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CONSTRUCTED GLOBAL SPACE, CONSTRUCTED CITIZENSHIP MICKY LEE

Abstract

This article examines the relation between global space and citizenship by examining the cases of WTO meeting and Hong Kong Disneyland. Scholars assert that global space can unsettle naturalised social relations. Yet, an ambiguous and vague sense of citizenship and a neoliberal spatiotemporal frame constrain how the state, the media, and the locals interpret the meanings of space, and how citizenship is manifested in space. In the global space of the WTO meeting and the Hong Kong Disneyland, the Hong Kong Chinese identity is reinforced by demonising South Korean farmers and mainland Chinese.

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Introduction

An increasingly integrated global economy has problematical space (Harvey 1989) just as the industrial revolution has problematical time. Advancement in new information and communication technologies is believed to conquer space and to accelerate economic transaction. The global financial market relies on telecommunications to survive; “just-in-time” production and outsourcing take advantages of space erosion for a 24-hour production cycle. Business executives negotiate virtually through teleconferencing and e-mail. Cable television and the Internet create a virtual space for consumers to shop and to indulge in a consumer lifestyle fantasy. Airlines, international hotel chains, global media and entertainment companies work hard to ensure world travellers never leave luxury comfort even when they are on the road.

Nevertheless, the access to space and the right to claim space is uneven. Whilst the affluent global north is not bounded by a geographical area, the global south is locked in a local area. The mobility of the global south is often questioned and scrutinised by lawmakers and the media. Laws and regulations deny the homeless, protestors and immigrants the right to space (D’Arcus 2006; Jameson 1998).

Critical scholars from cultural studies and political economy lament the increasingly privatised world dominated by transnational corporations. Public space from park to community radio, from arts and cultural venue to commercial-free Internet become more scarce. The state increasingly sees citizens as consumers who are vital to the economy. It is not surprising that Americans were urged to shop to show patriotism after the Sept 11 attack. Scholars and activists argue that citizenship will only flourish in public space, be it community media, public park or knowledge commons.

However, it is questionable if the provision of public space automatically leads to a stronger sense of citizenship. First, the concept of citizen implies universalism – that citizens have the same desires and needs. Cultural particularities are not taken into account in the undifferentiated citizen concept. As a result, gender, racial, ethnic, cultural and religious identities submerge under citizenship (Young 1990; 1994). The practice of citizenship has always excluded racial minorities, the oppressed class, and the economically disadvantaged (Roche 1994; Taylor 1994; Turner 1994; Croucher 2003; Heater 2004; Magnette 2005). Locke, Spinoza, Rousseau and Kant all believed that rationality is required for citizenship; hence, they disqualified women, minority groups, slaves and the poor as citizens.

Second, there is an assumption that citizens themselves understand their rights and obligations and that they find citizenship meaningful. The disengagement from citizenship is not merely due to a lack of education; it is a result of voluntary or forced migration, colonisation and decolonisation, oppression, marginalisation, war and state violence, privatisation of common goods, and commercialisation of the state and the media.

Third, the availability of and the access to space do not lead to citizenry if a neoliberal spatiotemporal ideology constrains citizens’ imagination of space. David Harvey argues in *Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference* (1996) that a hegemonic spatiotemporal frame is a meta-narrative of postmodernity; this dominant ideology of time-space relation has to be understood through examining the

historical materialist nature of how time and space are constructed. To Harvey (1989), globalisation is a spatial problem, a “spatial fix” is thus employed to absorb excessive labor and capital.

The boundary between public space and private space is increasingly blurred. For example, the international coffee chain Starbucks has successfully created a pseudo-public space in a private space. Patrons can sit in the coffee shop without interference from the staff. The Starbucks experience probes public libraries to be more like a private operator by offering beverage service and plush sofas. The blurring of the boundary not only allows the state to gather revenue from corporate sponsorship, it also helps corporations to appear more like a public service.

Because the concept of citizenship has the potential to suppress minority interests and it may not be meaningful to all citizens, the state and corporations can exploit the term “citizen” to achieve their political economic goals. To most people living in developed countries (and arguably in developing countries), they may have difficulty to recite how their citizens rights are protected by the laws. Yet they may have little problem with reciting some recent TV advertisements. After all, being a consumer is a more tangible experience than being a citizen. Money, not a particular gender, race, or ethnicity, is all one needs to be a consumer. Values such as success, sex appeal, love, family used in advertisements resonate with consumers more than abstract concepts such as equality and democracy.

Given the above three assumptions about citizenship and space, it is desirable to examine the process of how citizenry is constructed by the state, corporation, and citizens in a local setting (Jones and Garento 2002; Lister et al. 2005). Citizenry has to be articulated and negotiated in space. The meanings of citizenship change when the meanings of space change. Specifically, this paper looks at the construction of citizenship in a constructed global space – defined here as a strategic site (usually a city) that accumulates global investment. Bauman (1998) characterises global capital as “footloose,” it flows to where profit is. A neoliberal spatiotemporal order constrains how social actors experience space and how they make meanings of it. Global space attracts both highly paid executives as well as the global underclass (Isin and Wood 1999; Sassen 2001). The influx of workers, tourists, business executives to a dynamic, fluid, ever-changing global space probes social actors to renegotiate social relations (Harvey 1989; Massey 2005).

