Placing Reedy Creek Improvement District in Central Florida: A Case Study in Uneven Geographical Development

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Placing Reedy Creek Improvement District in Central Florida:

A Case Study in Uneven Geographical Development

by

Kristine Bezdecny

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements of
Doctor of Philosophy
Department of Geography, Environment, and Planning
College of Arts and Sciences
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Date of approval:
December 3, 2010

Keywords: urban geography, Celebration, urban revitalization, tourism, Walt Disney World

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Dedication

Tra’a – of all the accomplishments in my life, none is more valuable to me than you. Your growth and your support during this process has been an inspiration to me. I am honored and privileged to be your mom.

Thank you, little love.
Acknowledgements

I want to begin by thanking my committee for being, well, my committee! I also want to thank Dr. Amen for his role as both professor and as defense chair, and Dr. Andrew Berish: your Place and Mobility in America class solidified the theoretical perspectives used throughout this dissertation.

To my friends and former co-workers at the Center for Urban Transportation Research: you are amazing, and it has been a pleasure working and laughing with you. To my MobileWorld team at Esri, especially Alyson Smith and Violet Michniuk: thank you for your support of the insanity, and to Randy Worch, who never once blinked twice at doing whatever he could to allow me to finish this major step.

Ivana Blankenship: I hope you understand how much your friendship has meant to me over the years. Your cynical humor helped me to weather many difficult moments during this process. You rock!

Most importantly, to my family, Dick and Tra’a, I love you very much. While there have been many rocky moments, you have done much more than I could ever ask for in allowing me to complete this dream.

This endeavor began August 29, 2000, when I entered class at USF for the first time, on a whim. In swept a professor who would proceed to explain to the class the object of study of geography – and I have been hooked ever since. It is only fitting that I end this journey as I began it: thank you, Kevin, for your knowledge, wisdom, advice, humor, commiseration, and support throughout it all as my advisor. Je vous remercie!
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Abstract

This study is primarily about the theory of uneven geographical development. In an era when it is proclaimed that, through globalization, the world has become flat, the unevenness of economic and social development is often overlooked or suppressed. As the nexus between global and local processes, the urban space often becomes the site of conflict between those defining the hegemonic narrative of the space, from a global and flat perspective; and those experiencing heterogenous local narratives, whose uneven positions are reinforced by this hegemonic narrative.

This study explores the conditions of uneven geographical development in the urban space of central Florida. Focusing primarily on the Reedy Creek Improvement District (RCID), better known by much of the world as Walt Disney World, and on Celebration, the community developed by the Disney Corporation in the 1990s, the relationship between urban development and tourism, the defining economic sector in the region, are explored in the context of space-place, global-local narratives.

This is done using the four conditions of David Harvey’s Theory of Uneven Geographical Development. First, the history of sociopolitical processes within the urban space are explored as creating a framework upon which contemporary uneven geographical development could be built. Second, the development and continued power of the RCID in central Florida are examined within the context of accumulation by dispossession. Third, Celebration as a consumed company town is examined in the
context of accumulation across space-time. Finally, the relationships between the RCID and Celebration, and the rest of the central Florida region, are developed in the context of struggles occurring simultaneously across multiple scales.

This study shows that the theory of uneven geographical development applies well to a region that is heavily dependent upon the tourist sector for its economy, and thereby works to control the narrative of that space to continue attracting consumers. It also shows that, while the theory of uneven geographical development works well for a space that is a primary global tourist sink, it needs additional theoretical sophistication in order to better suit rapidly changing global processes.
Chapter One

Introducing Uneven Geographical Development

Introduction

The research presented in this study is about uneven geographical development, which is considered a spatial necessity within capitalism. A call has been made for the furthering of the theory of uneven geographical development, particularly as developed through the exploration of the internal processes of any given urban space (Harvey 2006). That is the primary purpose and rationale of this research.

The theory of uneven geographical development is approached through a case study on urban development and tourism in central Florida. Tourism and urban development are inherently uneven spatial processes that exist across multiple scales simultaneously. Often the impacts upon one scale can become contradictory at another, exacerbating the unevenness of the process. Not only are these processes continually (re)produced within a given landscape, but pre-existing internal processes and infrastructure still impact contemporary relationships within the region (the legacy effect).

The Orlando-Kissimmee metropolitan statistical area (MSA) is defined as Orange, Osceola, Seminole, and Lake counties (see Figure 1-1). Based on Journey to Work data, Orlando MSA also receives significant number of workers from Volusia, Polk,
Figure 1-1. Location of Orlando, Florida.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006.
Brevard, Marion, and Sumter counties (Census Transportation Planning Package 2000). The population of the MSA is the third most populous in the state, behind Tampa/St. Petersburg/Clearwater and Miami, and its population has increased 866% between 1950 and 2004 (U.S. Census Bureau 1950; U.S. Census Bureau 2004). Tourism is a driving force of the Florida economy, in general, and the economy of central Florida, in particular.

Orlando can be viewed as a quintessential tourist city, due to its globally well-known tourist sector and the choices made by the city to facilitate that sector for the past 35 years. Orlando is now one of the most visited urban spaces on the planet. Walt Disney World, located roughly 20 miles southwest of Orlando proper, is the single largest private employer in the state of Florida and one of the most visited tourist attractions in the world. In addition, Orlando also hosts Universal Orlando, Sea World Orlando, and several medium-to-small tourist attractions, as well as the necessary infrastructure to support this sector (e.g. restaurants and hotels). Local needs, including revitalization of existing residential neighborhoods, have often been viewed in the past as being secondary to the external drives of the tourist sector.

This case study specifically explores the primary tourist sink in the region, Walt Disney World, as well as urban development initially driven by the Disney Corporation in Celebration, Florida. The history of urban development and tourism in the region is explored, to show the existing legacy upon which Walt Disney World was socially constructed. The impact of developments such as Walt Disney World and Celebration across the central Florida space upon multiple scales is also then discussed. This is to
both utilize the theory of uneven geographical development as an interpretive tool for the study, and to test the efficacy of the theory, as it currently is conceptualized.

**Geography as a Holistic Science**

Many have argued that the very object of study of geography “is the study of variations in the human-environment relationship” (Archer 1995, 406; see Figure 2). There are three ways in which this relationship has been viewed historically and geographically, according to Archer (1995). The first view is of humans having a dominating impact on the environment. This would include the views that humans can completely control nature, once they fully comprehend all the necessary laws of the universe. It would also include behavioralist arguments, concerning the ability of human choice, or free will, to transcend its contextual environment. It is the view of the supremacy of human agency.

The second relationship instead emphasizes the impact of the environment upon humans, or the environmental determinist view. This would include the ideas, both in their “positive” and “negative” variations, that humans are created by their environment. It is the concept that the environment, or “fate,” transcends the ability of humans to change themselves through will. It is the view of the supremacy of the structural argument.

Lastly is a probabilistic view of the human-environment relationship. This view is more complex than the relatively “either-or” aspects of the previous two views. It is the view of the complex interplay between humans and the environment, as they continually change and are changed. Rather than arguing fate versus free will or
Figure 1-2. The Object of Study of Human Geography.

Adapted from Archer (1995).

agency versus structure, this view would recognize the necessary relationship existing between these two extremes.

These three views of the human-environment relationship become especially telling when viewing the relationship between humans and the humanly-constructed environment of the urban space. It is precisely this relationship that impacts the perceptions that humans make concerning their environment. What becomes important is that the perceptions humans often form about the city concern the illusions developed by that city in order to perpetuate its very existence. Often, the actual relationships that exist between humans and their urban environment are quite different from those projected externally regarding that same environment.

This manifests itself quite interestingly in geography. Like history, geography does not always agree with or honor the disciplinary bounds that have been laid down by
the division of labor in academia. Unlike history, geography tends to look at contemporary issues and draw across social and physical sciences, and the humanities, something often viewed as stepping on the toes of the expertise of those other disciplines.

An example of geography as a holistic discipline can be drawn from research conducted in urban geography. Urban geographers focus on the city as their spatial extant, and examine relationships that exist within that space, be they social, cultural, economic, political, historical, architectural, or environmental (both natural and human-constructed environmental conditions spanning climatology, biology, medicine, geology, among others). These are topics that traditionally have been kept separated by disciplinary boundaries, rather than investigated through the lens of the “big picture.”

A case in point would be Harvey’s assessment of Second Empire Paris (Harvey 1985). By focusing primarily on the urban space of Paris, he discussed interrelationships across a wide variety of topics that would typically be viewed from within disciplinary boundaries. A plethora of factors are covered, from politics and labor relations, to gender- and class-based social relations, to the architecture of Haussmann’s renewal project and its ideological and material implications to various communities within Paris and its symbology, and even the role of Paris in both the rise and the decline of the Second Empire. In doing so, rather than focusing on a specific set of minutiae related to one particular discipline, a much sharper image of the urban space is brought into relief, as well as a more complex and dynamic understanding of the shifting relationships between the existing conditions of the times. This holistic view of the urban space allows for a deeper and richer understanding of both the landscape and the constantly shifting dynamics of the city.
The issue with geography as a holistic science comes both from its theoretical and its practical unevenness. Theoretically, not all geographical traditions espouse the idea of geography as a holistic science. At times and in places, some have considered it to be a regional science, or a (quantitative geo)spatial science, but oftentimes with disciplinary implications, rather than holistic ones. This is particularly the case when viewing the quantitative revolution and positivism within geography. Through the philosophical shifts inherent in the “quantitative revolution” of the 1950s and 1960s within the discipline, attempts were made to define a bounded geographical discipline, one that would have a set purview within the academic institutions (e.g. Garrison 1960; Berry 1963; Haggett 1965; Harvey 1969). This was an attempt, though using Kant’s more holistic model as a basis for their arguments, to actually stifle holism within the geographic tradition. With the advent of critiques to those philosophical shifts, however, there has been a return to a holistic study of geography, if not necessarily the study of geography (e.g. Tuan 1974; Relph 1976; Harvey 1973). Interestingly, however, a movement back toward a philosophical model similar to the hegemonic theories of the quantitative revolution is currently taking place, driven by the explosion of geographical information systems analysis.

While this is not the focus of the current research, and while geographical information systems are employed in later chapters, this research was conducted within the framework of a humanist, holistic philosophical/geographical perspective. This research adopts the third view of the human-environment relationship, as it relates to the humanly-constructed urban environment (see Figure 1-2). The focus will be upon the relations between social groups within the central Florida space and the humanly-
constructed, particularly the social, environments they (re)produce (a la Lefebvre 1991). These relations will then be examined within the framework of uneven geographical development, both in how those relations have been created, which spaces become favored over others, and furthermore, as social constructions, how those relations can then be altered.

