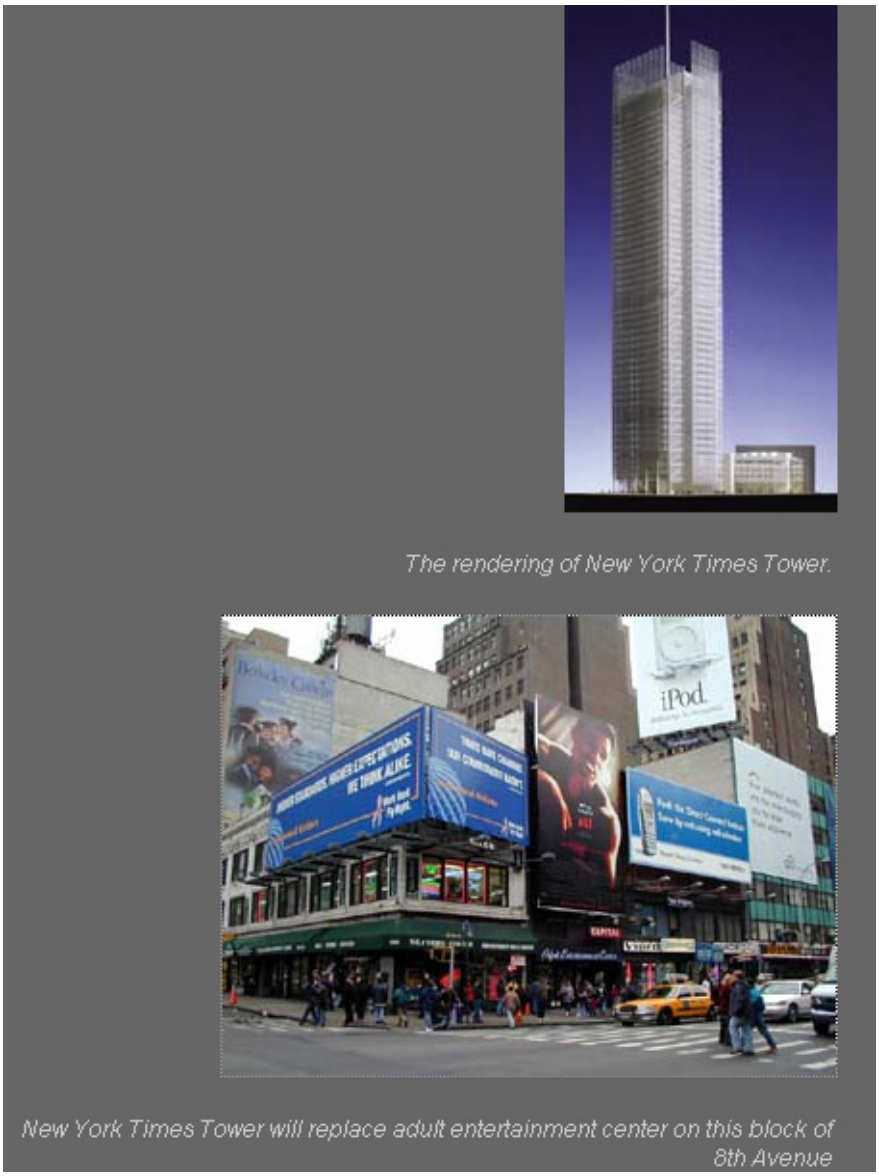

Figure 4: In Wired New York, the new Times Tower is depicted as a sparkling building by a prominent architect that will replace unattractive buildings with socially marginal uses.

(www.wirednewyork.com)

The self-interest of the *Times* is beyond question in the next major demolition of existing structures, expulsion of healthy small businesses, and alteration in appearance. This will make room on 8th Avenue for the new Times Tower designed by Renzo Piano. We will focus on regulating activities next, but we will return to 8th Avenue again later.

Regulating Activities

Collective consciousness attributes a great deal of the change in Times Square to policing, specifically the aggressive policing tactics of the Giuliani administration. While it would be possible to further nuance our approach by developing a distinction between legislation and enforcement, for the present purpose it will be sufficient to regard them as different aspects of an integrated process of legal regulation. Given the area's reputation for crime, policing was an important point of interest before plans for the area took shape.

As planning for the area was taking off, policing was stepped up in 1978. Delano (1984) worked as a transit police officer for the Port Authority during this period to write his ethnographic study of the use of the bus terminal. He explains:

> The bus terminal assists in bringing a transient (i.e., mobile) population to the midst of a distinct street-corner community, resulting in the existence of several subsystems. Further, some of the diversified actors in the terminal population may also use the facility in ways for which it was not intended. […] "negative" user[s] (who many times [are members] of the street-corner subcommunity) enter in order to sleep, commit a crime, or simply hang out. These latter individuals are seen as deviant by other segments of the population, and the police are faced with the task of controlling this diversity, providing a semblance of order to it.
> (p. 273-274)

Delano makes use of the notion of "street corner" community developed by William F. Whyte in determining distinctions between groups in Times Square; this distinction is explicitly drawn through public, visually identified behavior. More importantly, Delano describes the role of the police as regulating the "semblance of order," which indicates that legally sanctioned force was used to try to regulate visual order. This is not to say that the police never violate individuals' rights in regulating visual order; the evening news and civil rights cases indicate that they do at times. Some causes of such transgressions become

apparent with Delano's explanation of the police's need to weigh different goals within the dynamics of a changing present. We might also note that legal regulations often conflict with one another, and the legislation and policies that the police rely on sometimes infringe on civil liberties. While police action sometimes transgresses the law and socially endorsed policy, we will limit our discussion to the enforcement of officially sanctioned actions.

Within Delano's explanation, we note that not only are the police called upon to regulate the appearance of the area, the police use visual means to do so: "[T]he officer's mere presence in uniform [can] act as a control mechanism, since a potential criminal may wait until he leaves before committing an act, or may not commit it at all." (p. 282)

The use of policing alone, however, while regulating to some extent the visible activities, did not significantly alter the visual order of Times Square. Some of the targeted visual characteristics, like street peddling, intersected with other concerns for the area, like crowding on the sidewalks, as well as competition with business owners and the sale of stolen goods (although Whyte (1988) found that most of these goods are not stolen, providing an example of the dangers of accepting the "Broken Windows" indictment of marginal activities). The police found their ability to regulate visual order, and to address other concerns, impeded by both the limits of legal controls and practical limits on available force. Ultimately, the use of police power was constrained by a defined use of the space that resisted the uses the police would impose. In visual terms, the presence of the police and attempts to regulate of some activities was insufficient to overcome the overarching appearance of the area.

The inadequacy of the police to address street activities was one of the central arguments in the DEIS in support of redevelopment. The authors of the DEIS's saw a connection between the physical conditions along 42nd Street, which they called a

"backdrop," and the activities. They viewed the activities on 42nd Street precisely as a negative visual characteristic:

> To some, the visual image of 42nd Street relates more to the groups that throng its sidewalks than to its structures… The dominant uses on the street attract a visible group of people who congregate on the sidewalks—sellers and buyers of illegal drugs and other substances, bag ladies, winos, hustlers of all types and teenagers who hang around to catch the action. Completing the scene are shoppers, patrons of the moviehouses and tourists.
> (p. 2-21)

In addition to explicitly describing what they considered its negative appearance, the authors located the group identities that were problematic. Moreover, by naming primarily the problematic groups, they supported their claim that the street had become dominated by the "illegitimate" users.

Reichl argues that the DEIS failed to assert the source of legitimacy of certain users and the exclusion of others. This was particularly acute in the discussion of "loitering," where the DEIS notes that the police were constrained from removing socially objectionable individuals and groups because of the constitutional protection of the freedom of assembly. The DEIS did, however, provide a justification based on visual order for targeting loitering. The argument essentially said that because the activity of loitering violated mainstream expectations for visible activities, it defined the space in a way that was hostile to mainstream identities.