As a global city, a Special Administrative Region of China, and a former British colony, Hong Kong provides many examples to show how the state actively builds global space to attract global capital after decolonisation. The question of the Hong Kong Chinese identity has interested scholars prior to and after the handover in 1997. Yet few have examined how the changing meanings of space relate to the construction of the Hong Kong Chinese identity. The two events that illustrate the construction of citizenship in a global space are the Sixth WTO Ministerial Conference in 2005 and the construction of the Hong Kong Disneyland. In the case of the WTO meeting, the arrival of international delegates and protestors could have probed the locals to rethink what public space means and how citizenship is created in space. However, the media interpret the meanings of space with a capitalist spatiotemporal ideology. In the case of Hong Kong Disneyland, both the state and the Disney Corporation justified the construction of the park by replacing the concept of citizen with consumer. Both instances of global space have opened

up questions of citizenship, race, and ethnicity in a local setting. Rather than confronting issues related to the Hong Kong Chinese identity, race, and ethnicity in the global economy, the local media opted to single out South Korean farmers and mainland Chinese as villains who threatened the Hong Kong economy and the Hong Kong Chinese identity.

The Hong Kong Chinese Identity, Colonial Place, Postmodern Space

In order to attract global capital, states and cities have to develop strategies to stay competitive in the global economy. The astonishing economic development of the four Asia's little tigers is viewed as model examples that developing countries can follow to survive the economic globalisation. A locally situated analysis is needed to examine how the state has historically justified political and economic arrangements through the discourse of citizenship. The sense of citizenship that has been constructed is hardly an inclusive concept. To these days, there is no satisfactory Chinese term for the concept of Hong Kong citizens. In Chinese, "Hong Kong people" and "Hongkonger" are the two closest but unsatisfactory terms. This paper uses the term "Hong Kong Chinese" because, as will be argued below, the citizen concept is racially and ethically exclusive. Precisely because there is no Chinese term for Hong Kong citizen, the state, the media and the locals have reinvented the Hong Kong Chinese identity to fit their goals, particularly during political and economic unstable times.

When Hong Kong was annexed as a British colony in 1842, there was no "Hong Kong Chinese" – there were Chinese (as a race) and Westerners. Although most Westerners were British, the ambiguous Chinese term "sea people" was used rather than British. In the first hundred years of colonisation, Hong Kong was a fluid space. Westerners came to Hong Kong to govern, to trade, and to preach. Chinese moved across the border between Hong Kong and mainland China freely. There was no active government programme to establish Hong Kong as a home for both Westerners and Chinese.

Turner and Ngan (1995) argue that the Hong Kong Chinese identity was manufactured and imposed upon the population by the colonial government in the 1960s. It was essential to create a place, a permanent home, for Hong Kong Chinese. Students underwent a colonial education learned that Hong Kong is an "east-meets-west, international city." Hong Kong Chinese, as the locals call themselves, were described in government literature as westernised Chinese who follow Chinese traditions but enjoy western modernity.¹

The "Star Ferry Riot" in the sixties was reckoned to be the incident that alarmed the colonial government that communist-backed groups may cause social unrest and may overturn colonial rules. A dramatic fare hike proposed by the Star Ferry Company ignited the locals to stage protests against an oppressive colonial regime. The state believed that the protest was supported by communist groups, so it employed violence to stop the demonstration. Soon after, in order to discourage the locals from identifying with the Chinese Communist Party, the colonial government designed a Hong Kong Chinese identity for the locals. The state and the media often use women to represent modernity (Young, 2003; Rajan 2004; on the case of India). A gendered identity, the "factory girl," was hence designed: she

was an economically independent, new woman who laboured to boost Hong Kong productivity. After work, she enjoyed modern and western entertainment such as catching a Cantonese film or listening to the Beatles (who were flown to Hong Kong by the colonial government).

This manufactured notion of “Hong Kong Chinese” is a race/ethnicity-based, consumer identity. Hong Kong had become a home that could not accommodate non-Chinese. Non-Chinese minorities such as South Asians were and still are treated as foreign subjects – even though some of them have lived in Hong Kong for generations. British and other western nationals were seen as the superior “Other” whilst Indians and Filipinos were treated as the inferior “Other.” By designing the Hong Kong Chinese identity, the state has successfully used race and ethnicity to reduce locals’ hostility towards the colonial government by oppressing the non-white, racial/ethnic minorities. Race is used by the state to achieve political ends (Cynthia Enloe cited in Croucher 2003; Abah and Okwori 2005).