**Uneven Geographical Development**

According to Smith (1984), uneven geographical development is the dynamic consequence of a “see-saw” relationship between “a tendency toward the equalization of the conditions of production” and an inherent tendency toward competitive differentiation within capitalism, creating the “concrete determinants of uneven development” (Smith 1984, 114). This becomes a key component of uneven geographical development: “the dialectic of geographical differentiation and equalization is ultimately responsible for the pattern of uneven development, [but] it does not on its own completely specify the process” (*ibid.*, 131).

The urban space is seen as the smallest of three primary scales of production of space via capitalism and at which uneven geographical development tends to occur (Smith 1984, 135). At this scale, “the development of underdeveloped areas leads to a rapid increase in ground rent and the frustration, after a point, of further development … that is, capital attempts to see-saw from a developed to an underdeveloped area, then at a later point back to the first area which is by now underdeveloped, and so forth” (*ibid.*, 149). The result within the space is both an attempt at responding to crises spatially and simultaneously creating the spatial foundation for subsequent crises.
Uneven geographical development is directly tied to the need of capitalist economic sectors to continue to expand in order to survive. In order for the system to be (re)produced, some spaces must be unevenly developed (Harvey 1990). The theory of uneven geographical development is seen by Harvey (2006) as having four conditions (Figure 1-3; see below). These conditions include the accumulation of capital through dispossession and within space-time; material processes embedded within lived space; and struggles regarding uneven geographical development occurring at multiple scales simultaneously.

![Diagram of Uneven Geographical Development](image)

**Figure 1-3. The Four Conditions of Uneven Geographical Development.**

*Source: Harvey 2006.*

The shift in focus from the Fordist to post-Fordist economies in the 1970s, and the accompanying early shifts from managerial to entrepreneurial forms of governance, and, in this case, particularly urban revitalization policies, has occurred at the same time as
“the state has come to tolerate – perhaps even encourage – a high level of uneven geographical development as cities and regions participate in intensified competition over capital accumulation opportunities” (Marston 2000, 225; Swyngedouw 2001; Brenner 1999).

Under the managerial rubric, Marston (2000) sees the state as having attempted to facilitate dynamics that would mitigate, rather than exacerbate, the impacts of uneven development across the urban space. In fact, “while some socioeconomic differences may become smaller in some places as the result of capitalism, they are often exacerbated at other scales as a result of pervasive processes of uneven development” (Swyngedouw 2001, 118). Brenner and Theodore (2002), however, also sees these revitalization projects as policy responses within a given place to spatially uneven development. Having said that, “neoliberal political practice has generated … new forms of social polarization, and a dramatic intensification of uneven development at all spatial scales” (Brenner and Theodore 2002, 352). This uneven development is constantly shifting, such that the spatial manifestation of uneven development is dynamic in nature (ibid.; Massey 1985). These shifting dynamics in turn act to fuel further unevenness across space (Eley 2007).

What is interesting is that it is the application of uneven geographical development within space that is at issue, not the right of uneven development in the first place. In other words, there is not necessarily anything inherently wrong with differentiation between spaces. It is the dynamics by which they are differentiated, along with the question of who benefits from that difference, that is potentially at issue. It
becomes a question of context: the interrelationships that exist within and between the unevenly developed space(s).

The problem becomes when the uneven development is “a capitalistically imposed necessity that diminishes life chances in one place in order to enhance them elsewhere” (Harvey 2000, 251). This is the zero-sum game that is often associated with globalization – when a space can only progress developmentally at the expense of other spaces. This is exemplified by the imperial system that remained in place through World War II across much of the globe: resources from colonial spaces were frequently used to progress the development of the controlling nation.

Yet uneven geographical development is also a right, in that it “implies the right to be different” when an individual or group actively chooses their right not to develop to a standard imposed by whatever fictitious global authority (typically capitalism and its agents) tells them they should develop (Harvey 2000, 251). The Zapatistas would be a visible symbol of the right to uneven geographical development in their protests over NAFTA in the mid-1990s. Their desire was not to converge within a regional economic block, which also had conditions of imposed uneven development constructed within the agreement, but instead their desire was for self-determination within a context of their choosing.

One caveat that Harvey (2006) warns of, however, is that a lack of understanding of the processes that impose uneven geographical development can lead to those choosing an alternative form of uneven development to do so within the very same framework they seek to oppose. Attempting to seek an alternative to uneven geographical development can inadvertently lead to further unevenness. In other words,
change to unevenly developed spaces could become a double-edged sword, if the causes of the unevenness are not adequately interpreted and addressed. This would cause the solution to instead exacerbate the problem being redressed.

One more connection needs to be made: not just that of space and time, but of space-time and social construction. In other words, it must be recognized “that space and time are social constructs” (Harvey 1990, 418; also see Soja 1996). Harvey posits that “each social formation constructs objective conceptions of space and time sufficient unto its own needs and purposes of material and social reproduction and organizes its material practices in accordance with those conceptions” (Ibid., 419). Put more succinctly, “(Social) space is a (social) product” (Lefebvre 1991, 26; original emphasis).

The theory of uneven geographical development is in need of further investigation (Harvey 2006). This “theory should be understood...as an evolving structure of argument sensitive to encounters with the complex ways in which social processes are materially embedded in the web of life” (Ibid., 79). This is an idea directly related to the competition of places within and between urban spaces in the context of global-local relations, particularly within the tourist sectors. Urban development also involves uneven geographical development, either in the choice of which areas to develop, how to accomplish this task, and what infrastructure, physical or social, becomes a legacy embedded within the socially-constructed environment. As stated above, the research is investigated from within the framework of uneven geographical development, and seeks to further the theory through the exploration of how this concept is internalized within the space of central Florida.
Investigating Uneven Geographical Development in Central Florida

The First Condition

The first condition of uneven geographical development (Figure 1-3) is the material embedding of capitalist processes in social life: “the uneven geographical development of everyday life is the product of processes whereby we make ourselves and our world through transformative activities, with respect to both discursive understandings and daily-life practices” (Harvey 2006, 86). This embedding is a social construct upon/within a given space, often with a historical legacy. This legacy is often a factor that those participating in the embedding process are unaware of; they are simply (re) acting and (re) producing within the social space as they have always done on a day-to-day basis. This, in and of itself, is a sign that the process has been embedded within the space: it has been internalized socially such that it is often not consciously driven by those actively involved in its continuation.

The embedding of practices, however, does not occur within a sociospatial vacuum. As Harvey notes, the system remains open, both to influences from other spatial locations/scales, but also changes within the internalized social fabric (Harvey 2006, 77). This would also include any unintended consequences that occur as a result of the embedded, though still dynamic, processes, that take on the appearance of “common sense” within the space (ibid., 85). In order to analyze uneven geographical development in a given space, “the task of enquiry is to identify these underlying forces by critical analysis and detailed inspection of the individual instance” (ibid., 86). From this perspective, an historical geographical investigation of urban development in the central
Florida region, particularly as it has intersected with tourism, is undertaken in Chapter Three.

The Second Condition

The second condition of uneven geographical development is the accumulation by dispossession, rather than through the physical act of creation. This is seen as a necessary component of capitalism, where “uneven geographical development through dispossession … is a corollary of capitalist stability” (Harvey 2006, 93). This also includes, through the control of resources gained through dispossession, the ability to devalue and, if deemed necessary, destroy those resources. It becomes a symptom of the component of retooling, or creative destruction, that is a predicate of capitalism. In the case of urban redevelopment in general, one could argue that spaces became devalued with the attachment of the label of blight, in many cases leading to the removal (destroying) of the physical infrastructure of the environment, which by extension also displaces the social humanly constructed community from the space. This space, whether redeveloped or left vacant, gained value through the cycle of devaluation: that space now exhibited the potential for opportunities that could not be conceived had the space remained in its original state, with the socio-physical legacy that it entailed.

Harvey uses tourism as an example of accumulation by dispossession (Harvey 2006, 92). Tourism becomes “the appropriation of cultural histories as commodities to be consumed” (ibid.). The uniqueness or niche that a particular place can claim becomes a product that can be appropriated with little additional need for creation, once that niche has been recognized or initially invested in. Appropriation can be economic, but also
political (and, through policy, legal), physical (through the appropriation of natural and infrastructural resources) and social.

Historical tourism, and the urban theming that accompanies this enterprise, is a prime example of accumulation by dispossession. This entire industry is predicated on accumulation predicated on the theming of a particular version of the history of a space, and highlighting its uniqueness or niche compared to similarly themed spaces. This belies the real histories experienced in that same place, and the legacies that still may exist as a result of pre-existing relations in that place. This sociopolitical aspect, however, is often suppressed in this process, and rarely benefits directly from the industry that has accumulated based on a particular version of that space’s sociopolitical past. The very history of the space is disposessed in order to accumulate profit. More on how this has directly impacted the space of central Florida will be discussed in later chapters.

Accumulation by dispossession, at its heart, is an issue of consumption, rather than production. Whether the dispossession is physical assets, or represents an intangible, such as the perceived reputation of a space (in the case of tourist theming), it represents an act of capital accumulation by an entity through that entity bypassing the production cycle. Rather, the focus is on creating demand to consume, and thereby profit from, that which was disposessed.

The key is to entice consumption of the product, or the perception; in the case of tourism, that enticement requires the consumer to travel to the site of production. This leads to crises, less of production, and more of consumption: with accumulation by dispossession, there is the constant need to find new ways of consumption requiring little or no production, while creating a situation in which, through the lack of production, a
population may not have the finances to use toward consumption. This becomes relational to the spatial struggles that are the fourth condition: struggles across and within spaces of unevenness partially due to this gap.

In the case of the Reedy Creek Improvement District, the focus will be primarily on its embedding of dispossession within its sociospatial construction. This includes both the parallels between Walt Disney World’s urban space and gentrification, as well as the de-annexation of property from the RCID for the creation of Celebration (see Chapter 5). This will blend the use of the historical methods applied for the first condition with the investigation of the relationship between urban development and urban theming applied for the third condition (see below). The use of visual texts, except for the observational notes from such visual texts as are incorporated in the narrative, will not be used when exploring the current Reedy Creek Improvement District, due to copyright issues extended to the space (Bryman 2004; Sorkin 1992).