Figure 5: Those whose appearance conforms to identities as tourists are not considered "loiterers," while other groups are subject to regulation by the police.

There is a further question concerning how “loitering” is defined. In my observations of Times Square, this is a determination made as much on identity, as visually constituted, as it is made on activity. Well-dressed people, who might be theater patrons or tourists with time to kill, or office workers on break are not considered “loiterers,” while less well-dressed people, and minorities in particular, who are not visibly active in consumption or production are targeted by the police for loitering. In his critique of the DEIS, Gans noted a class disparity in the identification of loiterers, and asked that the planners find a better way of conceptualizing the problem. They returned with the Final EIS, which offered a definition for “loiterer,” but did not alter its conceptualization or usage. Before we continue with legislation by looking at zoning controls, we will continue this investigation into the role of identity in Times Square.

The Identities of Times Square

Kornblum directed an influential study at CUNY titled *West 42nd Street Study: "The Bright Light Zone."* (1978) Not only does this explicitly identify the area through its visual character, it implicitly attributes a social identity to the space. The concept of a "bright light" district emerged from the social ecology tradition, and it encompasses both the aspects of flashy entertainment and habitation by the socially marginal, by groups inscribed with negative identities. The application of this concept to 42nd Street begins to demonstrate the interconnection between visual order and identity.

The CUNY study identified 42nd Street as a male space:

> The West 42nd Street Bright Light District has become largely a man's world of sex shops, action movies, and retail stores which cater primarily to male tastes (sporting goods, men's shoes, electronics, cigars, etc.). In addition to the sexist aspects of 42nd Street imagery, it is not surprising that unescorted women are so under-represented in these blocks at most times of the day and the evening. (p. 24)

The study claims the "sexist" imagery played a role in deterring women from using this space, noting that the (male) social space was regulated in part through its appearance. The masculine nature of the space was maintained largely by the various consumer goods available and visible on the street.

Starr (1998) made a similar observation that stretches further back in history, identifying the southern end of the bowtie, the portion connected to 42nd Street, as historically a male space:

> Glass was seen as gleamingly modern by forward-looking 1930s designers and architects, and the Schenley Tower was touted as the building of the future. A great shaft bursting with light and power, it was the ultimate expression of masculinity. The tower was perfectly located, Schenley's [sic] said, citing studies purporting to show that more men than women passed through the intersection. (p. 113)

This observation is part of a broader explanation that she offers about how brands of whiskey played a role in the identity of the businessman in his smoky dealings.

Sorkin (1991 [1985]) claims that the redevelopment was intended to remove those whose identities conflicted with the white, middle-class, and largely suburban, definition of visual order.

> As you will recall, there's a plan for the area—strongly backed by the *Times*—to impose a Bernie Goetz-style urban renewal scheme intended, by means of massive construction, to blow away those persons whose troubling body-language has come to typify the Times Square experience for many. (p. 102)

The acceptance of the "Broken Windows" interpretation is called into question, and he suggests (through the invocation of Bernhard Goetz, a white man who shot four black youths in the subway who demanded money) that the redevelopment was racially biased.

Sorkin's suspicion of racial discrimination draws from the identification of Times Square with marginal groups, including racial minorities. Thus for many, 42nd Street was a "ghetto" street. The "ghetto" must be understood not only as an area of physical disrepair, but also as an area set aside for marginalized social groups; it encompasses both negative visual images and racial exclusions. The aspect of racial identity was also noted in the CUNY study:

> Our counts of pedestrian traffic at the noon hour refute the impression that the Bright Light District has become a "Ghetto Street." This was an observation made by suburbanites in written comments on the questionnaire. It is quite clearly not borne out by our counts of pedestrian traffic. At almost all times of the day and night whites are the numerically dominant group along the street.… While Blacks and Hispanics may be somewhat over-represented compared to their numbers of the overall city population, neither are they the under-represented minority nor the ghetto majority which they are in most other areas of the city. Of course the problems with this observation… is that the "street people" along 42nd Street tend to be predominantly Black and Hispanic, a fact which does not go unnoticed by the general population." (p. 23)

While the ascription of racial bias to suburbanites may often be done too easily based on its own set of biases, in this case the assertion that suburbanites associated 42nd Street with the "ghetto" presumably comes from the self-description data from CUNY's pedestrian survey. The data demonstrates Suttles's observation that places are identified in relationship to one another, rather than on absolute terms. For white suburbanites, who come from a heavily white demographic and who would likely spend their time in the city in those areas where

blacks and Hispanics are "the under-represented minority," Times Square represented a minority, "ghetto" space, not because it was numerically dominated by people of other racial identities, but because it was one of the few spaces where they found themselves confronted with these groups in any significant numbers at all. And given the racial identities of the "street people," it likely seemed like a confrontation to them.

Sagalyn portrays the efforts to redefine the identity of Times Square more along class lines (although she would probably recognize that the social structure produced by racial discrimination does not make race and class discrete categories): "They wanted to flood the place with thousands of middle-class pedestrians—office workers, wholesale buyers, tourists, theatergoers. These… were also the prototypes that habitually showed up in artists' renderings of redevelopment schemes." (p. 81)

Reichl (1999) notes both racial and class identifications, stating:

> While racial anxieties formed a thinly veiled subtext to political debate about redevelopment, images of high culture figured prominently in the overt public discourse.… And so, in public discourse, the redevelopment agenda was reduced to an appealing symbolic image of high culture, just as the existing conditions of the area were reduced to an appalling symbolic image of dangerous urban culture. (p. 2)

Thus, Reichl was observing that visual character is tied to the identity of the social groups that use an area. The "symbolic images" were fundamentally bound to the visual character of the area, with high culture defined as sparkling, renovated, "legitimate" theaters and associated with the middle class, while the danger of the street was clearly embodied in the sex shops and low-budget action movie houses that characterized the area at the time and attracted 'undesirables.'

Another powerful identity in Times Square was homosexuality. The visibility of gay nightlife accompanied the marginalization of other groups. Interestingly, this aspect, which was central to the coexistence of the soapbox ministers and the whole apocalyptical visual order that dominated Times Square and figured into many of the movies set in Times Square,

the marginality of homosexuality remained almost entirely outside the newspaper discussions and played a relatively minor role in the accounts of most academics, leaving the lower income gay community marginalized by mainstream society and public discourse. Even more affluent gays in the Village and Chelsea marginalized the open sexuality of the gay space centered on Times Square, attempting to distance themselves from an identity with which they did not want to be associated. (Serlin 1996)

Figure 6: 42nd Street Sushi Bar in Tokyo's Shinjuku District. Images of Times Square have influenced Tokyo, which has in turn helped define the identity of Times Square.

Perhaps the most interesting aspects is the role of outside perceptions in defining the identity of Times Square, and how that definition changes its relationship with underlying global structures. Starr (1998) notes that with American expansionism during early 20th century capitalism (the period generally acknowledged as the heyday of Times Square) the bright commercial lights that emerged here as a part of urban commercial space spread to cities around the world, taking up a particularly strong place in Tokyo's Ginza and Shinjuku districts. While advertising for American companies declined in Times Square during the 1960s, Japanese companies took out signs in its prominent locations. This preserved the signage aspect of the visual order of Times Square in much the same condition, although the appearance demonstrated the American dependence on Japanese imports and growing Japanese ownership in the country. These signs did not go unnoticed, particularly when concern took

root that the U. S. might be falling behind or being bought out. Thus the Japanese, relying on their own understanding of Times Square, and acting as advertising agents for their corporations, maintained the visual order of Times Square. At the same time, it also took on some of the identity of the Japanese ownership.