The Hong Kong Chinese identity campaign was clearly a successful one. By the 1980s, this identity was portrayed in popular culture and government literature as a modern, westernised, English-Cantonese bilingual who lives a fast life in the hustle-bustle of the skyscraper city. This Hong Kong Chinese is unlikely to be fluent in Mandarin, nor is she knowledgeable of Chinese politics and contemporary culture (incidentally, Chinese history textbooks curiously left out any mention of the People’s Republic of China and the Chinese Communist Party). This Hong Kong Chinese is fearful of the communist regime yet she has an abstract notion of Chinese nationalism (Teo 1997). On the other hand, she is not a patriot of Britain and is indifferent to British culture and politics. The ambiguous identity is best illustrated by Hong Kong Chinese’s support of the Chinese team at Olympic but of the English football team at the World Cup. The consumer lifestyle that Hong Kong Chinese led differentiated them from mainland Chinese, who at that time still lived in a relatively closed-door Communist China. The Hong Kong Chinese identity epitomises what a postmodern identity ought to be – fragmented, hybridised, consumerist, popular culture-oriented, ever changing, and amnesic of history (Abbas 1997; Stokes and Hoover 1999).

The process of decolonisation had created a context for Hong Kong Chinese to question the permeability of Hong Kong as a home. The Beijing Massacre in 1989 and the Sino-British negotiations of the city’s future stirred up heated debate about the implications on citizenship. A tangible colonial place that had been the “home” of Hong Kong Chinese has suddenly transformed into a liminal, intangible space of uncertainty. Massey (2005) writes that place is often seen as closed and coherent; as “home” or a secure retreat. Space, on the other hand, is an open field full of possibilities but uncertainties. Beijing’s refusal to implement a democratic political system and its employment of violence on June Fourth intensified the uncertainty and fear among Hong Kong people. Since the commencement of the Sino-British negotiations in 1984, the well-to-do and the professional class hurried to emigrate to Canada, the US, Australia, and the UK for a more certain future in a place that would not dissolve into space. Although Deng Xiaoping promised “fifty years no change” after the handover, the Hong Kong homeland would gradually dissolve into her motherland China, which is made alien to Hong Kong Chinese both politically and economically.

On the British side, fearing the arrival of a few millions Hong Kong-born Chinese, the British Government ruled them to be naturalised British nationals (overseas), BN(O) in short, who have no rights to abode in the UK. BN(O) is space-bound and time-bound; it cannot be passed on to the next generation. The BN(O) status is only an indication that one is born in a British colony, it does not guarantee any citizen rights under British laws. When Hong Kong ceased to be a colony, BN(O) became a memory, an identity of the past.

In order to curb the uncertainty that Hong Kong people felt towards the dissolving homeland into space, the government teamed up with entertainers to run a “Hong Kong is my home” campaign. Canclini (2001) and Croucher (2003) both agree that citizenship is a sense of emotional belonging and it provides a sense of difference. Home is a powerful metaphor for a private, enclosed space for one to develop an emotional attachment.

A decade after Hong Kong became the Special Administrative Region (SAR) of China, the city-state government, the PRC, and the locals still attempt to determine what Hong Kong is to China, and what China is to the world. An integrated global economy has impacted nation-states of different sizes and different political systems. To examine the transformation of Hong Kong as a space governed by neoliberal economic rules, it is essential to take into account both the transforming political economic power of China and the Chinese Central government’s determination to show the world the feasibility of “one country, two systems.”

As a small city-state, Hong Kong has to re-invent its narrative for both the local and the global audience to survive the economic globalisation. Facing the rise of Shanghai as an international city, and neighbouring Shenzhen as a gigantic export processing and a special economic zone, the Hong Kong SAR government reinvents Hong Kong as an “Asia’s world city.” Abbas would call it a *déjà disparu* identity: “what is new and unique about the situation is always already gone, and we are left holding a handful of clichés, or a cluster of memories of what has never been” (Abbas 1997, 23). This newly designed identity reinforces the postmodern, hypercommercial, and capitalistic nature of colonial Hong Kong. The geographical locale that Hong Kong identifies with is Asia, a vast continent that is culturally diverse. Whilst China is a political economic entity that is confined to a nation-state boundary, Asia is an imagined region constructed by the West during the colonial era. Hong Kong’s former self, an international city is a physical meeting place for different nationals; Hong Kong’s present self, a world/global city, on the other hand, is imagined to be a boundaryless space that serves as a node for the flow of capital, personnel, technologies, culture, and ideas. The identity “Asia’s world city,” more so than the former colonial self “an east-meets-west international city,” erases cultural and political attachment to China. According to Sassen (2001), global cities connect to each other more than to their respective states. The reference points that Hong Kong chose are not China, but Shanghai, Beijing, Singapore, Taipei, and possibly Tokyo. In order to prove that Hong Kong is indeed a world city, the SAR government accommodated two visible global power—the WTO and Disney.

The Freedom-Loving Capital

The Sixth WTO Ministerial Conference took place in Hong Kong in 2005. To both its supporters and critics, the WTO represents a global power in international trade.