The focus on the Reedy Creek Improvement District will begin with the period of time in which land was purchased to develop the theme park complex that became known as Walt Disney World, and continue by exploring the creation of the Reedy Creek Improvement District by the Florida legislature, to the rise of Walt Disney World as an economic sink within the region. The primary focus will be the dynamics existing through the mid- to late-1990s. This period in time coincides with the rapid expansion of the region, demographically and economically, primarily driven by tourism. This is undertaken in Chapter Four.
The Third Condition

The third condition Harvey (2006) puts forth is the accumulation of capital in space-time, by which “the coercive laws of competition push capitalists to relocate production to more advantageous sites and the special requirements of particular forms of commodity production push capitalists into territorial specializations” (ibid., 98). Harvey draws upon his work in *The Limits to Capital* (1982) and *Spaces of Capital* (2001) to develop this condition. At this point in uneven geographical development, the historical sociospatial conditions have been set in place for the (re) production of the dynamic: processes have been sociospatially embedded, and accumulation by dispossession has/is occurring, as any initial creation necessary for the process has already occurred. This is the contemporary processes of accumulation within the space that are (re) producing uneven geographical development presently.

Due to the complexity involved in the conditions for capitalism to continue to develop, this condition for uneven geographical development exhibits similar depth to its internal relations. It is, perhaps, too broad of a condition in and of itself; the possibility of expanding this validly beyond a single condition of uneven geographical development will be explored in Chapter Five. Within Harvey’s (2006) construction, accumulation in space-time includes several factors that relate to the (re)production of uneven geographical development:

- Market exchange;
- Coercive laws of spatial competition;
- Geographical divisions of labor;
- Monopolistic competition;
• Speed-up and the annihilation of space through time;
• Physical infrastructures for production and consumption;
• The production of regionality;
• The production of scale;
• Territorial systems of political administration; and
• The geopolitics of capital.

Market exchange refers in part to “the daily flow of labor power between place of work and place of residence,” particularly as regards any spatial limits to the exchange (ibid., 96). The greater the distance between place of work and residence, the greater the uneven development across space, which also, along with competition for advantageous spatial positioning, exacerbates spatial divisions of labor. This division exists both in the availability of a place of residence within a certain income/price bracket, as well as the location of place of employment.

Competition leads to monopoly also within space in an attempt to consolidate accumulation dynamics within a given space, “at key sites, such as so-called ‘global’ cities” (Harvey 2006, 99). Infrastructure then needs to be spatially coordinated so that it is efficiently accessible in the pursuit of competition and monopoly within the space, meeting both the needs of economic activities in the area, but also the sociospatial daily needs of residents as they facilitate spatial flows, as well. This process then acts as a catalyst for continued time-space compression within a given area, by increasing profit, productivity, and monopoly by decreasing time across space. This “reducing the friction of distance, in short, makes capital more rather than less sensitive to local geographical
variations” which leads “not [to] greater equality of power through the evolving territorial division of labor, but growing geographical inequalities” (ibid., 100-101).

The investments then made in the built environment, to facilitate these processes, lead to the production of regionality: the focus becomes regional growth, development, and entrepreneurialism for the health of the overall region. This “regionality is always ‘under production’ as well as ‘in the course of modification’ through capital accumulation” (Harvey 2006, 104). Thus, the focus of economic endeavors, such as tourism, and of local infrastructural changes, such as revitalization, can be seen as a production of regionality, and also a focus upon the production of uniqueness, within the space as a (re) creation of uneven geographical development within the space. This also can be exacerbated over the production of the scale at which processes are focused within the space, and what constitutes the “scale of regionality” (ibid.). These processes are usually actively promoted and facilitated by policy and governance dynamics in a given space (Smith 1996).

The production of regionality is critical to the relationship between urban theming and urban revitalization. While this condition in its entirety is the stipulation that modern uneven geographical development is being driven by modern capitalism, this breadth becomes difficult to deconstruct at the urban spatial scale. While this is an important feature of uneven geographical development, from a sociopolitical perspective, the production of regionality within the context of accumulation by dispossession (constructing regionality based on the theme being co-opted from the space) will be the primary focus for this condition in the remaining chapters. In addition to this, focus will be placed on the production of scale (through the space/place relationship – see the fourth
condition) and the geographical divisions of labor within the space, in addition to the annihilation of space through time, which is essential in driving contemporary tourism in themed urban environments.

In order to investigate the third condition of uneven geographical development, the relationship between urban development and urban theming within a given space, in this case, Celebration, Florida, will be used as a proxy for the uneven development of accumulation in space-time. The data utilized will include both secondary data sources and primary data sources, in particular visual texts.

**The Fourth Condition**

The fourth and final condition that Harvey (2006) sets forth regarding uneven geographical development focuses upon struggles occurring at multiple geographical scales. These struggles, while capable of changing the (re)production of space, cannot succeed without adequately addressing the previous three conditions. Sociopolitical struggle must also address the existence of uneven geographical development across multiple scales simultaneously.

Uneven geographical development has been / is being embedded in many scales simultaneously; dispossession may not occur at one scale but, by the same processes, instead occur at another; and the (re) production of space to suit the (re) production of capital occurs at nearly every scale across space, from the space of the body to the global space. In fact, the struggles against uneven geographical development, particularly within daily life, are themselves “infused with meanings that derive from commodification and its associated fetishisms. The quest for alternatives … most
conspicuously fail when they are unable to address daily life issues in a satisfactory way” (Harvey 2006, 114). So, uneven geographical development exists across multiple scales, meaning that, in order to investigate uneven geographical development within a given space, that investigation must also include multiple scales, and surrounding space within those scales in order to relationally explore those processes occurring.

This struggle can also be seen as a struggle between space and place within the same location, and across multiple scales within that location, from the personal to the global scale, in relation to that area.

**Power and the Space-Place Relationship**

While some authors (notably Casey 1996) focus upon chicken-egg arguments concerning space and place, the relationship between the two concepts is actually synergistic, forming a dialectic. As discussed by Harvey (1996), a dialectic is not just the pitting of dichotomous elements against each other, but a synthesis of conflicting relations. The emphasis is on the relationships themselves, as space and place are socially constructed by their relationships. In fact, “processes do not occur in space but define their own spatial frame. The concept of space is embedded in or internal to process” (Harvey 2006, 123; original emphasis).

According to Agnew (2002, 5), spaces are defined as the homogeneous narrative constructed by those in power, whilst place exists simultaneously as the differentiated, heterogeneous experiences of day-to-day life. Place is seen as existing with shifting interrelationships, the narrative of space supposedly shifting more slowly, if the shifting is admitted to at all. Massey (2005) sees both place and space as no more than the sum of
our relations and interconnections, and the lack of them; it too is utterly ‘concrete’” (Massey 2005, 184), and that the distinction is a heuristic one, denoting control. These also relate to Harvey’s statement that “those who command space can always control the politics of place” (Harvey 1990, 234).

Those controlling the urban space often use social imagineering in order to attempt to control experience within the space. By using its command of space, those in power would control not only the physical place, but the social place as well (per Harvey 1990, 234). The imagineering project, both physical and social, would involve the creation of simulacra (Harvey 1990, 300), a hyperreality that, while expressing a utopian ideal, also creates a heterotopia, in which incompatible and contradictory spaces are superimposed upon the place (Foucault 1997, 354). Those contradictions, however, are buried within the control of the definition (Harvey 1990) and interpretation of those images into a seemingly cohesive whole, creating a perceived “thematic unity” (Foglesong 1995, 3). No matter how much control, however, may be attempted within a space, no architectural project can be completely functionally liberating; few are also completely oppressive – both are practices, which the built space may limit/encourage the possibilities of, but not prevent or fully bring to functionality (Foucault 1984, 245).

The relationship between space and power is strong. In fact, “space is fundamental in any exercise of power” (Foucault 1984, 252). That power creates hegemony within the space. That relationship “continues and becomes more intense and complex within the city itself” (Massey 1997, 105). Since the urban is the nexus between the global and local, complex sociospatial patterns of power exist. Those forces, particularly economic, that are external to the city, yet a driving force within the city, will
have some hegemony over the definition of the space. Internal relations, however, will also create power differentials and additional definitions of space, at differing scales. The city thereby becomes a nexus of hegemony over space between global and local forces that can work both complementary and competitively in a dialectical fashion.

According to Zukin (1991, 241), “the new landscape of power requires neither centrality nor monumentality. Instead, it visually reconciles the tension between public and private consumption, global and local capital, market and place.” In the contemporary urban space, “the landscape contextualizes both weakness and power. On the one hand [cities] abstract the desires of the powerless and institutionalize them in the landscape of power. On the other hand, [the city] both represents and molds these desires” (ibid., 250).

The relationship between space and power in the city is complex, where “the built environment is both the product of, and the mediator between, social relations” (Knox 1991, 182). Cities become

“On the one hand … places of freedom and escape. Here you find the advantages of multiplicity and of complexity, of the potential for mixing and the ability to disappear, here you can do your own thing, be anonymous. And yet for others, or for other aspects of identity, all that multiplicity and chaos can become a source of danger, vulnerability and oppression. … Cities, in their various forms, can be a context both for the freedom of expression of some identities and for the extinction of the expression of others” (Massey 1997, 105).

The relation of space, place, and power in the urban environment is strongly related to uneven geographical development within the urban scale, as an outcome of the command of space and control of place within the landscape of power.

The multiple scales being investigated will be done so within the framework of the space-place relationship. The scalar issue falls within the context of the commanding
of space in order to control place argument presented by Harvey (1990, 234; see Chapter Six). This relationship will be explored both for the context of the Reedy Creek Improvement District and in Celebration’s case. Again, a narrative approach will be employed in the discussion of this relationship.

Data Collection

Qualitative methodologies are often viewed as having three stages: data collection, data analysis, and data interpretation. The first stage, data collection, involved the collection of historical data and secondary data, primary photographic data collection, and demographic data presented using geographic information systems. Data analysis and data interpretation were achieved primarily through the use of dialectics. The presentation style selected for the research is a narrative approach.

Historical Data Collection

While historical data is, by its very nature, secondary data collection, the type of data being collected differs enough from (contemporary) archival data as to warrant its own particular focus. This is considered a particularly rich form of research, due to the often-large amounts of material available for research (Abbott 2004). The study of history can prevent the illusion of the “ideology of return” (Foucault 1984, 250): “History protects us from historicism – from a historicism that calls on the past to resolve the question of the present” (ibid.).

Though Soja (1996; also Lefebvre 1991) warns to take care in merely historicizing the societal, the historical context of a space is still valuable in beginning to
understand and evaluate contemporary dynamics within and between given spaces. This allows for a better contextual understanding of the internal dynamics still impacting the contemporary space (Harvey 2006). Care will be made, however, to ensure that, rather than just being a history of Orlando, this phase will constitute a historical geography of Orlando.

Four time periods in Orlando’s history were focused on. The first time period is Settlement development to Incorporation (1838-1875): this time period includes the creation of Fort Gatlin and the town originally known as Jernigan as a slaveholding settlement, the Civil War, and Reconstruction. The next time period investigated is from Incorporation to World War II (1876-1945): this includes the earliest development of Orlando as a naturalist tourist site, its decline, and the development of Orlando into a full-fledged, albeit small, metropolitan area. The third time period is World War II to Disney (1946-1971): Orlando’s growth and changes as an urban area prior to the reintroduction of tourism as a major economic sector in the space, and its redevelopment using Title I programs. Finally, the time period Disney to Recession (1971-2000): looking at the impacts of tourism, contemporary globalization, shifts in urban revitalization policy, and exponential growth upon Orlando’s urban space. This final time period will serve as segue into the contemporary discussion.