Japan entered the picture again with Robert A. M. Stern's "42nd Street Now!" Even today, Stern continues to compare photographs of Tokyo's Ginza district to the sex shops that existed in Times Square as justification for the need to redefine Times Square as the sparkling center of a competitive global city.[8] Incidentally, his choice of Ginza (an upscale shopping district) as a comparison, rather than Shinjuku (home to Kabuki-cho, Tokyo's most famous red-light district), implies the set of class and cultural values that he leveraged to change Times Square.

Sagalyn (2001) notes a similar outside role played by Hollywood: "While the reality of Times Square was changing, especially after the 1930s, Hollywood defined Broadway for America and kept alive the aura of its old image." (p. 51) Nevertheless, as this image has been reintroduced into Broadway, it has faced opposition precisely for being an imposition of outside culture, thus the ongoing complains about shows adapted from films. This is accompanied in spatial and visual terms by the national and international chain stores and restaurants that have moved into Times Square, prompting complaints that it is becoming a mall.

The identity of Times Square hinges precisely on the identity of New York City as a whole. The most famous and directly obvious case was Mayor Koch's frequently cited "seltzer, not orange juice" rationale for rejecting the City at 42nd Street project, which would have redeveloped the street as an amusement park. The academic commentaries have all

picked up on Koch's insistence on an edgier development more in line with the identity of the city, but they seem to have overlooked the comparisons to a "world's fair" that defined the discussion.

New York hosted its second world's fair in Flushing Meadows-Corona Park in 1964-65, which was largely criticized by the press and failed financially because of poor attendance. For New Yorkers, a conceptualization of a world's fair existed independently of the exhibition in Queens; this existing conceptualization was, in fact, used to criticize that fair for its lack of visual order by failing to create a unified appearance. But for New Yorkers in the 1970s, the term "world's fair" not only involved these connotations of visually-ordered thematic amusements, it also carried with it the memory of a recent civic disappointment.

In the Zone

While there have been varying legislative approaches relying on policing, zoning represents the first concerted efforts to redefine the visual order of Times Square. The Broadway Association, which attempted to create "a revival of 'class,' in Times Square" successfully pressured the City to make zoning changes in 1947 and 1954 to discourage penny arcades and establishments running "sucker auctions." (Sagalyn 2001, p. 58) These early attempts at regulation were not successful either, and the DEIS noted that banning the penny arcades in 1954 led to "further conversion of the storefronts to high-turnover counter restaurants and shops selling 'sunbathing' magazines." (p. 1-5)

In 1982 the City altered the zoning, reducing bulk on the east side while allowing more on the west side. At the urging of theater owners, the City provided a higher permitted floor area ratio (FAR) in exchange for theater rehabilitation, as well as allowing transfer of

[8] Stern recently repeated this presentation on February 2, 2002 at a conference at Columbia University about the future of the World Trade Center site, going on to explain that a similar guiding vision will be needed for the 16 acres devastated by the terrorist attack.

air rights from low-rise theaters to other sites within a district designated around Times Square. These zoning changes were opposed by preservationists and other civic groups, who were angry about the demolition of five Times Square theaters earlier in the year to build the Marriott Marquis Hotel and suspicious of new development. The massive hotel has been widely criticized as an "anti-urban" detriment to pedestrian life. In appropriate terms conveying its detriment to the desired visual order, Peter Bosselmann (1998 [1987]) stated:

> When plans for this hotel were proposed in 1973, they had been praised as a crucial step in the city's redevelopment program for Times Square. But when they were completed in the mid-1980s, they failed to link pedestrians on Broadway to activities inside […] Its decor, moreover, can hardly be compared with that of the five theaters it replaced.
> (p. 107)

The demolition of the theaters also spawned the creation of a group called Save the Theaters that campaigned to have all the remaining theaters landmarked. While all the major theater owners opposed landmarking, the Board of Estimate formed the Times Square Advisory Council to look at the area, ultimately leading to zoning amendments.

Meanwhile, in December 1983, the 42nd Street Development Project unveiled plans for four office towers around the southern end of Times Square. Although a good deal of care had been put into developing design guidelines that attempted to integrate a newly imposed visual order with the collective consciousness surrounding Times Square, the towers designed by Johnson and Burgee did not follow the guidelines, providing fewer signs and exceeding the bulk. The towers were intensely and unrelentingly attacked by elite civic groups and the architectural community, whose complaints eventually forced Johnson and Burgee to return to the drawing board to make the towers conform more to the visual character of the area. Even redesigning the towers to incorporate the area's signage was not enough to save the design, and Johnson and Burgee were eventually dropped from the project.

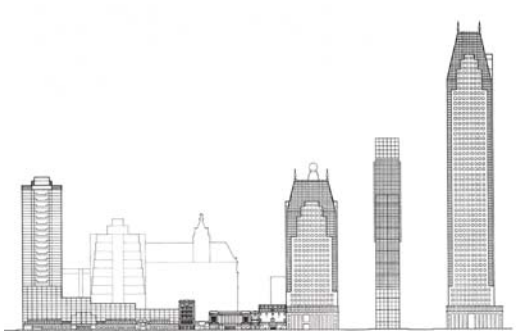

Figure 7: The designs by Johnson and Burgee for four large office buildings (two of them pictured at left) with mansard roofs, recalling old theaters in the area, were widely criticized as visually inconsistent with Times Square and a threat to its identity.

(DEIS figure 1-4)

It might seem appealing to treat this as a case of an architect designing an individualistic project that was collectively unacceptable, and that may have been a contributing factor. Nevertheless, it was largely the issue of bulk that provoked the criticism, and the bulk was a determination made by the developers and agreed to by the State, fixing a difficult design parameter for the architects to work around.

The arguments against the bulk were based on two points, its increase in congestion and its effects on the visual character of Times Square. The increase in congestion is a functional argument independent of visual order, but for the most part it took a back seat to the question of appearance, and visual order was the defining point in the conversation. This is, in part, because the original deal stipulated that the developers would pay for the renovation of the subway station, which would arguably have mitigated a great deal of the congestion problem.

Beyond criticizing the developers' proposals, the civic groups created an alternative vision of Times Square. Working with the Municipal Art Society (MAS), Peter Bosselmann developed a model of the Times Square area and filmed perspectives of different redevelopment scenarios to demonstrate the visual importance of signage and the impact that taller buildings would have. Likewise, Artkraft Strauss, a company that has been selling spectacular signs in Times Square for over a hundred years, coordinated with MAS and other

sign companies to turn off all the signs in Times Square as a demonstration of its central role in the area's visual order. Sagalyn notes:

> Through printed criticism, high-profile publicity events, and cautiously husbanded regulatory change, civic organizations pushed for an alternative aesthetic vision of Times Square.
> (p. 173)

While these efforts did not command prolonged public attention, they were effective in defining the visual order that framed discussions and led the planners and decision-makers for 42nd Street and the City to amend the design requirements and zoning codes.

The project's developers initially opposed the requirements for the large signage, which would have a negative effect on their office space. While the positive externalities that the signs produce in Times Square may have played some role in changing their mind, the major motivation was the high rent they found they could charge advertisers. Moreover, the identity of the new Times Square (combined with city subsidies to companies threatening to move out of the city) is strong enough to draw major corporations, despite complaints about the signs from some of the office workers.[9]

Although the FAR remained high, the zoning required large, illuminated signs, as well as requiring buildings around the bow-tie to set back after rising 50 feet. Thus the civic groups, relying on technical expertise and public demonstrations to define and illustrate visual order, successfully lobbied the City to legislate their visual order through amendments to the zoning code.

Theater owners and developers also worked with the City to allow for the transfer of development rights from the theaters to sites along Eighth Avenue. This resulted in a conflict primarily between theater owners and residents of the Clinton neighborhood. Clinton residents were opposed to allowing greater development on the west side of Eighth Avenue, viewing it as a threat to the visual order of their residential community. The Clinton

residents thus claimed Eighth Avenue as its border with Times Square, and sought to define the division through the visual means of limiting the bulk along the west side.