The power locus of the global political economy is “foot loose,” Zygmunt Bauman (1998) calls it the “bodylessness” of power. The power is not rooted in a place, rather it flows around space. Nevertheless, neoliberal globalisation in the form of global talk requires a specific locale to manifest itself. Globalisation manifests itself in an intensely local setting; yet the contexts are the least local (Appadurai 2001). Similar to previous WTO conferences, global movements protest at the WTO meeting in Hong Kong attracted intense local and international media interest. Klein (2004) claimed that protestors take back the commons by questioning the relations between citizenship and space by occupying public place. However, most local residents experienced the WTO protest from news outlets. The media interpret what space means, and how citizenship is experienced in a global space.

Literature on the relationship between the media and social protests has provided a rich foundation upon which the media coverage of mass demonstration can be studied. Most studies assert that the media frame social protests as events of news values, and that organisational norms and practices govern the news frame (Gamson and Wolfsfeld 1993). At the same time, the media utilise tactics to present themselves as objective, detached, and neutral (Gitlin 1980; Hackett 1993; Hertog and McLeod 1995). Local media coverage of the WTO protest used a lot of commonly-recognised news values²: *official sources* (Gitlin 1980; Kim 2000; Chen 2005); *elite interests* (Gitlin 1980; Hackett 1993; Small 1994; Hertog and McLeod 1995; McLeod 1995; Undrakhbuyan 2005); *violence* (Gitlin 1980; Hackett 1993; Small 1994; Martindale 1989; McLeod 1995; DeLuca and Peeples 2002; Kruse 2003); *deviance* (Gitlin 1980; Shoemaker 1984; Hackett 1993); *sensational elements* (Gitlin 1980; Hertog and McLeod 1995); and *focus on the individuals* (Gitlin 1980; Gamson and Wolfsfeld 1993; Small 1994; Hertog and McLeod 1995).

Past studies tend not to examine how the media represent space. As institutions with economic motivations, the media are governed by a neoliberal spatiotemporal order. For example, evening news is broadcast at a time when the economically active population begins their leisure time in a private setting; salient news items are allocated with more time; advertising time is sold to generate revenue (Moore 2005). Not only are news items edited in a capitalistic fashion, the spatiotemporal order represented in news stories also adheres to the neoliberal economic principles.

Critical scholars agree that public streets and space are common goods: in a democratic society, citizens can participate in street protests; citizens can gather in public places for social, cultural and political purposes; citizens have the rights to feel safe in the streets. In contrast, in a consumer society, the streets are transformed into shopping and commerce zones where *flâneurs* stroll, observe, and consume. Some cities have restricted citizens' right to use public space. For example, the city of Seattle has passed a city regulation that prohibits individuals from sitting down on a sidewalk if not for emergency assistance, rallies, parades, waiting for buses, or consuming food and beverage in a street cafe (Mitchell 2003). A translation of this regulation reads: the homeless cannot sit on a sidewalk because they will bring inconvenience to the locals and the tourists. The homeless citizens' rights to space are blatantly denied in an increasingly privatised world. Assessing the urban space in Hong Kong, Cuthbert and McKinnell stated that:

Given the nature of urban development in the context of Hong Kong, history is slowly extinguished, rights are lost, urban space becomes increasingly

subject to surveillance and policing, human activities become restricted and the public realm loses its clarity as a symbol of civil society (Cuthbert and McKinnell, 1997: 296).

During the meeting period, the convention venue and its surrounding area were transformed into a sacred global space. The WTO meeting site at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre was transformed to symbolise a space where “globalisation is in process.” Broadcast news helped to construct a familiar local site into a culturally-nonspecific space that represents “global power.” The Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre is connected to a number of financial buildings in the area by pedestrian bridges, which are like arteries to the heart. In order to protect the heart of global economy, the police protected the veins as well. The vulnerability of this global space was accentuated by the police’s painstaking security efforts. Similarly, after Sept 11 attack, along with the White House, Disneyland also increased security; McDonald’s and Starbucks, symbols of economic globalisation, were sites for attack during the WTO protest in Seattle.

In a global space, the global north has the maximum access to space whilst the mobility of the global south is scrutinised and monitored. The media intensely scrutinised how protestors (in particular, South Korean farmers) moved around the city while questioning their rights to visit and to mobility. In contrast to the luxury hotels where the WTO delegates stayed at and the flashy cars that transported them to the meeting venue, the media showed the dilapidated city hostels and recreation houses where the protestors stayed at. The protestors were marginalised spatially and economically: The media pointed out that the protestors brought along cup noodles and fruit to Hong Kong. Unlike Disneyland tourists, the media did not view protesters as tourists who might benefit Hong Kong economically. The media acted like a prison guard stationed in a panopticon by continuously scrutinising the “criminals.” The media closely monitored the behaviour of South Korean protestors – from their napping and exercising in public parks, to the uniforms and national costumes that they wore during protest. On the contrary, the story assigned insignificant roles to WTO delegates; EU Commissioner Peter Mandelson occasionally acted as the talking head to remind the public that the WTO negotiations were indeed in process. The little airtime allocated to WTO delegates seemed to legitimise the activities inside the convention; hence they needed no monitoring from the media.