The focus of the research will be upon the development of the urban space, revitalization processes over time, the role of tourism in the space, theming of the urban environment, and the interrelationships between these factors. Special attention will be paid to power relations and the changes in uneven geographical development of the space over time.
Historical research was performed in the libraries of University of South Florida, University of Central Florida, University of Florida, Orange and Hillsborough Public Libraries, and at the Orange County Historical Society. Online searches included academic literature, “gray” literature, and primary documentation, both governmental and non-governmental, was also conducted. From this, the narrative was then be developed, within the previously developed theoretical and philosophical framework.

**Secondary Data Collection**

According to Hoggart, Lees, and Davies (2002), secondary data is data from which “researchers are removed from the data collection process” (75). While they agree that issues may arise from the use of secondary data, they do not ascribe to the idea that primary data, in and of itself, is more valuable, regardless of its researcher-controlled nature. The key is to select the appropriate data for the research, while keeping in mind issues and “nuances” with any secondary data selected (ibid., 76). Secondary data is socially constructed and should not be considered as objective, value-free, neutral, or taken at face value.

As used by others, in general, official reports, plans, brochures, websites, guidebooks, and other documentation were investigated in order to assess image and substance, particularly concerning tourism (Teo 2003). Also researched were government documentation, foundation reports, and local periodicals (McGovern 2003). Information is compared in narrative form using the archival secondary data (Gladstone and Fainstein 2001; Gotham 2005).
Secondary data was collected from multiple sources. Demographic data on Orlando residents was procured primarily from the U.S. Bureau of the Census. Data was available for each decennial census at the county, census tract, and block group scales; geographical changes must be considered before creating any spatial comparisons over time, where possible. ESRI (2006) also made demographic data available in the 2006/2011 Demographic Dataset at the block group and census tract levels. Demographic data focused upon overall population, households, workers and employment, income, race and ethnicity, age, gender, and poverty demographic characteristics.

Economic data was also evaluated from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, concerning the changes in employment and wages overall, and within the tourist sector, in the Orlando region. In addition, journey to work data from the Census Transportation Planning Package was reviewed. This dataset, using year 2000 census data, has information on flows from residence to work at the census tract and block group levels.

For tourism, data was available from the Orange County Convention and Visitor’s Bureau. This data includes total visitors, location from which visitors originated, and direct tourism revenues. Data from the Orange County Tax Appraiser’s office also includes information on the revenues generated in terms of sales and hotel occupancy taxes. Information was also available from third-party tourist industry sites concerning attraction attendance and revenue.

News articles from the local paper, the Orlando Sentinel, and from national news sources were investigated to determine how those messaging the region dealt with tourism, urban revitalization, urban renewal, and urban redevelopment in the region.
Articles related to Walt Disney World, the Reedy Creek Improvement District, and Celebration were also researched.

Government documents included existing long-range plans, existing local policies as they relate to urban revitalization and to tourism, and existing subsidies and tax abatements for the tourist sector, compared to those available in totality. Official press releases and public records of interviews with the media were also used to determine the “official” position of local government concerning issues of urban revitalization, tourism, uneven geographical development, and theming concerns. Finally, information provided by the local government agencies, and made available by developers, on existing and planned urban revitalization projects was collected.

Primary Data Collection

In addition to historical and secondary data collection, primary data collection techniques were employed. This included the development of a photographic essay and using passive observational techniques, presented in a narrative form.

The observation method chosen was a holistic descriptive observation approach (Kitchin and Tate 2000). This did not involve participant interaction, but rather a study of the physical space being investigated. It is considered a slightly more casual approach to observation, yet one that can add additional dimension to the overall study (Yin 1994). It will also act as a form of ground-truthing of the accuracy and datedness of the data investigated, while attempting to reduce Heidegger bias being introduced into the study. Heidegger bias refers to the role of observer, through the very act of observation, altering
the observed phenomenon. While this is an expected side effect of the observation process, care was taken to interact directly with the observed as minimally as possible.

As part of the record of observations, a photographic essay was developed. Initial observations were first conducted, as well as investigation into any stipulation for photographing specific sites prior to taking the pictures. Photographs are a static record of the site being visited, unable to fully capture their dynamic nature; however, they are also a rich record of information that might otherwise be overlooked or too complex to fully express in writing. This also creates a visual text that can be used as an aid to historical reconstruction (Domosh 2001; Black 2003). This is particularly of value due to the rapid changes exhibited in the space of Celebration since its inception. Photographic methodologies have been employed by various researchers in order to enhance their investigations in urban studies (Davis 2002, Solnit and Schwartzenberg 2000, Elwood 2006). Rather than being a lone methodology, it is used to highlight and supplement the rest of the data collected, adding complexity and richness to the remaining data collected.

These datasets were then used to construct a narrative regarding the development of the new urbanist community Celebration, as a case study in exploring the relationship between urban revitalization and urban tourism within this space. This relationship will form the proxy for the division of labor, through the creation of a spatial mismatch, and the production of regionality and scale within the context of the third condition.

Geographic Information Systems Representations

Geographic information systems (GIS) representations consisted of two parts. First, GIS was used to provide a spatial, visual representation of many of the secondary
data collected. Secondly, areal analysis was conducted, using collected secondary data, to investigate uneven geographical development across the space of Orlando.

Secondary data used for this analysis includes data from the U.S. Bureau of the Census at the following scales: county, census tract, and block group. Due to the use of Summary File 3 data, no geography smaller than the block group could be investigated using the given universes. Summary File 3 (SF3) data is based on the census long form, which is a 1/6 sampling of the U.S. population during the decennial census. Since this is a sample, there is sampling error; as such, the data universe values do not align with Summary File 1 (SF1), which is the total population count. The SF3 data, however, contains several additional datasets beyond the basic questions included in SF1. While the primary data universe values for SF1 are total population and total households, SF3 also includes such universe values as total workers. Additional variables in the SF3 set include information on income and journey to work data.

The SF3 will no longer be continued; for future SF3 variable sets, the American Community Survey (ACS) has been enacted. This is conducted every year, with a sampling of roughly three million households annually. While ACS data is more current than SF3 data, its lack of complete availability for the primary study area, and concerns about its statistical alignment with SF3 for direct comparisons, means that SF3 data will be the primary data utilized.

Certain variables, however, have been updated as part of the 2006/2011 Demographic Dataset, a private dataset provided by ESRI. This data is meant to align with the 2000 SF3 geographies at the block group level and provide a statistically acceptable comparison with the SF3 data (ESRI 2007). This data is used with care, since,
while it can be aggregated to the county and census tract levels based on the constituent block groups, the underlying sampling error is unknown, as would then be any multiplicative effects occurred in aggregation. For this reason, comparison between 2000 and 2006 data only occurs at the block group level.

This data was then used to create a visual, spatial representation of the demographic variation over the space being investigated. GIS analysis has been used by Elwood (2006) and Elwood and Leitner (2003) to investigate urban revitalization. Their use has primarily been investigating the development and use of GIS maps created by urban organizations. Quantitative modeling has also been used in regards to urban revitalization (Caserta and Russo 2002). Urban simulation models, to spatially investigate urban plans and policies, have also been developed by Hopkins, Kaza, and Pallathucheril (2005). In this case, the focus will be primarily on the value of the qualitative, relational spatial change across the space, rather than just the absolute change in values (Galton 2000).

For spatially descriptive maps, the use of symbology, particularly choropleth mapping, was utilized. Monmonier (1996) warns about the potential for misleading readers of maps based on symbology, especially when creating choropleth maps. Colors chosen for the symbology, and alternatives when extreme data values may skew the reading of the map created were considered as necessary. A relatively neutral coloration was employed in order to visually highlight the changes in relative values. As maps have at times come to become simulacra of the urban space, these maps were created with the purpose of aiding in the conveyance of specific information, while the emphasis remains
on the interpretation of the underlying data and urban space, not the map in and of itself (Soja 2000; Baudrillard 1983).

Areal maps were created based on a joining of the census data tables to TIGER/line shapefiles, at the census tract and block group scales. The choropleth maps cover the Orlando metropolitan statistical area (MSA). All maps were constructed using the StatePlane Florida East NAD 83 projected coordinate system.

**Data Analysis and Interpretation: Narrative Dialectics**

Narrative formats are used in many qualitative research projects. In geography, as in other disciplines narratives are most common when performing historical research (e.g. Kurtz 2002). It has also found use in discourse analysis in urban geography (Lees 2004). Previous research into space and place, from a Lefebvrian perspective, has also employed narrative approaches (Merrifield 1993). This is a style which allows researchers “to examine the interconnectedness of human agency and social structure and the temporality of historical events in processual ways” (Gotham and Staples 1996, 481). This is an approach that has been used successfully by researchers to investigate urban relationships, such the relationship between poverty and urban development (ibid.).

Narrative approaches are seen as a method that expands beyond structuralist approaches to analysis, but many narrative approaches “contain too many unacknowledged explanatory devices – in other words, theoretical models and causal mechanisms are left implicit” (Kiser 1996, 255). There are also issues with the conditions used to define the scope of the narrative, and the use of multiple theories as a set of tools for the narrative, rather than “using one theory to provide a general structure
… for the entire narrative” (ibid., 258). In the case of this dissertation, the scope is defined both temporally (mid-nineteenth century through 2006) and abstractly, through the use of the theory of uneven geographical development. While each chapter has unique elements, this theory provides the cohesive thread throughout the narrative.

The style used to present the research findings is similar to that used by Oncu and Weyland (1997), which employed a literary format to investigate the roles of global and local forces in the struggle for social identity in globalizing urban spaces. Harvey (1985) also used a narrative approach when documenting the relationships exhibited in Haussman’s rebuilding of Second Empire Paris.

The narrative discussions of the cases of the former and current Reedy Creek Improvement District will all employ, over the course of the investigation of uneven geographical development, the relational methodology known as dialectics. Dialectics is a method of creating a synthesis between two conflicting internal relations (Harvey 2006). This allows for the focus primarily upon the interrelationships existing between various factors. Dialectics are a complex, dynamic process; Harvey (1996, 49-57) summarizes the dialectical method in only eleven steps. Those concepts are further summarized here.