Economics

The CUNY study suggested that economics was involved in the picture by encouraging similar (male-oriented) uses to locate near one another. Continuing on the previous quote from the CUNY study:

> When one counts the sex ratios of pedestrians along 5th Avenue in front of the Lord and Taylor Department Store, for example, the proportions are reversed. Thus a good deal of the sexual segregation and specialization in stereotypical male products along West 42nd Street is a matter of location economics which aggregates same-sex uses in one area.
> (p. 24)

It is economically beneficial for stores to locate near one another if they share a customer base, because this lowers the transportation costs to potential customers, making it more likely they will visit the store than if it were located elsewhere. In the context of 42nd Street, an underlying division between male and female consumption would have been necessary to generate an economy of agglomeration based on masculine consumption. Thus the social construction of gender took on physical form on 42nd Street in part because of the constraints of economic exchange. Again, as these aspects are all interrelated, the appearances and interactions that men experienced in this space likely helped determine what it meant to be masculine (at least if bachelor's parties and 21st birthdays have anything to do with the matter).[10]

While it is always difficult to know what motivates financial institutions to back a project or firms to select a site, there is some evidence that these decisions are partially motivated by the appearance of the area. Brian Murphy, the senior vice president of the

[9] See "Life Inside the Can," *Metropolis Magazine*, August 2000.
[10] It would be interesting to see what connections could be drawn between the appearance of Times Square and that of the stereotypical dark lounge with the neon beer signs and posters of women found in fraternity houses and bachelor's pads.

Prudential Realty Group remarked on the interim plan: "This will give prospective tenants an immediate fix on what Times Square will look like." (*New York Times*, Aug. 3, 1994). Earlier, Sharon Barnes, one of the Prudential project directors had said, "Once the demolition of all the poor-quality stuff that is there now occurs, companies that couldn't imagine themselves being in that area will have another thought." (*Newsday,* April 22, 1991)

The economic issues surrounding the signs also warrant some examination. Although the developers initially opposed the sign requirements, they came to see the signs as a large source of potential rent. Under normal circumstances, continuing to add additional signage would cause the industry to suffer from diminishing returns to scale. Each additional sign would lower the value of all the signs around the square, as their visibility declined. Instead, the visual order that results from the signage produces a special place that makes Times Square the primary tourist location in the city and maintains an active entertainment district, thereby increasing the audience that can be reached by advertisers.

Noting the number of unused sign stanchions on 42nd Street, however, it appears that, at least under the current recession, the demand for signs has been exhausted, even if producing a special place increases the demand. This may be partially an economic result of the requirements imposed by the Empire State Development Corporation, which mandate a minimum size for signs. It may have been possible to cover additional space with smaller signs, which would have been available to advertisers with smaller budgets. Moreover, it seems to be partially the relative uniformity and market limitations imposed by the requirements that have led to some of the complaints about the "theme park" character of the area. Because of the sky-high price of such large signs, and a scarcity of smaller, more affordable signs, it is only the largest firms that can afford the advertising space. As a result,

firms can more carefully coordinate their message with its context and can follow trends that result in a themed quality for Times Square.

Figure 8: It seems an unlikely accident that Britney Spears appears beside the Virgin sign in Times Square.

Signage and economics also came into play in the design of the tower of 4 Times Square. The building made provisions to make it more environmentally responsible by increasing its efficiency. To reduce the amount of structural steel, the building is capped by a truss, which would ordinarily be considered an unacceptable architectural feature for a building that contributes to the skyline. This was resolved by deciding to cover the truss with illuminated signage, extending the visual order of Times Square into the skyline. These signs, however, would not be visible from Times Square but only from more distant locations. While this might have helped establish the identity of Times Square within the skyline, there has been little demand for these speculative signs. Since completion, only one of the tower's signs has been rented. Recently the owners put up a sign to advertise their own building to cover the eastern panel.

Crowded Out

The Times Square Business Improvement District (BID) was formed in 1992. It is an association that collects mandatory assessments from the businesses within the district that are used to protect business and property interests in the area, principally by regulating visual

order through actions such as repairing signs, picking up litter, and cleaning graffiti. The BID hires additional security and operates a visitor center for tourists. It also has some modest homeless outreach programs.

In its efforts to regulate visual order, the BID operates mainly through economic and legislative venues. The BID itself is an economic structure that has been put into place to eliminate the free-rider problem. It enables businesses to invest in visual order without allowing others who did not contribute to benefit. The BID also enables businesses to benefit from economies of scale.

Once constituted, the BID has relied on the norms of the local business community to pursue legislation that would protect an image they found conducive to their businesses. These have included support for the zoning amendments banning the concentration of adult uses, and a ban of street vendors, who were seen as cluttering up the sidewalks.

The BID security engages in a moderate amount of destruction of space as well. By closely scrutinizing "loitering" in the area, the security will make some groups feel unwelcome, undermining their ability to maintain their social space within Times Square.

The ban on sidewalk vendors supported by the BID, which also helps oversee its enforcement, is based on arguments about pedestrian congestion. At the same time, the City and the BID encourage the media corporations to gather crowds outside their studios, requiring additional police officers and BID security, and restricting or completely immobilizing the sidewalks.

Every weekday, the BID sets up pedestrian barriers along the west side of Broadway in anticipation of the teenagers that occupy half the sidewalk in front of the MTV studio. These youths stand outside during the filming of "Total Request Live" (TRL) with Carson Daly at 3:00 for a chance to be seen by a star and to get on television for a brief moment.

Figure 9: The BID prepares each afternoon for screaming teenagers to block the sidewalk during filming of MTV's "Total Request Live."

This location is part of the area covered under the vending ban; a hot dog or t-shirt vendor using considerably less space cannot set up there at other times. So why is pedestrian congestion a problem when it involves a street vendor, but not when there are masses of screaming teenagers? Consider Sorkin's (2001) description:

> All the networks (and MTV) now have fishbowl-style broadcast environments […] And all use the celebrity-hungry crowds as fascinated backdrops. To fully participate in the Times Square experience, we become little billboards among the big, craning to be seen.
> (p. 10-11, parenthesis in the original)

The teenagers taking part in the filming of TRL are part of the visual order of Times Square, whereas street vendors are perceived as a threat to that order. The pedestrian congestion in Midtown Manhattan provides a logic that the BID has been able to use in obtaining legislation to protect its visual order. This difference is certainly based in part on the visual character of the activity, but it is likely that, like loitering, there are identity issues at play here. The teenage MTV fans tend to be largely white and middle class, whereas street vendors are more often lower income members of racial and ethnic minorities.

New Victory for Victorian Morals

More central to the appearance of Times Square than the vendors, however, is the removal and zoning prohibition of "adult uses." Formerly, the pornographic movie theaters and bookstores in Times Square constituted much of its appearance, and were the aspect of its identity that most people found particularly objectionable. Pornography raises a difficult set of questions involving free speech, community standards, and the exploitation of women. Because of strong social norms against pornography, and prevailing attitudes against sexuality[11] in general, the 42nd Street Development Project expended large amounts of public funds to close "adult uses" along 42nd Street. The City rejected a proposal by the pornographic businesses, which knew they were under pressure, which would have limited their visibility on the street. Such limitations would have had the effect of conforming to the desired visual order without eliminating this social space. Instead, the City adopted zoning regulations that prohibited pornography in all but two sites in Times Square. In rather clear terms, the removal of pornography from Times Square reflected a strong set of social norms.