Space of representations made protests visible to the local and the media (Mitchell 2003). Scholars commonly reckon that the media do not report news, but construct reality and represent it as the truth. Although global movements protestors have become more savvy to use space, their actions are mediated by the media. TV news constructs protest as exotic, violent spectacle that needs to be surveyed and monitored. News stations strategically dispersed reporters to a number of public sites to provide the audience with multiple localities simultaneously. Low angle shots were commonly used to capture street protests. Insufficient knowledge of grassroots movements led journalists to interpret for the audience what the protest tactics meant. A journalist called the protest “carnival-like”; another interpreted street theatre, performance, and story-telling as entertainment and called them “music night show” and “cultural show.” The neoliberal spatio-temporal order has constrained how space is understood and used by citizens. The powerful

entertainment industry in Hong Kong has naturalised all forms of performance as consumption and has denied the political agency of the performers. In a truly public sphere, means of expression such as singing, dancing, and acting are practices through which citizens exercise their agency to probe for social change and collective action.

If the WTO delegates represent the global north and the protestors represent the global south, then where are Hong Kong people? Sassen (2001) asserted that global cities provide a space for the global underclass to form coalition. Although social relations can be reinforced in a global space, the fluidity of global space can also unsettle naturalised social relations. For example, although few Hong Kong Chinese are farmers, the working poor can identify with the harsh living condition of farmers elsewhere. Instead the media downplayed the significance of the fluidity of global space. It encouraged Hong Kong Chinese to seek home – a physical locale at times of uncertainty. Juxtaposed with what the media called a colourful march were clips of interviewed citizens who expressed their fear of violence and their desire to go home. When it is uncertain who has the right to claim space, home becomes a powerful metaphor for a sense of attachment and belonging. As discussed, the Hong Kong government told Hong Kong Chinese that Hong Kong is “our home” during times of political uncertainty.

In order to accommodate the WTO meeting, the Hong Kong government heavily restricted traffic in the downtown area. The media highlighted stories about traffic detour, suspension of public services and businesses, and the inconvenience experienced by the public; only the economically active population was seen as citizens (Dagnino 2005; Lister et al. 2005). The working public, small business owners and taxi drivers were used to represent citizens’ voice. The media did not care too much about how the economically inactive and the marginalised citizens (such as the homeless) felt about the road blocks. Filipino domestic helpers in Hong Kong gather in public space on holidays; a restricted downtown area may limit their rights to gather. However, as the media and the government have long neglected the citizen rights of this labour class of foreign national, their right to space was not deemed as an issue.

When asked how the government can help employees to commute to work, an official advised companies to implement flexible workdays for employees, and advised employees to take annual leave or telecommute from home. To the government, workers’ inconvenience should be subordinate to that of the companies and Hong Kong productivity. The Hong Kong Chief Executive and the Conference Chairman both expressed empathy for the Hong Kong people but insisted that citizens need to contribute to Hong Kong’s commitment to free trade. This illustrates Jameson’s (1998) point that the freedom of capital compromises citizens’ freedom of mobility. After the WTO meeting, the Chief Executive and various high-level officials staged a high-profile PR event for the media. The government expressed its concerns to affected businesses, and proposed to bus mainland Chinese tourists to affected areas to stimulate consumption. As will be further discussed in the next section, mainland Chinese are only granted mobility in the city if they consume.

Some citizens questioned their rights to mobility, but they tended to blame the protesters and government officials rather than the WTO delegates. This illustrates that the most powerful have the privilege to maximum mobility and enjoy a com-

mand of space. The government and the media affirm WTO delegates' legitimacy as political actors, hence their behaviours and actions were not monitored at all. Similarly, large companies could choose the sites of operation and control the flow of labour through renting office space elsewhere and through demanding employees for accommodation at the expense of employees' extra time to commute.

Whilst some Hong Kong Chinese expressed a desire to go home in the disorienting global space (Morley and Robin 1995), others were spectators in global space. In the majority of news reports, Hong Kong Chinese were represented as passive onlookers who took pictures and recorded video of the events from *outside* the protest areas. The behaviour of the onlookers was not unlike those of Disney visitors. As will be mentioned in the next section, a consumer society has trained members to be quiet citizens. Thoroughly trained as consumers, Hong Kong Chinese view protests as a spectacle like a Disney parade where onlookers can be passive participants who consume images of no depth. In line with what Baudrillard wrote about simulacra (Baudrillard 2001), Hong Kong Chinese believe that the images do not represent anything other than the images themselves. This postmodern understanding of protests epitomises how a neoliberal spatiotemporal order has masked material relations as symbolic ones.