The focus of dialectics, it cannot be overstated, is on relations. Structures are seen as existing within/because of their relations, both internal and external to the structure, and their social construction. According to Harvey (1996, 50), “dialectics forces us always to ask the question of the ‘thing’ or ‘event’ that we encounter: by what process was it constituted and how is it sustained?” Systems are internally heterogeneous and contradictory, and parts and wholes interrelated in nonlinear fashion. Relations are
dynamic, as are the socially constructed space and time (a la Lefebvre 1991). Finally, dialectics is a process itself dynamic through the process of study: as research continues, the relations previously constituted may be supplemented, expanded, or altered, either due to the increased research, or to changes within the system itself discovered through the continued research.

Soja (1996, 2000) and Lefebvre (1991) developed the concept of the trialectic, or the relating of three different factors using this dynamic. This is seen as an alternative to the limiting duality of dialectics, as well as an attempt to re-emphasize spatiality in socio-historical interactions (Soja 1996). Without the third leg in the tripod, it is understood that there cannot be ontological understanding (ibid.).

This is in keeping with the move toward convergence between Harvey’s theories of historical-geographical materialism, which emphasizes returning considerations of space to a philosophy of temporal social construction; with postmodernist critiques of space, such as those made by Soja and Lefebvre. In fact, in “Space as a Key Word” (Harvey 2006), Harvey uses a similar matrix construction of absolute-relative-relational space to that introduced by Lefebvre (1991). This is not to say that convergence has occurred between these theories: tensions still exist, and have not yet been reconciled. In the adoption of space as a cornerstone of dialectical thought, however, convergence is occurring between Harvey’s theory of uneven geographical development and theories of trialectics.

In this study, a trialectic is formed between the conditions of uneven geographical development, and their treatment (Figure 1-4). This is directly within the framework of the trialectics triad of time (embedded processes), social (capital accumulation as a social
construction), and space (multiple scales). While uneven geographical development can be viewed as a relationship between the material embedding of processes, accumulation, and struggles across multiple scales; the investigation of uneven geographical development will be viewed as a relationship between the proxy trialectic of historical geographical context, the urban development – urban tourism/theming relationship, and the space-place relationship.

![Diagram of Historical geography of the region, Uneven Geographical Development, Embedded Processes, Capital Accumulation, Multiple Scales, Space-place Relationship, Urban development - Tourism.]

Figure 1-4. Study Trialectics.

*Based on Lefebvre (1991) and Soja (1996).*

The use of the narrative dialectics/trialectics in this study was performed while keeping in mind Marx’s maxim from *The Eighteenth Brumaire* that humans create within circumstances not of their own choosing: the material embedding of the processes by
which we (re)produce unevenly developed space cannot be discounted. This is being performed through the use of relational methods, since “what is interesting is always interconnection, not the primacy of this over that, which never has any meaning” (Foucault 1984, 254). The value in this study will be in the work to create more relationships from which to further investigate uneven geographical development both theoretically as well as methods by which to apply the theory to a given space.

In this particular case, however, the focus will be less upon the political economy of uneven geographical development, and more on the demographic / sociological implications of the dynamic. This is done to highlight

“the interrelated web of socioecological relations that bring about highly uneven urban environments, as well as shaping processes of uneven geographical development at other geographical scales, has become a pivotal terrain around which political action crystallises and social mobilisations take place (Swyngedouw 2003, 902).

The social processes, particularly those (re)producing the lived space, are defined within the framework of the political economy of capitalism (Lefebvre 1991).

Selecting Central Florida

It could be argued that central Florida is not a representative example of the relationships between theming, tourism, and revitalization within and across urban spaces. As a global tourist sink that includes an unusual privately-run governmental entity, Orlando represents many unique qualities, relative to other urban spaces. It could also be argued that the unique relationships inherent in the Reedy Creek Improvement District (RCID) and its governance by the Disney Company would not be replicated in other urban spaces.
There are three reasons that Orlando is a valid urban space to study. The first reason is its very uniqueness. There are elements in Orlando that cannot be found in other urban spaces, such as the RCID. While this uniqueness means that Orlando as an urban space cannot be replicated, and therefore the study cannot be generalized, this is an absolutist conclusion to draw. This conclusion has validity, but there are additional conclusions that can be drawn. From a relative and relational space perspective, the very differences in Orlando can be used to provide comparisons against urban spaces that, except for such elements as a global tourist sink and the RCID, are congruent to Orlando. Urban spaces can be evaluated based on their similarities to Orlando, as well as to their differences from that city.

The second reason that Orlando warrants additional study is its comparability to other global tourist sinks. While some global tourist destinations are global cities, such as New York or Dubai, many urban spaces experiencing urban tourism are globalizing cities, similar to Orlando. The very act of globalizing, or of the global community becoming “aware” of these spaces within the global urban network, often leads to theming of the urban space. When combined with the theming that accompanies a tourist economy, this creates a dynamic that needs further exploration. Orlando can act as a referent point in doing comparative research with similar globalizing tourist cities, such as Las Vegas and Ixtapa / Zihuatanejo. Many of these urban spaces will never achieve “global city” status, but are more frequent than the uniquely penultimate global cities (Marcuse and van Kampen 2000).

The third reason parallels the study of those global cities, and of earlier cities of uniqueness, such as Paris (Harvey 1985), Chicago (Wirth 1938), and Los Angeles (Soja
These cities inform us of many dynamics of urban spaces that are not easily studied in other cities, precisely because those dynamics are more prominent in these spaces. This allows researchers to better understand the relationships that can occur between complex, and often subtle, processes that are (re)defined by the day-to-day interactions of people within a multi-scalar place. In addition, these cities are often considered as setting trends that other urban spaces seek to imitate. In Orlando’s case, the unique situation of the RCID highlights relationships between tourism, revitalization, and their subsequent theming of the urban space that are also existing in other urban spaces. The caveat is that such a study of Orlando provides clues to the markers or clues that researchers can now look for when investigating these relationships in other spaces. Furthermore, Orlando becomes a model for postindustrial tourist spaces, something that will be explored in future research, particularly for spaces such as Las Vegas.

The Flow of This Dissertation

Chapter One has introduced the research, discussed the theoretical framework of uneven geographical development, and highlighted the methodologies that are employed in the research.

Chapter Two will explore in more detail the literature surrounding urban development and urban tourism, from which this study proceeds. This literature is used to provide a framework for the case study of the impacts of the Reedy Creek Improvement District on the Orlando city-space.

Chapter Three is an explication of the early history of uneven geographical development in the central Florida region. This highlights the first condition of uneven
geographical development, material embedding of capitalist processes in social life, within the Orlando metropolitan statistical area.

Chapter Four extends the history of the region by introducing the creation and development of the Reedy Creek Improvement District within the region. This highlights the second condition of uneven geographical development, the accumulation by dispossession in favor of the RCID within the sociopolitical landscape of the region.

Chapter Five highlights the third condition of uneven geographical development, which is capital accumulation in space-time. This is done by evaluating the relationship between urban revitalization and urban theming in the space of Celebration, once a part of the RCID.

Chapter Six focuses on the fourth and final condition of uneven geographical development, struggles across multiple scales. Here, the relationships between urban theming and urban revitalization are intersected with the space-place relationship in the region, highlighted simultaneously across scales in the region.

Finally, Chapter Seven concludes the dissertation, evaluating the use of Harvey’s (2006) theory of uneven geographical development within the RCID case study. Further research to expand upon the work of this dissertation is also discussed.
Chapter Two

Intersecting Urban Revitalization, Tourism, and Globalization

Introduction

This chapter explores the literature regarding urban revitalization and urban tourism. Urban revitalization projects are often used by local and regional governments to create conditions that promote an urban space for tourism; while tourism is ostensibly seen as providing the economic impetus to fund revitalization projects. Both urban revitalization and tourism lead to a theming of the urban space in order to attract capital and consumption. These processes intersect quite frequently. The focus here will be on this intersection as it specifically applies to the Reedy Creek Improvement District within central Florida. This intersection of urban revitalization and urban theming will also be discussed within the context of the urban space as the nexus between the global and the local (Harvey 2000).

A (Brief) History of Urban Geography

The intersections discussed in this study are placed between two major movements in urban geography: historical-geographical materialism and what Peet (1998) refers to as critical postmodernism from the Los Angeles School.

By the 1970s, there was disaffection not only with positivism as a philosophy/methodology, but also with its role within urban geography. Issues of social
justice, equity, urban restructuring (except for that recommended by the researchers), and others went unexamined, or unassessed, by the positivist camp. Leading the way in finding an alternative interpretation of urban issues using first a historical materialist and then historical-geographical materialist philosophy was David Harvey, who as late as 1969 had published a treatise on the use of positivist methodologies in *Explanation in Geography*.

By the 1970s, Harvey (1989) no longer thought that positivism could explain the radical social changes occurring within urban spaces, or the economic shifts toward flexible accumulation becoming apparent early in the decade. In marxist thought, the city is seen as playing a central role in the facilitation of capitalism. The city can also represent the physical manifestation of capitalism’s contradictions and crises, often through expansion and restructuring under the rubric of creative destruction.

Uneven geographical development plays out on, through, and between urban spaces. Urban spaces are developed relative to the nonurban spaces surrounding them. Between cities there is often competition for the acquisition of capital and finance, leading to the rise of a few cities at the expense of most cities. Within urban spaces, sociospatial polarization is a manifestation of uneven geographical development, in which lower classes are marginalized within an urban space, often over several successive cycles of marginalization, particularly in the face of urban restructuring.

Urban spaces are also a site for facilitating time-space compression. As nodes in the network of global capital, not only are they sites of concentration for finance and capital, they also function as centers within distribution networks. Both transportation
and finance infrastructures are seen as designed around these external needs, and to continue the efficiency of the annihilation of space through time (Harvey 1990).

As economic centers, and with economic facilitation within the capitalist system as their primary function, most people become secondary within the urban space, often reduced to structural elements within the system. This creates contention: to paraphrase Marx, humans still want to create history, to act, even within conditions not of their own choosing. This leads to battles over class power structures, in which the sociopolitical needs of residents in the urban space are also met, beyond their simply being cogs within the economic system. This leads to considerations of the urban space as a site of (economic) conflict.

As such, historical-geographical materialism tends to focus upon the relations existing within, between, and without the urban space, typically from a political-economic perspective (primarily; other perspectives are also included, but usually not as the highest relational valuation). This is in contrast to the positivist focus upon atomistic causal functions. Historical-geographical materialism also emphasizes the social construction and reproduction of relations, and investigates how and why they are (re)created, rather than positivism’s focus on finding natural laws to explain circumstances.