While many of the arguments that led to enactment of legislation were framed in terms of the public's right to be free of imagery it found objectionable, or the need to protect children from harmful images, in state court the zoning was ostensibly justified by preventing "secondary effects" associated with pornographic businesses. A correlation was drawn between pornography, and crime on one side of the equation, and lower property values on the other, although there was no demonstration of a causal link. Essentially the legal decision to uphold the decision in the *Stringfellows* case was determined through norms of socially

[11] It is important to distinguish between sexuality and nudity. While a large amount of idealized nudity is permitted, more direct references or depictions of coitus are tabou. Thus the Calvin Klein ads with unapproachable models in various stages of undress are not considered offensive, unlike the more realizable, graphic images of pornography, or the realized encounters with prostitutes. This hinges partially on an identity-driven definition of art largely dependent on class, which zones out strip shows while

recognized and unrecognized identities. Through the Civil Rights movement, racial and religious minorities made important gains, and it is now illegal to spatially discriminate against such groups as blacks and Jews (who were previously denied the ability to purchase homes through the use of restrictive covenants). At the time these civil rights issues were being decided in the 1950s and 60s, there were strong arguments about the secondary effects of neighborhood change caused by the "infiltration" or "invasion" of such groups. Nevertheless, a more comprehensively inclusive and equitable set of social norms prevailed, which determined that using such identities to segregate space was unacceptable. Under current legal precedent, however, sexual identities are not considered "suspect categories" like racial, ethnic, and religious identities. Thus, in the *Stringfellows* case, sexual identities were allowed as a basis for the destruction of space.

The prohibition of pornography oddly intersected with religion in a way that was little questioned. By accepting a minimum distance requirement to separate pornography from places of worship, the Court accepted the imposition of religious identity on urban space.[12] More broadly than actual religious sentiment, however, was a continuing Victorian notion of "family values." Its notions of protecting the public from sexuality, and children in particular, legitimized the distance requirements from residential areas in addition to churches, and provided outlines for the identity of a "New" 42nd Street.

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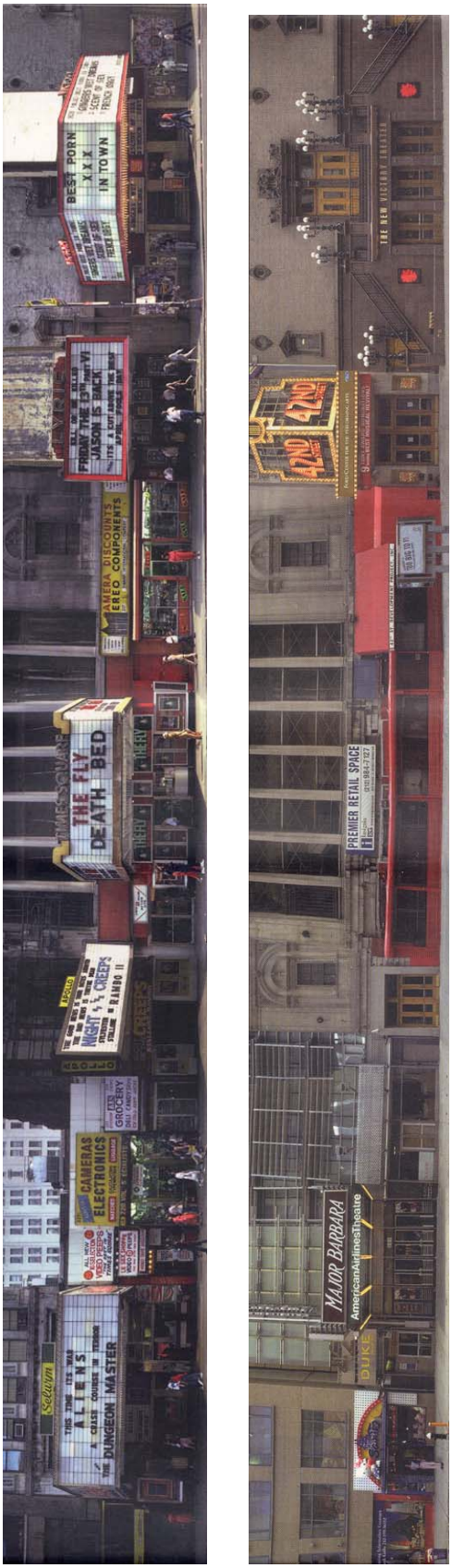
allowing shows like "Naked Boys Singing" to appear in the more expensive and socially sanctioned "legitimate" theaters.

[12] One of several important points poorly argued by the ACLU.

The New 42nd Street

The street signs on the stretch of the former Deuce between Seventh and Eighth Avenues say "NEW 42 ST." This choice of terminology is probably more descriptive than the 42nd Street Redevelopment Project or the Times Square B.I.D. had realized. Much of the former physical space has been demolished, and the social space has been replaced. Not only does 42nd Street look different, it is filled by a different group of people. Critics of redevelopment in Times Square have largely focused on its destructiveness in both physical and social terms, while its proponents have conceded that some destruction was necessary to rectify an awful situation. Sorkin's "Bernie Goetz-style urban renewal scheme" definitely claims that the destruction of space was a violent means of eliminating an unwanted social space. Delany (1999) puts it in only moderately less dramatic terms:

> The current transformation of Times Square is a Baron Haussman-like event. But like Haussman's rebuilding of Paris, this event is comprised of many smaller events, among them the destruction of acres of architecture, numberless commercial and living spaces, and, so far, the permanent obliteration of over two dozen theater venues, with (as of May 1997) more than a half dozen other theater demolitions planned within the next three months. With it all dies a complex of social practices… (p. 144, parenthesis in original)



As Harvey would point out, more intensive development is contingent on the destruction of the "underdeveloped" structures occupying the site. Yet there is a more explicit destruction of one social space to make room for another. As major redevelopment was underway, Sorkin (2001 [1997]) said:

> [T]he demonization of Times Square can only presage its demolition and "cleanup," a standardization and scaling up that will dilute the [social] mix to acceptable strength, the same hygienizing cycle that was brought to us historically by the (we thought) discredited history of exclusionary zoning and urban renewal. (p. 14)

Like Reichl and myself, Sorkin noted that proponents of redevelopment promoted negative representations to influence the collective consciousness of Times Square.

Creating a collective consciousness that rejected the existing visual order of Times Square was necessary for its destruction. Building a negative understanding of 42nd Street was not simply a task that planners and that developers utilized to support their redevelopment scheme, however. The movies have influenced collective consciousness of Times Square developed independently of the efforts to redevelop the area.

Figure 10: Times Square, before and after redevelopment (Sagalyn 2001)

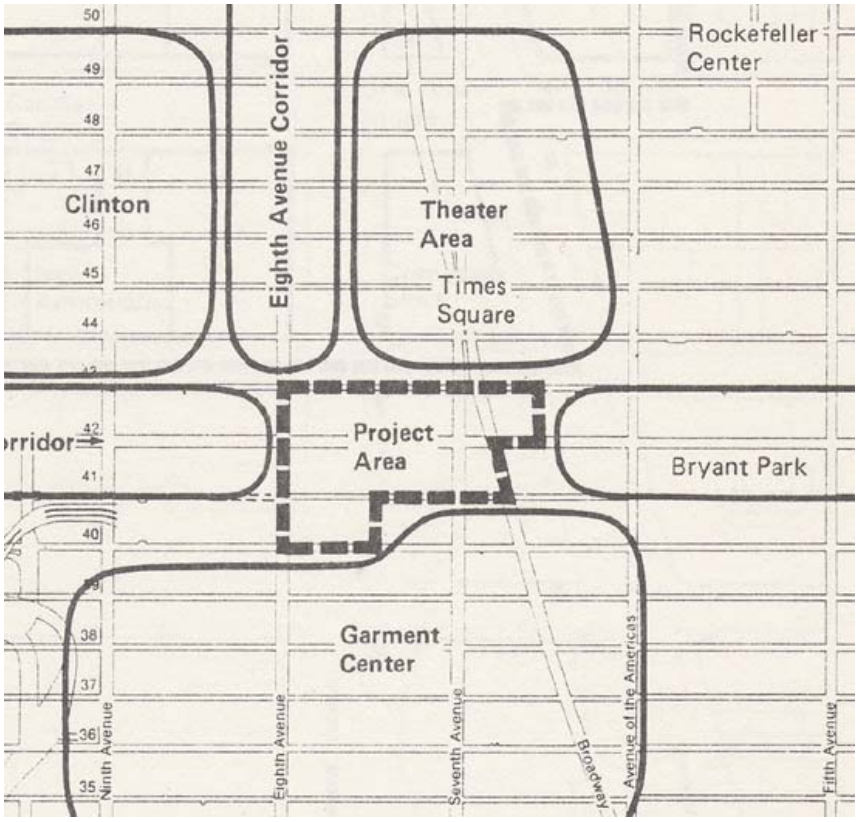


Figure 11: The DEIS identified 42nd Street separately from Times Square and the Theater District, thereby contributing to its fragmentation.