There were few instances in which the media reported on Hong Kong Chinese who transcended naturalised social relations. A few sympathetic Hong Kong Chinese expressed pity towards the South Korean protestors. Women were used to represent the Mother whose love transcends cultural, linguistic, national, racial, and ethnic boundary: a woman was shown treating South Korean farmers to Cantonese dim sum, and she was quoted as feeling sorry for their economic deprivation. Another woman told a TV journalist that she has wept after watching the protest. In both cases, South Korean protestors were reduced to the status of children who needed to be taken care of by a Mother.

The media have largely neglected Hong Kong Chinese who participated in the protest as public citizens. The media barely mentioned there were Hong Kong citizens among the protesters but gave no exact number. A news story showed a marching local public servant who expressed concerns about the privatization of the service industry and the potential harm that it would pose to local workers. This story was not followed up. Furthermore, the media questioned the rationality of two Hong Kong citizens who joined South Korean farmers waiting to be arrested.

Global space could unsettle naturalised social relations by having the global north interacts with the global south. In the Hong Kong media coverage of the WTO meeting, the media sidetracked the relations between the WTO delegates and the protestors. It instead focused on the relations between the protestors and Hong Kong Chinese. The antagonising relation is reinforced by the difference between South Korean farmers and Hong Kong Chinese in a global space.

Social groups are pitted against one another for economic survival in the global economy. Factory owners exploit predominately women workers by threatening that their exploitative jobs will be *taken away* to another country if they do not accept the long hours and the low pay. American workers are told by politicians that overseas workers have *taken away* their jobs. African American workers gradually find their low-paying jobs have been *taken away* by Hispanic workers. The race to the bottom occurs locally, nationally, and globally. In the media coverage of the WTO

protest in Hong Kong, South Korean farmers were singled out as the group that clogged the flow of money and capital of Hong Kong, and hence the livelihood of the population. WTO delegates and other proponents of the global economy were not alleged in the media to be the powerful social actors who decide how the production, distribution and consumption of goods, wealth and resources should be allocated. The footloose global capital was not blamed for job losses. Instead, a different, alien group is said to *take away* the rights to survive from some other groups.

Disney Citizens

For many men and women, especially youth, the questions specific to citizenship, such as how we inform ourselves and who represents our interests, are answered more often than not through private consumption of commodities and media offerings than through the abstract rules of democracy or through participation in discredited political organizations (Canclini 2001, 5).

The second case of global space discussed is the construction of Hong Kong Disneyland. This case is illustrative of how public money was used to build a private, global space in the name of benefitting the public. Ironically, private space such as Disneyland has become a site that resembles a public space in an increasingly privatised world. Disneyland citizens are those who consume both material goods and images. Similar to the case of WTO protest, a global space unsettles social relations. Yet the media seized the chance to reinforce the consumerist ideal of the Hong Kong Chinese identity while singling out mainland Chinese as clueless consumers.

The innocent discourse of Disney has taught consumers to be quiet citizens who question little about social relations and regulated practices. Disneyland exemplifies a neoliberal, global space. Disneyland can be built in any city in the world as long as the location can attract enough visitors. Regardless of the geographical location, Disneyland is void of any local reference. Visitors are reminded that they are in the magic kingdom. The capital that funds Disneyland is footloose. The Disney Corporation can sell its stakes in Hong Kong Disneyland and charge for management and licencing fees only. Tokyo Disneyland, for instance, is not owned by the Disney Corporation.

In order to fulfil its ambition to be the Asia's World City, the Hong Kong government used public money and exploited public trust to reach the business deal with Disney. Hong Kong Disneyland is a collaboration between the Disney Corporation and the Hong Kong Government. Disney hopes the amusement park will provide an avenue for mainland Chinese to learn to be Disney citizens/consumers before the Chinese Central Government loosens regulations on imported foreign films and television shows. The Hong Kong Government believes that the park will help to establish Hong Kong as a global city (Lo 2005). Defending the exorbitant amount to build the park, the former Chief Secretary Anson Chan said that both Disney and Hong Kong are internationally well-known brand names, hence one cannot put a price on Disney choosing Hong Kong as a partner.³

The government paid for 90 percent of the construction costs but it only owns 57 percent of the park. It also has to bear the cost of building a new railroad, public facilities (such as fire station), and infrastructure (such as highway). At the initial stage, the government's astronomical expenditure on the construction and infra-

structure far exceeds the potential profits. The negotiation was hardly democratic; the public was not informed of the closed doors talk until the agreement was reached. To defend the question of whether the business deal is fair, the former Chief Secretary responded that Hong Kong people could assume ownership of the park. The discourse of “ownership” society asks citizens to realign themselves as stockholders in a private market in which the individual is a consumer who makes rational choices about expenditures (Miller 2007). The Financial Secretary further urged the public to focus on the economic return to the community. However, some Christian groups doubted if the working class would benefit. Furthermore, Disneyland employees are subject to some appalling working conditions: short notice of work schedule, 13-hour workday, unpaid lunch break, inadequate recess time and rest area.⁴

As a private space, Disneyland attempts to replicate many remnants of public space. One of the main attractions Main Street USA is modelled after the town centre of US Midwest small towns in the early 1900s. Main Street USA was imagined to be a place where citizens meet and exchange latest news. The daily parade borrows its concept from Independence Day parade where citizens practise citizenship by showing patriotism. Regardless of one’s gender, race, ethnicity, nationality, and age, visitors are treated equally and courteously by staff members. Once visitors enter the park, they are free to roam around the park without interference. In a privatised world, it is gradually difficult for citizens to walk in a roomy space that is safe, clean, and commercial-free. The identical treatment that all visitors receive may be disguised as equality in a democracy.