Historical-geographical materialism was a radical alternative to positivist urban geography. It still was strongly situated within modernist thought (from a materialist perspective). By the 1980s, additional alternatives would explode within urban geography, leading to a plethora of philosophical and thematic foci.
When considering postmodernism in the urban space, Foster (1985) makes the distinction between a postmodernism of resistance and a postmodernism of reaction. A postmodernism of reaction is seen as a more “superficial response” than that of resistance (Knox 1991, 183). It also is seen as the form of postmodernity that emphasizes an aestheticization of politics (Harvey 1990). While some would argue that most urban development has fallen under the postmodernism of reaction rubric (Knox 1991), the school of urban geography most often associated with postmodernity adopts a rubric of postmodernism of resistance, or what could be termed a critical transmodern, as opposed to an anti-modern, approach.

The Los Angeles School of geography has been compared to the Chicago School, and considered to also represent an extreme urban condition, rather than a generality (Hall 2000). It has also been compared to the Frankfurt School of critical social theory. Some would say it represents a hybrid of both approaches toward a school of thought (Dear 2005). Whether the validity of studying Los Angeles is predicated upon its being a general or unique condition aside (many postmodern thinkers would consider this a nonissue, if not indeed the point), it has been said that L.A. now represents the quintessential postindustrial/postmodern diffused hybrid urban space (Soja 1986). L.A. is seen as “emblematic of a more general urban dynamic” (Dear 2005, 332), extolling the “prototypicality of the LA experience” (ibid., 328).

The LA School focuses on the restructuring of LA, through social construction and flexible accumulation, from a post-marxist perspective (Dear 2005). Not only is the emphasis, then, on the southern California region that serves as the school’s primary incubator, but also upon a particular assessment that can be generalized, albeit in a way
critical of positivist approaches, to other postmodern urban spaces. Rather than LA being
the exception to modernist models of the urban space and Chicago (or really New York)
as the premier space that all other urban spaces were becoming, now New York is
thought of as the exception to the postmodernism first illustrated by LA.

New York, however, is typically also considered a quintessential U.S. global city:
the inherent contradictions between New York as a command and control city near the
top of the global hierarchy and as polymorphous noncentralized urban space will not be
explored in this work. These contradictions, however, are becoming indicative of the 21st
century U.S. urban space: dynamics focused upon attracting and maintaining external
flows of capital in contrast with the variegated nature and needs within the urban space
itself. This can be modeled via a discussion of the space-place relationship.

Urban Revitalization

Urban revitalization, and the related concepts of urban renewal and urban
development, denotes the process of transforming a particular area within the overarching
urban context; the argument could be made for the renewal of an entire urban space, but
that will not be the focus here. Revitalization tends to focus upon spaces designated as
“inner-city” prior to revitalization, and “downtown” afterwards. This means that, implicit
to urban revitalization, theming is a major component of the physical and perceived shifts
within that space. The purpose of revitalization is to adapt the use of a space to create a
net gain for the local community from a social or, most often, economic perspective.
Whether that progress will entail providing updated infrastructure to an older
neighborhood, providing structurally safe affordable housing in place of unsafe
structures, or treating it as an undeveloped/underdeveloped area that must be developed economically, all can be contentious when discussing urban revitalization.

The revitalization of urban spaces is not a new concept; it has historical antecedents within the modern city, most notably the restructuring of Paris by Haussman in the nineteenth century (Harvey 1985). In the U.S. city, however, urban revitalization is very much a by-product of Keynesian economic principles employed during the Depression and the return of G.I.s from World War II, further catalyzed by low-interest home loans provided to those returning. Urban revitalization was seen as necessary to create an urban space that would meet the rapidly changing residential and economic needs already being perceived ahead of the postindustrial, post-Fordist shifts toward flexible accumulation in the 1970s (Harvey 1990).

With revitalization, however, came questions about the residents already existing in the areas being “renewed,” “redeveloped,” or “revitalized.” As with Hausmann, in many revitalization projects, the pre-existing neighborhoods would be razed, with no recourse for their existing populations except for displacement to somewhere else (and with a strong NIMBY sentiment both in areas of revitalization and surrounding areas).

While revitalization is an important process, and one that is often necessary for providing and improving necessary infrastructure to a neighborhood, questions arise: Who is the city for (Zukin 1995)? Revitalization for whom (Davis 2002)? Should “cities be designed for people or for profits” (Harvey 2010, 193)? When considering populations being sought, or marginalized, by an urban space, “what is at stake in these debates is not simply the question of what downtown is for but also who will be included in the community and how its norms should be enforced” (Lees 2003, 625). Ultimately,
revitalization needs to include several solutions, but ultimately, within the context of the larger scales in which a neighborhood exists, the needs of the neighborhood should still be met in a socioeconomically, sociopolitically equitable fashion.

*History of Federal Urban Renewal Policies*

The U.S. Federal government began its direct involvement in urban redevelopment with the Title I Housing Act of 1949. This Act, which included redevelopment subsidized with federal dollars, would remain in force until the program’s termination in 1974. The primary intention of the Act was a focus upon residential areas, but there were several loopholes allowing dollars to be spent on non-residential projects. It also contained no provisions for affordable housing. To help combat the ambiguities in the Act, comprehensive planning became a requirement in 1954, at the urging and support of the planning profession (Teaford 2000, 445). Cities were able to accomplish their efforts as a result of “receiv[ing] a growing stream of federal aid to purchase inner-city property for urban redevelopment and renewal” (Weber 2002, 525). The funds, Title I, and the use of eminent domain under the Fifth Amendment would become the primary tools for urban renewal projects for a quarter-century. This would constitute a focus on managerial forms of revitalization, in which the planner as expert would manage urban changes within the governmental sphere (Harvey 2001).

Title I renewal efforts were supposed to be inclusive of the residential communities selected; more powerful factions, however, quickly became dominant in pushing their own agendas upon those spaces. The “program generally evoked images of destruction and delay rather than renaissance and reconstruction” (Teaford 2000, 443). In
order to justify the removal of existing neighborhoods and their residents, “the national state collaborated with the local state to create quasiscientific methods for identifying ‘blight’” (Weber 2002, 525-526). Many planners were able to use blight designations in order to clear areas requested by commercial developers, or to facilitate the expansion of the new federal highway system infrastructure being built near, and more importantly, through urban areas.

Blight became a form of structured self-fulfilling prophecy (Davis 2002, 389). Many neighborhoods were destroyed through the use of indicators that “involved some sort of mixing or blurring of boundaries: a mixture of land uses or of the race and ethnicity of residents” (Weber 2002, 526), or for blight potential, under the 1954 Housing Act amendment. Following destruction, though, renewal efforts would often be delayed, sometimes for years, other times never to occur at all following the demolition phase. Davis (2002) intimates that this in and of itself served the purpose of removal of the poor from downtown areas.

In addition, with no provision for affordable housing, many of the residents often had nowhere to go, once their neighborhoods were officially labeled as blight, though attempts were made in many urban spaces during the 1960s to provide public housing (often with several thousand fewer units than those destroyed in their wake). The problem was such that “by the 1960s, social welfare reformers and public housers had turned against it, claiming that it burdened the poor rather than helped them. In their opinion, Title I had become a welfare program for the wealthy…” (Teaford 2000, 445).

“Decent, affordable housing did not seem the essential stimulus for an urban renaissance,” because more money could be gained for commercial ventures, which were
also what businesses and chambers of commerce had in mind. Opposition did occur among those whose neighborhoods would be destroyed and themselves displaced, though projects often went ahead in spite of this (Davis 2002).

One of the goals of Title I projects was to create inviting downtown spaces, not just for residents, but also for businesses and as entertainment venues. While some successes occurred under the program, there were also many failures, often within the context of several other factors at a time that was beginning to see a major economic and demographic restructuring. Many successes were also anomalies within their own cities, and at the cost of residential displacement (Teaford 1990). Many cases saw the use of “rehabilitation and selective clearance” methods (Teaford 2000, 451-452).

Critiques of the program often focused upon the role of government in general, and the federal government specifically, in funding and directing social programs. Planners would also be criticized for their roles in urban renewal, with the argument that their profession had merely damaged what already existed within the urban space, rather than focusing upon the sociopolitical context of the problems and the source of their existence (Jacobs 1961). The modernist approach to urban revitalization was viewed as destroying both social and architectural context. Ironically, “the discussion about renewal and all the redevelopment plans did not actually change America’s cities radically” (Teaford 2000, 457; Davis 2002). While structurally cities did change radically, their social processes that these design and architectural changes were meant to alter remained pretty much intact.

By 1974, the Title I program was officially replaced by the Community Development Block Grant program, which was followed in 1977 by the Urban
Development Action Grant program (Teaford 2000, 446). Under these programs, the federal government was no longer the primary impetus behind urban revitalization, being replaced by state and local government, and private interests, as the vehicles for revitalization. Under the grant program, little emphasis was placed on housing at all, and “funds could be used for virtually any private development that produced new jobs and increased local tax revenues” (Teaford 2000, 459).

In the 1970s, urban spaces were experiencing an economic restructuring from the industrial to the postindustrial, and urban spaces began to change toward “the pursuit of economies of scope rather than scale” (Knox 1991, 182). Rather than cities seeing their economic advantages increase by their regional accumulation of industry as ever-increasing scales, they instead were required to branch out and increase the scope of their economic drivers. By the end of the decade, private developers would become major players in urban revitalization, which by the 1980s would include an emphasis on public-private partnerships and business improvement districts (BIDs) (Gross 2005), as well as on a new round of residential urban revitalization that focused upon meeting the market and entertainment needs of those considered most economically viable: the yuppie (Smith 1996). This became a shift toward an emphasis upon entrepreneurial forms of urban revitalization, emphasizing private conceptualization and execution, rather than the previous quarter-century focus upon a governmental managerial approach (Harvey 2001).

Under the changing conditions of a postindustrial and globalizing economy, “by the late 1970s and 1980s, many cities realized that proactive measures were needed to counteract vacancies, and communities began to organize with the goal of revitalizing downtown areas” (Faulk 2006, 632). This revitalization often took the form of economic,
rather than residential, revitalization. It often involved providing tax breaks and other economic incentives (including, at times, complete or partial payment of development costs with public funds) for the attraction of corporate and entertainment enterprises to the downtown area. One of the most visible examples of this were the bidding wars that began in the 1980s for the attraction of pre-existing sports franchises with the promises of the public providing new stadia (Newsome and Comer 2000). Other competitions ensued over corporate headquarters and attracting developers for downtown entertainment and shopping complexes. Harvey (2000, 141) describes this as “feeding the downtown monster.” These projects were seen as necessary for the overall betterment of the urban space, even if they occurred at the expense of social programs (since most enterprises did involve public funds as part of the deals).