(detail: DEIS Figure S-2)

The destruction of 42nd Street was preceded precisely by its fragmentation. First, the street was isolated from the theater district by its loss of live theaters, and the perception of crime[13] led to its designation as "the Deuce." Fragmenting it from Times Square was more difficult, given the continuity of visual character, but this was also achieved through continued differentiation in collective consciousness and the establishment of a separate administrative jurisdiction. The concentration of action films and sexual imagery became defining traits that helped to differentiate between 42nd Street and Times Square.

[13] I use the term "perception" because it remains unclear to me what the actual impact of crime was. Statistics have typically been reported in absolute, rather than per capita, numbers largely reflecting the huge flow of people passing through each day. The high level of policing may also have resulted in a higher percentage of

Fragmentation was promoted by the Empire State Development Corporation, which severed 42nd Street administratively from the surrounding area, and continued by identifying it separately in the DEIS maps. The Empire State Development Corporation described it as an area that had become separated from the theater district and had to be reintegrated:

> Historically it is part of New York's theater district – in fact, the City's most famous theater street is the spine of the project area. Much of the project area is not visible from Times Square, however, which helped to isolate it from the entertainment center when the heart of the theater district moved north. (p. 1-29)

The DEIS was explicit in its efforts to destroy the existing social space to create a new one. It advocated bringing more "legitimate" users into the area, so that they might feel that they had a claim to the space. This creates a new social space, which destroys the preexisting space as it increasingly limits the activities of the previous community. Ultimately, as the previous social space is destroyed, the new identities affect a change in the visual order for their own ends. This is precisely the result we have seen in Times Square. The DEIS focused largely on the configuration of space to make it "defensible," largely through observability, but the appearance of the new spaces was also carefully conceived through design guidelines to support the identities of the "legitimate" users, while various actions were also taken to remove the visual character of the existing groups. Among these design guidelines was a consistent effort to consolidate the appearance and support observability through the consistent use of transparent walls. Similar to Morikawa's observation in Tokyo about the prevalence of opaque and transparent walls in distinct districts, the anonymity of Times Square, which displayed sexual products and concealed its patrons, was replaced with a visibility that puts its new users on display.

This change is encompassed in a shift in the construction of individual identity in Times Square. Previously individual identity dissolved into anonymity within observed

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crimes actually being reported. While the level of crime on 42nd Street was high, the perception of crime was likely greater than its practical effect.

norms of shared sexual experience, while individual identity now dissolves into the equally normative practices of collective celebrity.[14]

Untamed Territory

I should be careful not to portray the redevelopment of Times Square as an unmitigated effort to destroy the existing social spaces: criminal, gay, homeless, poor… There were limits on destruction. Thus, the newsstand at 44th and Broadway was not removed. Instead, it was moved and integrated into the visual order, matching the materials of the new ABC studio. This was the result of economic regulation, with politics assigning priorities between competing interests. Facing litigation and the potential for negative P.R., ABC's parent company Disney decided not to press for closing the newsstand, even though it probably would have won in court. Already under criticism for undermining the identity of

Figure 12: This relocated newsstand preserved a small business while integrating it into the visual order of the new Times Square.

[14] The latter is not entirely new. The New Year's Eve crowds have always enjoyed their group celebrity. Instead of a periodic event, however, it has become a permanent norm in the new Times Square.

Times Square, Disney likely did not want to make headlines by putting an immigrant-owned newsstand out of business in a city that characterizes itself largely by the entrepreneurship of its immigrants. Such negative publicity might have resulted in calls for a boycott that would reduce the company's profits. Alternatively, for only a small expenditure, Disney moved the newsstand from in front of the location for the new signature marquee and even integrated into the urban design to complement the new ABC studio.

There were also some more deliberate attempts to integrate the existing social space. The point to be made here is that it was an act of integration, where the existing groups would be disciplined to conform to the newly installed identity. This was most clearly visible in the legislative experiment for a Midtown community court, strongly supported by the BID, which puts those who were sentenced to work. Seemingly copied from Foucault's descriptions, the court attempted to discipline marginal groups who committed "quality of life crimes," that is, disrupted the visual order, by sanctioning them with supposedly self-edifying sentences that contributed to making the area look better.

Boyer, Reichl, and Sorkin, among many others, have all complained that Times Square is now more exclusive and is becoming a theme park. In response to this criticism, the planners in charge of redevelopment have long argued that it is too accessible to the public and too strongly claimed by collective consciousness to ever be overly subjected to a thematic visual order. And they claim they wouldn't want it to become a theme park, which would kill the street's magic. Perhaps we should not look behind the curtain wall, where these wizards have installed a Ferris wheel…

The destruction of space continues to enlarge the new Times Square, as Eighth Avenue has been fragmented from the rest of Times Square. It is a remnant of the old Times Square, its appearance has changed little and there are a couple of adult uses that are still holding on. These differences have become the focus of attention, and are being leveraged

(see Figure 4) to destroy 8th Avenue and integrate it into the new Times Square. The zoning changes allowing transfer of bulk to 8th Avenue were an integral part of this process, and the 42nd Street Development Project continues to play a role with the building by Arquitectonica on the corner of 8th and 42nd now nearing completion and the projected Times Tower.

Still, there is some truth to the resistance against domination by a single visual order, particularly if that order is exclusive. There is still some diversity to Times Square; just the other day I saw two young black men pay a man carrying a sign that said "6'7" Jew will rap for cash."

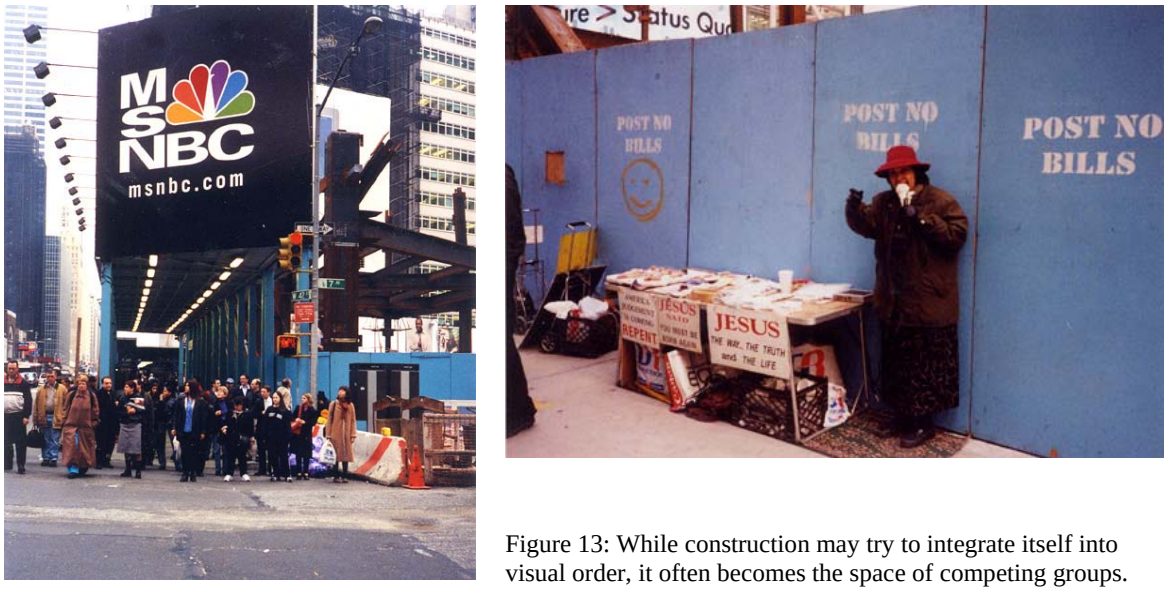

Figure 13: While construction may try to integrate itself into visual order, it often becomes the space of competing groups.