Disneyland is constructed as a space where there is no death, no sickness, no sadness, no terror and no everyday worries (Wasko 2001). Disneyland management carefully plans how the park is utilised, including how visitors should occupy space, how they should flow in space, and how much time they should spend in a particular space.

Disney also controls interpretation of the park by actively rejecting any negotiated and oppositional readings of it. When the mother of this author pointed out the Saharan animals in the Adventureland are fake, the boat captain replied that they are actually real. The second time when we took the boat trip, a different captain delivered the same script, but we learned how to answer the questions correctly.

Disney’s ambition is to shape how visitors think, behave, and act in the way that the company wants them to (Giroux 2000). It wants to turn consumers into Disney citizens who have a sense of belonging to the Disney world. Not only does Disney dismiss cultural differences in meaning-making, the park management also ignores local laws by refusing to let uniformed food inspectors to enter the park.⁵ The park is constructed in a remote part of Hong Kong where space is devoid of any geographical and cultural references. Visitors at Disneyland are not supposed to believe they are in Hong Kong or China, but in the magical Disneyland. The Hong Kong Government wanted the park to reflect Chinese culture, but Disney rejected by arguing that visitors should have a genuine Disney experience (Slater 1999). Disney changed its mind only after the park failed to attract enough mainland Chinese tourists (Fowler 2008).

In order to ensure the flow of consumers to Disneyland, the Hong Kong government encourages the flow of mainland Chinese tourists to Hong Kong to consume.

The Hong Kong Government believed that Disneyland would magically lift Hong Kong out of economic recession. Encountering the declining number of tourists after 1997, the Hong Kong Government heavily lobbied the Chinese Central Government to relax tourist regulation so that more mainland Chinese could visit Hong Kong to consume. The Chinese National Tourism Administration abolished the tourist quota system in 2002 and banks were allowed to exchange foreign currency. Launched in 2003, “individual visit scheme” (the Chinese name is appropriately called “freedom walk”) allowed residents in four Guangdong cities to travel overseas without joining a tour group. As of 2006, residents of the entire Guangdong province and those of 21 cities in other provinces were permitted to travel to 81 countries (the US not being one of them). Hong Kong benefits economically: In 2005, more than half of the 23 million visitors were mainland Chinese; 2.5 million of them visited Disneyland in the first two months.⁶ The Hong Kong government even suggested to the Chinese Central government that special Disney visa could be granted to mainland Chinese visitors.

The flow of mainland Chinese visitors has an implication on an international division of labour in a global space, which alters social relations and unsettles the meaning of Hong Kong Chinese. Locals who work in the tourist industry find themselves serving mainland Chinese who historically have been seen as a backward, uncivilised, lower class under the colonial “Hong Kong Chinese” discourse. The consumption power of mainland Chinese tourists is now comparable to, if not superior to that of tourists from other countries. If consumption power no longer differentiates Hong Kong Chinese from mainland Chinese, then what is left of this constructed identity? Similar to how the media singled out South Korean farmers as the villains who endangered the livelihood of Hong Kong Chinese during the WTO protest, Disney management and the local media singled out mainland Chinese visitors as bad citizens. In a private space, a bad citizen is someone who does not spend enough.

The management feels that mainland Chinese tourists need to modify their behaviour so that the park can run more. For example, the park found Chinese tourists spend a lot of time taking pictures, spend little money on souvenirs, and crowd at the restaurants at the same time. As the park does not understand why, unlike Americans, mainland Chinese eat lunch only during lunch hours, the management decides education is essential to change visitors’ behaviour. The remedy is to control imagination (Wasko 2001). The park issues a one-page Chinese guide instructing tourists how to enjoy Disneyland, and why it is enjoyable (Fowler and Marr 2006). The company also runs television advertisements in mainland China explicating how to enjoy Disneyland with family. The advertising executive stated that the park has to hold the hands of Chinese consumers and tell them what to expect (Marr and Fowler 2006). Both the Hong Kong Government and the park hope to familiarise mainland Chinese with Disney by having Disney characters tour major Chinese cities and by broadcasting TV programmes starring Hong Kong and mainland pop stars to introduce the theme park.⁷