When considering the residential revitalization of the urban space, “since the 1980s, federal, state, and local governments have drafted and passed bills that attempt to reduce and eliminate spatially concentrated poverty” (Spencer and Ong 2004, 368). Under Hope VI, enacted in 1992, local residents determined to be living in neighborhoods with a high-density of poverty would be dispersed throughout the urban space, in an attempt, not to reduce poverty or its causes, but to create an environment in which it would not be on display. Many communities lost important social support networks; dispersal also created a transportation crisis, as public transportation could no longer adequately serve the populations it had historically served (ibid.).

Revitalization would slow down in early part of the 1990s, partly due to economic recession. With the resurgence of the economy in the middle of the decade, many forms of revitalization, now tied (often exclusively) to private developers and financiers, would
rebound. Planners still had a role to play, but one often handicapped, as it had been for several decades, by the political environment at the moment. One tool that was at their disposal was the environmental impact assessment, an attempt to ensure that new development did not constitute an undue burden to the natural environment. This, however, also had its loopholes, and could often be circumvented in areas where new development was replacing preexisting neighborhoods. Furthermore, other environmental legislation for the designation of brownfields and Superfund sites could also be used to condemn older neighborhoods that bordered or contained land on which hazardous materials had been processed in earlier decades, prior to policy and enforcement.

The results of urban policies in US cities since World War II are viewed as having an equivalent impact, both aesthetically and socioeconomically, as war bombing the city-space (Davis 2002, 386-387). In assessing contemporary urban revitalization policy, “past conceptions of growth incorporated issues of wealth redistribution, public resource provision, and equity,” while current processes “peripheralized these” (Wilson and Mueller 2004, 284). Ironically, with gentrification and revitalization, “socioeconomic segregation and poverty in low-income neighborhoods also deepened at this time” (ibid.). While earlier revitalization policy may not have lived up to its ideals, some emphasis had been placed on the concept of social redistribution; urban revitalization for the past quarter century has instead focused more upon the desires of economic entities, with the residents and their neighborhoods shifted and altered to meet the infrastructural, financial, and capital needs developed from there. Without strong support from the federal government and its treasury, many spaces could not affect change without private
involvement. Even with federal governmental involvement, policy could easily be skewed away from local and regional needs, economically or especially the needs of the urban populations.

New urbanism, and “the new urbanism” of gentrification (Smith 2002), are indicative of the transition within urban revitalization from managerial planning, which Title I was exemplary of, to entrepreneurial planning (Harvey 2001). Whereas in the 1970s and 1980s, local governments turned to actively supporting private enterprises in order to fund revitalization projects no longer underwritten by the financial strength of the federal government, by the turn of the 21st century urban revitalization had come full circle, with public agencies actively adopting and engaging in neoliberal urban revitalization forms that had before been the purview of private developers, such as Duany (Duany, Plater-Zyberk, and Speck 2000), Calthorpe (1993), and Florida (2003). Gentrification and new urbanism are now viewed as means by which an urban government can manage the future directions of their urban spaces, entrepreneurialism becoming a neoliberal form of urban management.

*New Urbanism*

In theory, the purpose of new urbanism, and its architectural relation neotraditionalism, is to re-create a sense of community, as exhibited in pre-World War II small town America, through urban design. New urbanism is viewed as an alternative to urban sprawl and as an urban revitalization project (Bohl 2000; Congress for the New Urbanism 2005). New urbanism is a planning movement that began in the 1980s as a response by (primarily) architects against the spatial sprawl exhibited in U.S. cities
following World War II, particularly those related to the automobile, and attempts to counter these by adopting physical design elements predating that time period as being more appropriate representations of community. For new urbanism, form is considered “a community’s most intrinsic and enduring characteristic” (Katz 2004, 16). The focus of new urbanism, according to the Congress for the New Urbanism,

“advocate[ing] the restructuring of public policy and development practices to support the following principles: neighborhoods should be diverse in use and population; communities should be designed for the pedestrian and transit as well as the car; cities and towns should be shaped by physically defined and universally accessible public spaces and community institutions; urban places should be framed by architecture and landscape design that celebrate local history, climate, ecology, and building practice” (Congress for the New Urbanism 2000, v-vi).

In fact, “design and style are recognized as crucial ingredients” to the development of new urbanism (Knox 1991, 201). Infill new urbanism often becomes synonymous with gentrification.

Bohl (2000, 762) emphasizes that new urbanism focuses upon “design-based strategies,” with “the neighborhood … advanced as an essential building block.” The neighborhood is further defined as “limited to an area approximating a 5- to 10-minute walk from center to edge, ensuring that all neighborhood activities are within convenient walking distance of residents” (ibid., 763). His is admittedly a concept of community predicated on the “physical planning and design” rather than on the people composing that space (ibid., 767). To Bohl, the concern is not the social community that exists within the developed space so much as promoting the physical design tenets of new urbanism in contrast to other development models.

The emphasis is placed on the local scale: walkable neighborhoods and “downtowns,” mixed land use, and a diverse offering of people, housing, and
employment. The goal is that all essential facilities, including schools, shops, jobs, parks, homes, and more, should be in walking distance (preferably a quarter-mile radius, or “five minute walk” [Congress for the New Urbanism 2005]). New urbanist communities now exist throughout the U.S., as well as in Canada, Europe, Latin America, Asia, and Australia (ibid.).

As Beatley and Manning (1997, 20) sum this up, “the thrust of the New Urbanism is a belief in the need to return to the design principles embodied in traditional American towns.” They also discuss that, in practice, new urbanism tends to focus less upon the urban space, and more upon the suburban and exurban spaces for development. Developments are frequently at odds with sustainable urban growth, and environmental sustainability tends to be a tertiary concern at best. They see new urbanism as “simply tinkering with the physical layout of a development” (Beatley and Manning 1997, 21).

Harvey (2000) describes the new urbanism movement as an environmental determinist utopia. The idea, promoted to some degree by Bohl (2000), is that sociopolitical behaviors can be molded by the architectural and overall design styles exhibited in new urbanist communities. While it is a more holistic way of viewing an urban space in contrast to “the postmodern penchant for fragmentation,” it also treats the design of early twentieth century communities nostalgically, with little to no consideration of the sociopolitical contexts within those places (Harvey 2000, 169). This is especially the case in the (non) treatment of the staunchly communitarian nature of many of those small-town communities, in which violence in the form of community “spirit” is prescribed for maintaining hierarchical order as “an antidote to threats of social disorder,” an idea that was also promoted in the original Utopia (ibid., 170). In other
words, “the ‘new urbanism’ must, if it is to be realized, embed its projects in a restrictive set of social processes” (ibid., 171).

Bryman (2004, 48) associates new urbanism with “the spread of the theming principle.” The focus of new urbanism is in the creation of “a nostalgic representation of small town life as it used to be” (ibid.). That nostalgia, however, only extends to those representations selectively chosen, rather than emphasizing as well the inequities that existed in the original places being thematically recreated.

Others, including Smith (2002) consider new urbanism part of a greater movement toward gentrification within not only the urbanized West but globally. New urbanist designs are often viewed as an attempt to re-create a nostalgic version of the past whilst simultaneously creating a future-oriented infrastructure for the community. In practice, the diversity is often superficial and typically to be found in available housing styles, while the communities are predominately white upper-middle-class families that create an employment spatial mismatch for the community and its surrounding region: those living in the new urbanist community typically commute out for employment while lower-paid employees must come into the communities to perform the low-paying service sector jobs created.

According to Frug (1999), the theory of new urbanism

“focused on six aspects of urban design: creating multiuse environments, constructing grid systems for public streets, giving priority to the needs of pedestrians, facilitating reliance on public transportation, highlighting the importance of centrally located public space, and establishing focal points and boundaries for urban space” (Frug 1999, 150-151).

New urbanism attempts to change the socioeconomic condition of community by changing the built environment; but then will not take responsibility for the fact that the
socioeconomic condition is not changing, precisely because it is not being addressed (Knox 1991). In theory, the community is treated as the object of the place, not as the people contained within those structures.

While Bohl (2000, 787) disagrees with “critics [who] fault New Urbanists for erroneously expecting design elements to bring about more social and civic interaction and focus on the porch as an outdated cliché,” he does not address the point raised that the answer to today's urban problems do not lie in the physical designs of the past, which existed to (theoretically) meet that time period's social and economic contexts. For example, the front porch was a wonderful design element before the widespread utilization of central air conditioning; there are few urban areas where it will still be highly used with the advent of cooler houses in the summer. While the use of more contemporary technologies and changes in sociopolitical contexts can be addressed and critiqued, in current practice, this is a contextual aspect of new urbanism that is often ignored.

In practice, new urbanism does not address the racial, ethnic, gender, or socioeconomic conflicts inherent within contemporary society, but instead the focus is on “the simultaneously nostalgic and radical nature of their propos[als]… New urbanists replace suburban nostalgia for the seclusion of life in the countryside with an urban nostalgia for city vitality. They reject the radicalism of more … of the same and embrace instead a radicalism that integrates different types of people into a less car-centered environment” (Bohl 2000, 152).

New urbanist communities, in practice, “show that people like benevolent authoritarianism, as long as it rules by imposing visual criteria” (Zukin 1995, 64). This leads to the creation of “a collage of intensely private worlds, each entered through brick or timber portals in the manner of an English landed estate” (Knox 1991, 200).
Currently, the focus in new urbanism has shifted almost exclusively to infill new urbanist development (Congress for the New Urbanism 2007). While theoretically new urbanism is antithetical to gentrification, Smith (2002) sees infill development, in practice, as another guise for gentrification. In many urban spaces, particularly in cases such as Orlando, new urbanism and gentrification are seen by public officials as revitalization processes that work in tandem in order to improve both the residential and economic developments, and tax bases, for their downtowns (Dyer 2006).

_Gentrification_

Ruth Glass (1964) first coined the term of gentrification. The process was seen as one in which those of higher socioeconomic status (Glass’ terming this as the “new gentry”) begin to move into neighborhoods that previously had been predominately working and lower class neighborhoods, leading to a rise in real estate prices and squeezing the previously existing population. Displacement is seen as axiomatic, a direct result of gentrification. Smith (1996) emphasizes that temporal displacement may also occur: an area where gentrification occurs may not be immediately displacing population, but a population had been displaced at some previous point in time, with the land used for other purposes or held in stasis until such time as a gentrification process begins.

Gentrification, while often seen as the work of private developers and individual “pioneers,” has actually enjoyed governmental and financial support for several decades (Smith 1996). It is a process that has also played a role in remaking the global city (Smith 2002). Gentrification occurs in areas with pre-existing populations as a revitalization effort. In the process, the pre-existing population is displaced in favor of new residents of the upper-middle and upper classes. It has become a public policy in
Britain and much of the U.S. which “portends a displacement of working-class residents from urban centers” (Smith 2002, 440).