Additionally, an exclusive visual order cannot fully sustain itself without interruption. The very construction and maintenance required to support its appearance undermine its order. This is particularly true of construction sites and especially scaffolding, which create new spaces that are often claimed by competing groups.

I should perhaps clear up one of my own previous misconceptions concerning the destruction of space in Times Square. My initial impression was that the decline of soapbox

ministers was the result of aggressive actions by police and BID security concerned about them bothering tourists. While some harassment may have occurred, this is more likely the result of the destruction of the previous social space. The soapbox ministers existed in a symbiotic relationship with the area's marginal population, and homosexuals in particular, which the preachers continually denounced as sinful. The destruction of this marginal social space encompassed these evangelists. Telling a middle class family on its way to a show at the New Victory Theater that they're dirty and going to Hell just isn't the same.

The criticism is not that a more inclusive Times Square was destroyed, as the old Times Square was rather exclusive of women. The criticism to be made is that the new Times Square was achieved through the destruction of marginal social spaces that might have been retained, and that marginalized groups have been excluded from the visual order of the new Times Square, even if their presence there is tolerated.

PART FOUR: A Planning Vision

Discussions about vision and Times Square have typically revolved around a critique of the "authenticity" of the new Times Square. And although this question is rooted in appearance and collective consciousness, I am not particularly concerned about it on a planning level. Many places people enjoy have some level of inauthenticity to them. Admittedly, I largely share a modernist esthetic that values clarity, and in my own efforts to make places look the way I like, I do advance such arguments. However, since I recognize that other groups invest their identities in other appearances, which I might find fake and tacky at times, I am unwilling to argue that everything should conform to my own standards. This raises a tricky question, then, as to how to confront visual questions in practice. My belief is that planners and decision-makers have a responsibility to understand visual order well enough to provide physical spaces that can be inclusive of different identities. It is

important to distinguish between inclusive and diverse, however. Requiring an integration that disperses minority groups in the interest of promoting diversity runs a great risk of destroying minority social space and preventing the consolidation of political spaces for those minority groups. At the same time, it is important that groups are not excluded from resources or from full use of their city.

While many pass off appearance as superficial to the underlying economic interests of the developers in Times Square, this ignores the role that social norms of appearance play in determining value. Criticizing the final acquiescence to bulkier buildings in Times Square after the zoning was amended to regulate the visual character of signage implies that developers somehow got the better of the civic groups. This is a curious criticism, exhibiting more of a Marxist hostility toward capital than observations of Times Square, since the interest of the civic groups and most other critics of the redevelopment was precisely to determine the appearance and identity of Times Square, not to block the profit interests of the developers. To the extent that the zoning was able to use signage to establish visual order in Times Square, the bulk became less threatening.

More importantly, the question of appearance in Times Square centers on who regulates its identity. While Susan Fainstein is correct each time she reminds me that marginal groups are still allowed to come to Times Square, and that they have always been subject to observation and harassment, we cannot fail to recognize that they have lost a valuable asset in the sense of ownership of Times Square. Even if Times Square was derided for its poor appearance, it was a place where marginal groups felt a sense of ownership over a famous, central part of the city. However marginal and darkly portrayed in the movies, it was *their* place, and it was a place that commanded enough recognition to still draw substantial numbers of tourists. That is no longer the case, as it has been replaced with a

middle class identity. Marginalized groups are largely free to be there, just like I am free to go into an upscale sushi restaurant. That does not mean I can afford it, or would feel comfortable there. If an upscale sushi restaurant were to replace the Medici in Hyde Park, the college students at the University of Chicago would no longer feel it was their hangout, even if it provided some interesting exterior design that could be the pride of the neighborhood. And such is the case in Times Square.

The problem is not exactly that planners completely failed to create an image of Times Square to motivate social norms. Planners and architects like Robert A. M. Stern did create appealing images.[15] The problems resided in the conceptual flaws of those visions. Much of their work viewed the social norms directing economics as fixed parameters, rather than constructions that might be influenced and changed, thereby legitimizing a whole range of biases that should have been questioned. Thus, Stern framed a global competition with foreign districts such as Ginza through a class-based conception of visual order. The planners of the DEIS likewise apparently believed it was necessary to accept the discrimination of marginal groups to revalue 42nd Street, rather than developing an image that could embrace both financial interests and the street's existing users.

Following a desire to include women in one of the city's central places resulted in the destruction of marginal space, with the intention being largely the removal of conditions that made the area hostile to women. Nevertheless, such efforts were pursued uncritically and combined with other interests to destroy existing marginal social space that was not demonstrably harmful. While the Millean conception of liberty that underlies the American legal structure and much of its collective consciousness would seem to protect pornography, at least in private, there may be room for debate about whether pornography is harmful to

[15] Elsewhere, the closely allied New Urbanists, such as Stern's disciple Duany, have also aggressively pursued an image of the city, with at least an espoused intention of creating inclusive communities, but they have relied on the same poor conceptual foundation.

society. But objections to the violence of action films as a spatial problem emerged solely in Times Square, and there is no way to support eliminating the video arcades except by targeting marginal identities. One of the dangers of the social regulation of visual order is a tendency to use appearance to segregate space, rather than resolving the underlying social conflicts.

If the changes in Times Square have been criticized for consolidating an environment that privileges more affluent consumers by wresting control from the people who previously used the area, how might things have been done differently? Since the resolution of conflicts in urban space is the primary role of planners, a functioning conception of visual order and an approach to dealing with it is necessary if they are to be effective in their efforts. The Olmstedian tradition and the approaches of Jane Jacobs and William H. Whyte can help provide practical direction in this endeavor.

Frederick Law Olmsted combined a strong conceptual image of an inclusive, democratic society with his designs for public space that generated strong new social norms. While we may question specific details of his aging conception, the conjunction of design and social norms provided a powerful direction that changed the face of the industrial city and continues to influence planners and public discourse.

In *The Life and Death of Great American Cities* (1961), Jacobs worked to redefine social norms regarding the appearance of place, making mixed-use and heterogeneous housing attractive. Instead of simply accepting the socially dominant understanding of space, she interrogated it herself and then made persuasive arguments that changed collective consciousness by strengthening weak, positive norms. The outcomes that Jacobs achieved followed precisely from the way she was able to change social norms.

While Jacobs's example can be effective for writers, the gap to dealing with concrete problems needs to be bridged. Perhaps one of the ways to bridge that gap is, in fact, *through* writing, and through visual and multimedia images. It has long appeared to me that one of the deficiencies in the current planning field is the lack of effective writers, as planners have left discussion and illustration of urban form almost entirely to politicians, journalists, and a few outgoing architects. As a result, they are left in a position where they can only implement visions for which somebody else has already gained acceptance. If planners take a more proactive role in articulating a vision for the city, they will find it easier to shape places in positive ways.

To the extent that groups remain marginalized despite efforts to change social norms, it becomes important to provide and protect places that provide them with both dignity and a sense of ownership. It is largely these spaces of resistance or refuge that have the potential for creating images that redefine social norms.