The local media reinforce the difference between mainland Chinese and Hong Kong Chinese by highlighting the former’s ignorance of consumer lifestyle. For example, for games that require verbal explanation, visitors can queue at the Cantonese line (for Hong Kong Chinese), the Mandarin line (for mainland Chinese

and Taiwanese), or the English line (for the rest). The media advise the locals to line up at the English line if the Cantonese one is long because the Mandarin line is said to be less orderly and civilised. The local media tirelessly contrast the differences between Hong Kong Chinese and mainland Chinese. The former were portrayed as jaded, sophisticated consumers who are well-versed in the rules of consumption. The locals compared the Hong Kong park with those overseas and lamented inadequate space and choices. The mainland Chinese, on the other hand, were portrayed as clueless consumers who have little respect for civil behaviour and little regard for personal hygiene. Similar to South Korean farmers during the WTO protest, the use of space of mainland Chinese in Disneyland is scrutinised. For example, visitors are not allowed to sit on the sidewalk because this behaviour is associated with mainland Chinese.

Returning to Space

Political economists and cultural studies theorists both argue that citizenship can only be fostered in public space. Yet, it is unknown if public space automatically creates a stronger citizenship. This paper argues that practice of citizenship has to be understood in a local setting because (1) the concept of citizenship implies universalism without taking particularities into account; (2) there is an assumption that social actors understand what citizenship means and find it meaningful; (3) a neoliberal spatiotemporal ideology governs how space is interpreted.

This paper looks at how the state, the media, and the locals interpret the meanings of space and construct citizenship during the WTO meeting and inside the Hong Kong Disneyland. Due to British colonisation and then re-unification with China, the Hong Kong Chinese identity is argued to be a vague and ambiguous form of citizenship. It is more of a racially/ethnically exclusive and consumerist identity. Precisely because of its unclear nature, the meanings of citizenship can be molded by the state, the media, the corporation, and the locals to achieve political economic purpose.

Scholars have argued that naturalised social relations can be unsettled in global space, yet global space can also solidify the interests of a particular social group. Facing the changing social relations under an integrated global economy, social groups often respond by asserting their group rights in the forms of cultural politics, ethnic identities, local communities, nationalism, and religious fundamentalism (Islin and Wood 1999; Robertson 1995; Della Porta et al. 2006). The disfranchised population often looks up to the media to learn who they are as citizens (Croucher 2003).

The cases of the WTO meeting and Hong Kong Disneyland are two illustrative but different examples to show how the state, the media and the locals reinforce the Hong Kong Chinese identity by demonising the Other – South Korean farmers in the WTO meeting and mainland Chinese in Hong Kong Disneyland. Appropriating a neoliberal spatiotemporal frame, the media believe space should facilitate a maximum flow of capital. Therefore when WTO protestors make themselves visible in public space and when mainland Chinese flout rules in Disneyland, the media highlighted how these two social groups endangered Hong Kong economy and the Hong Kong Chinese identity.

Although the cases of WTO meeting and Hong Kong Disneyland are representative of how global space is interpreted and how that interpretation is related

to the construction of citizenship, there are many cases in which the neoliberal spatiotemporal order may not apply. It is unarguable that Hong Kong is a global city, but is everywhere in Hong Kong a global space? To give an extreme example, is prison a global space? There are instances that show global space is temporarily void of global capital accumulation. For example, the very streets that WTO protestors marched on have also held a few, large-scaled mass demonstration in which Hong Kong people showed their grievances towards the bad governance during the tenure of the first Chief Executive Tung Chee-hwa. In that context, was the global space no longer global because it does not accumulate capital? Did the global space return to public space?

The above questions imply that as powerful as (economic) globalisation theories and international political economy are to explain the changing nature of space and social relations, they do have their blindspots.

Notes:

1. As someone who grew up in Hong Kong and underwent a colonial education from kindergarten to graduate school, this section was written from an interpretivist, autoethnographic perspective.
2. The television news examined come from the Chinese channels of the two Hong Kong television stations TVB and ATV. TVB, in particular, almost monopolies the local television market by owning 80 percent market share of broadcast television. Its status is unchallenged by the underdog ATV and the newcomer cable television. It is possible that TV audience watch the evening news of both stations as ATV's one starts at six and TVB's half an hour later. WTO-related news from the time period December 5, 2005-January 2, 2006 were used for the analysis
3. "Chief Secretary for Administration: Hong Kong Disneyland A Sound Investment." Hong Kong Government press release. 2 November, 1999.
4. "Transcript of press conference on HK Disneyland project." Hong Kong Government press release. November 3, 1999.
5. The daily operation of the park shows how Disney strictly controls the Disneyland image. Soon after its opening, two uniformed food inspectors who wished to investigate a reported case of food poisoning were asked to remove their caps and badges to conceal their identities. The local media later criticised the abuse of power by Disney ("Disney's hegemony incites public anger" 2005).
6. Market summary (Feb. 2006) – Mainland China. The Network for HK Tourism Partners.
7. Pop stars narrating their love for Hong Kong. Discover Hong Kong. <http://www.discoverhongkong.com/taiwan/tvprogram/index.jhtml>. Last access: June 14 2006.

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