In order to determine how to improve the use of an area, it is important to understand how it is being used. Whyte (1988) provided an excellent example of how to study the use of an area. There will always be value judgments, as well as social conflict, involved in determining which uses are appropriate for an area. With a clearer understanding of the ways different groups actually use the space, however, planners can more effectively determine the equity and validity of claims by different groups. A more nuanced replacement for the "Broken Windows" hypothesis will improve the approach of planners. By lumping loosely defined measures of marginality together with criminality, the "Broken Windows" hypothesis inevitably leads to the discrimination of minority groups. It is necessary to carefully examine the reasons that groups and activities are marginalized before deciding that they are not appropriate.

Unsurprisingly, Olmsted, Jacobs, and Whyte were all closely tied to sociology, and planners seem to encounter problems when they distance themselves from sociological work. In Times Square, the CUNY ethnographic work became one of the principal bases for discussions about the future of Times Square, cited by both proponents and opponents of redevelopment in the newspapers, the environmental impact statements and its responses, and court documents. The broad repetition of the study's findings suggests that sociological work plays a crucial role in structuring the way visual order is conceptualized by planners, decision-makers, and the public. Moreover, it underscores the conceptual poverty of planning, as the planners who compiled the DEIS relied on poorly adapted statements from the CUNY study. Given the important conceptualizations of sociology, it is important that it actually be included in planning curricula, and planners should work more closely with sociologists. It would be particularly worthwhile to keep an eye on the Sociology Department at the University of Chicago, which has shown an increasing interest in questions of urban space[16] and has recently hired planner Saskia Sassen.

Understanding visual order is one key to the relationships between people and places. Appearances are not, as many have passed them off, solely a superficial matter that distracts from more important issues. Visual order is an integral part of social space and must be treated as such. While criticism of the ways appearance is used in the political process have their basis in a rejection of underlying agendas, once we understand that any visual order expresses some set of values intimately tied to group identity, we realize that questions of appearance cannot be swept aside, but must rather be integrated into an approach toward the space. Furthermore, such critics fail to recognize that appearance, as an element of identity, is something that people value. With an extended focus of economics, we recognize that it

[16] In addition to the work by Lloyd, Marc Sanford is currently looking at "The Social Organizational Features of Consumption in the Urban Milieu."

can be exchanged for other aspects that people might also value. It is thus a disservice to simply claim that those who have accepted changes in appearance that conform to their identity in exchange for other project elements have somehow been duped. Perhaps they have, but a more detailed analysis of the exchange would be warranted, rather than the typical de facto conclusions.

Alternatives for Times Square and Beyond

With a better conception of visual order, it is possible to imagine alternative arrangements for combining identity and appearance in Times Square, even if my own observations of Times Square cover only a short period of time and are not as systematic as the type of work that William H. Whyte has done.

Achieving a socially acceptable visual order could be possible without excluding street vendors, and perhaps it could even accommodate places for pornography. Instead of uniformly insisting that there be no blank walls at ground level, it may be possible to amend the zoning to permit windowless sections in areas with wider sidewalks to permit street vendors to set up. This would allow greater flexibility for internal programs in the buildings (particularly helpful for the auditoriums of theaters and cinemas, and potentially conducive for the privacy of adult uses), ensure interest along the sidewalk, and provide a place for small sidewalk entrepreneurs without conflicting with storefronts. Advertisements could be projected onto the walls at night after the vendors were gone to maintain the visual order at all times. This approach would require rejecting the absolute demand for observability through transparent walls, as well as an acceptance of street vending as an acceptable activity. Precisely by questioning the relationship between Times Square and other places, we can uncover concepts that might be useful. Exploring the conceptualization of “umote” and “ura” (roughly, front and back) that defines Kabuki-cho in Tokyo, for example, may

provide possibilities for allowing competing interests to remain within Times Square without threatening visual order.

More voices could be included in Times Square while maintaining its visual order through some simple changes in the signage requirements. The requirements could be redrafted to ensure a specified *minimum coverage* by signs, rather than focusing on the *size* of the signs, thereby allowing more smaller signs that would both enlarge the market and permit access to a greater range of companies. This would also strengthen, rather than weaken, the visual order of Times Square by preventing its manipulation into overly controlled themes.

Without evidence that pornographic businesses actually foster crime, regulations against pornography risk reinforcing social marginalization and likely entail the unnecessary destruction of space. Because of the strong social norms against pornography and the changes in property values, practically, it may be impossible for it to return to Times Square at this point. Nevertheless, it is unacceptable to continue using legislation to discriminate against customers with dissenting views on sexuality.

Perhaps most importantly, planners that recognize the importance of street vendors as enhancing street life and fostering economic alternatives for those with limited options[17] should be writing and producing images of Times Square and other places that support street vending. Use of local examples, like Fordham Road in the Bronx and images from Times Square itself, could be even more productive than references to successful foreign models, as

[17] See Duneier (1999).

Figure 14: Unlike Times Square and many other parts of New York, on Fordham Road in The Bronx, street vending coexists with stores like the Gap, and is a central part of the street's excitement.

(Trading Places: Martin Pfirrmann and Matias Echanove)

Figure 15: Informal entertainment accompanies the street vendors as part of the street life that defines the visual order of Fordham Road.

(Trading Places: Matias Echanove)

it would allow the public and decision makers to experience the examples first hand, and would raise fewer problems in terms of undermining local identity. In the end, I believe the physical and social space in Times Square should be developed around a more inclusive visual order, embracing entrepreneurs and patrons of the smaller businesses and street vendors in addition to the major media corporations and professional offices. This type of inclusion will only exist if it can be supported by social norms, and embodied in visual order.

While Times Square has already undergone a comprehensive redevelopment, it remains open to future changes. In fact, the redevelopment around Times Square is not yet finished. Currently Eighth Avenue is slated for destruction and integration into the new Times Square. This should be closely scrutinized by active planners to assure that the destruction of any social space be confined as much as possible to those who demonstrably injure others, rather than encompassing marginal groups in general. It is also important to accurately document the conditions that exist, rather than allowing perceptions to be driven by those with an economic interest in removing others. Moreover, planners should work to ascertain ways to protect the current social space and to preserve its participation in the visual expression of identity. Aside from obvious changes (like not condemning everything that looks run down), they might try innovations in developing façade renovation programs for small businesses or providing display spaces that are available to community members for periods of timing on a rotating schedule.

With an understanding of how visual processes work in Times Square, it becomes possible to recognize them elsewhere, as with the potential destruction of Coney Island. Collective consciousness perceives Coney Island much the same as it had viewed Times Square. Many people object to the stores along Surf Avenue, and the people they attract. The City has begun efforts to make businesses strictly comply with an entertainment-related zoning. Apparently people do not find the funky junk shops an entertaining part of the Coney Island experience. The Economic Development Corporation, the City's entrepreneurial arm, has been poking around recently, and if they happen to come across a potential amusement park developer I would not be surprised to begin seeing accounts about how ugly and dangerous the place is, accompanied by black and white photos of run-down shops encroaching on the sidewalk (complete with claims about the "appropriation" of public

space), while slick, color, computer-enhanced images of an attractive place for a completely different social space circulated (possibly with sidewalk cafes, which are not viewed as encroaching on public space). This too must be closely watched to ensure that marginalized groups are not simply removed or demoted to a parolee status.

I have only discussed New York City in this paper, and the case has focused solely on a very specific commercial area. Nevertheless, the underlying visual concerns and these means of regulation should apply in a variety of urban residential settings as well. This would be a good point for further inquiry, and could be part of an interesting extended ethnographic study conducted from a planning perspective. A much more rigorous examination of the economics of visual order is also a crucial future step. There is more work to do, and understanding visual order is an important starting point.

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