Media reporting (particularly newspapers) plays a role in supporting and promoting gentrification in cities (Wilson and Mueller 2004). The media are seen as a source of authority, which can create representations of neighborhood that lead to isolation of the area and a call for revitalization through gentrification. Neighborhoods are often compared to disease that needs to be marginalized, to prevent “contamination,” and then the “dying” neighborhood can be cured by the authoritative specialists (Wilson and Mueller 2004, 282-283). These representations become a necessary framing of a situation that instead might highlight “impressions of class-imposition and unfair restructuring” (Wilson and Mueller 2004, 291).

Knox (1991) claims that gentrification has “already been shown to be pivotal to the spatial practices of the ‘new’ middle classes,” creating designer neighborhoods that are not designed for existing residents (Knox 1991, 186). That is, the spatial components of gentrification are as important as its socioeconomic components. A relationship exists between the voluntary sociospatial polarization of gentrified neighborhoods and the more complex circumstances leading to the sociospatial polarization of those displaced.

Hoffman (2003) also raises the issue of commercial gentrification. Businesses begin to cater to tourists and wealthier residents, while raising worries of potential displacement from less well-off residents, even when residential gentrification is not being considered (Hoffman 2003, 294). It also creates a spatial mismatch between the residents and businesses meeting their needs. This refers to the geographic distance that is created between a worker’s residence and their place of work; this is considered a
mismatch when the two are not in geographical proximity to one another. This leads to increased commute times, transportation costs, and road congestion.

For the purpose of urban revitalization is not just one of residential restructuring: “urban revitalization strategies are aimed not just at attracting middle-class gentrifiers as resident taxpayers, but also at bringing them back to urban areas as consuming, and in the spending, visitors” (Lees 2003, 614).

Gentrification is a manifestation of the neoliberal revitalization practices of the past quarter-century, with emphasis placed on market value, agency, and individualism. Creative destruction and the use of the market to facilitate devaluation and revaluation of neighborhoods are a key component of the gentrification cycle:

“As the correlate of gentrification, obsolescence appeals to the individualist notions of taste and preference that guide consumption and trump any structural or social explanations for wide-scale devaluation. The market is viewed as an omniscient and neutral arbiter of value, with consumer sovereignty as the link between freedom and capitalism” (Weber 2002, 533).

Many gentrification projects are anchored by major entertainment venues, such as theaters, shopping complexes, and tourist attractions, often to create not only an impetus to draw residents to live downtown, but to provide a sense of security, tied to that of the venues (Davis 2002). This is an attempt by “municipal officials” to “counter suburban and ex-urban development and the ghosting of the inner city by creating a vibrant, liveable inner city” (Lees 2003, 615).

Urban revitalization as a process to improve the city-space improves it not only for internal residents and nearby residents who work in that space. It also is seen as improving the aesthetics, safety, and infrastructure of that space for visitors consuming that physical space: tourists.
Urban Revitalization and the (Themed) Tourist City

Tourism is the relatively new mass commodification of travel and place, existing for roughly the last century and a half (Judd and Feinstein 1999). Travelers became tourists when the industry arose that commodified the experience (ibid.). It involves both the commodification of space and consumption of leisure (Teo 2003). It is a relatively unique mode of production in which the consumers distribute to the site of production, making the direct production place-bound (Chao, Hazari, and Sgro 2004). This creates a dependency upon external networks, preferably global, for tourism to thrive. Since the consumers are the entities that must be mobile, the rise of tourism on a global scale is directly tied to the increased availability of cheaper modes of transportation, making tourism more affordable and accessible. Tourism has become one of world’s most important economic sectors that is “simultaneously a provider of shared and distinctive experiences” (Fainstein and Judd 1999, 267) that both “enlightens and demeans” (ibid., 34).

Tourism is unevenly distributed in space, though it tends to be concentrated in the central city-space (Gladstone and Fainstein 2001); this is due to the fact that tourism typically requires the economies of agglomeration and scale as well as the transportation hubs that are indicative of an urban space. This is also a result of postmodern tourists considering a bundling of experiences as more important than the availability of individual components (Smeral 1998; Shaw and Williams 1994). Tourism also typically requires the economies of scale and agglomeration and transportation hubs that are indicative of an urban space.
Tourism plays a vital role in the service economies of many contemporary cities. The ways in which urban space is revalued and commodified as places of consumption emphasize quality and the aesthetics of urban space (Meethan 1997). Tourism can be seen as a collage of production and consumption moments, a global process that manifests itself locally, explicitly involving the construction of place (Milne and Ateljevic 2001, 386). In fact, cities now predicate much of their growth upon amenities and as physical sites of consumption (Clark, et. al. 2002; Fainstein and Judd 1999)

The civic arena is seen by some researchers as having becoming more focused upon “bread and circuses,” rather than on what are seen to be its traditional responsibilities of public health, educator, and safety services (Eisinger 2000). Cities become sold like any other commodity (Fainstein and Judd 1999). Three elements become viewed as important in this scenario: the tourist, the tourism industry, and the contextual city (ibid.). The urban space then operates within the context of the tourist network, then as the node within its regional context (Shaw and Williams 1994)

Tourism becomes viewed by planners as “a way of importing spending and exporting the tax burden” (Eisinger 2000, 321). It also is seen as a means of creating a competitive advantage of the central city over the surrounding urbanized regions, visitors creating a synergy with local residents for increased cultural amenities, and increasing the city’s attractiveness, both to visitors and to residents (Gladstone and Fainstein 2001). Others, however, see tourism as creating competition within the region between the central city and surrounding suburbs for tourism traffic as the sector has decentralized (Turner and Rosentraub 2002). Fainstein and Judd (1999) emphasize, however, that while this competition does exist, it does not constitute a zero-sum game and often
utilizes allows for increased tourist revenue over the regional space. This is further
promoted by the trend toward developing niches, both between tourist regions, as well as
within them (ibid.).

Tourism and the Theming of the Urban Environment

In order to compete, both within the urban space and between cities, urban spaces
attempt to promote uniqueness. This creates a paradox where, in such promotion, many
tourist cities converge toward service standardization (Fainstein and Judd 1999). This
becomes problematic, since inter-city competition is less fierce if the destination has a
high degree of uniqueness; it becomes far more competitive if the areas are considered
substitutable (Caserta and Russo 2002). Interurban and intraurban competition also leads
to “coercual production” in attempts to always improve in order to keep up with the
competition (Judd 1999).

Tourism, in general, is still highly dependent upon the overall economic health at
multiple spatial scales, as well as direct and indirect tourist competition, also across many
spatial scales. With cities competing with other similar locales for the tourist dollar, it is
imperative that they attempt a commodification of difference to attract consumers. This
is often seen, instead of working to benefit the city, as an opportunistic gambit on the part
of decision-makers (Teo 2003). In fact, oftentimes the city is not capable of recouping its
local outputs toward the cost of such projects (Judd 1999).

Urban policy-makers walk a fine line, however, in encouraging difference, on the
one hand, and portraying that difference, and the city itself, as the image of safety and
fun. This tends to encourage a Disneyfication of their historical and contemporary problems in favor that fun, safe, acceptable image.

Cities are becoming festival markets, where the urban space becomes branded and “downtown districts have become theme parks” (Turner and Rosentraub 2002, 491; Judd 1999). Cities focus upon a total design concept for their theming, based upon the philosophy of “Disney Imagineering” (Teo 2003, 556). Imagineering space, seen as the manipulation of reality for a select group, leading to “easy to consume images, presence of icons, spatial definition and coherence, and management of traffic flows,” simplifies that space for its consumption (ibid., 556; also see Chapter Four).

Cities must create a tourism narrative with the subsequent infrastructure that evokes that narrative (Fainstein and Judd 1999). In its theming, the urban space becomes an entertainment product, its own theme park, objectified for consumption (Sassen and Roost 1999; Judd 1999). Disney, and the process of Disneyfication of the urban space, then becomes paradigmatic of illustrating hyperreality, or the simulated experience more “real” than the original, for the urban space in its efforts (Urry 1999). The themed city becomes a place of distraction and a form of escapism, while simultaneously and paradoxically also encouraging consumers to seek the “authenticity” of the city, albeit a sanitized version of this supposed reality (Fainstein and Judd 1999). Theming the urban space thereby “is always two-edged; it both enlightens and demeans” (Fainstein and Gladstone 1999, 34).

Cities commodified for the purposes of tourism exhibit “a perceived loss of authenticity. That is … Fantasy City development is problematic because it transforms the meaning of a place from its original and genuine version to a commercial construction
which tells a different story altogether” (Hannigan 1998, 195). This, however, must be approached cautiously, as it assumes that the “original” narrative of the urban space was itself a holistic, honest representation of all aspects of that space. Having said that, a themed version of the urban space reinforces the safe narrative that drives tourism, which in turn encourages further sanitation of the urban space. To paraphrase Hannigan (1998), tourist attractions are attended as a means of fantasizing ourselves in a better socioeconomic position, not to fantasize any potentially underlying oppression (Hannigan 1998, 196).

Tourism, particularly from a global perspective, can be seen as potentially having negative aspects on the local space. Local forces, however, often share, promote, and even shape global tourism (Chang 1999). There is seen a need for a global-local relationship in viewing urban theming, in the context of tourism: the need to entice visitors on one hand, and meeting resident’s needs on the other. Cities experience a simultaneity of globalization and localization forces that they attempt to balance, particularly where tourism is concerned; these forces, in turn, work to shape tourist destinations (ibid.). According to Gotham (2005, 311), “while the production of tourist spaces is a globalized process of commodification, the effect and meaning of commodification are expressed at the local level, where particular conflicts and struggles actually occur.” Global and local forces are relationally integrated within the urban space, and not only in oppositional positions (Chang 1999). Tourism has become increasingly important, particularly from the viewpoint of the urban as the nexus between the global and the local (Milne and Ateljevic 2001).
Tourism plays a vital role in the service economies of many contemporary cities, leading to more and more cities are turning to tourism as part of their revitalization efforts. According to Hoffman (2003, 293), “for local actors, tourism has many advantages as a development strategy, particularly because it combines cultural and economic objectives.” Tourism also can serve as a regulatory measure, as “it gives the community control, but at the same time, disciplines and stabilizes” (ibid., 297). This leads, however, to choices in focus when preparing a revitalization project, since “building a city as an entertainment venue is a very different undertaking than building a city to accommodate residential interests” (Eisinger 2000, 317).

Tourism, in general, is still highly dependent upon the overall economic health at multiple spatial scales, as well as direct and indirect tourist competition, also across many spatial scales. With cities competing with other similar locales for the tourist dollar, it is imperative that they attempt a commodification of difference to attract consumers.

The Global-Local Nexus and Urban Revitalization

Hall (1966) was one of the first to discuss the concept of world cities, or global cities. These cities were defined by economic criteria, and seen as rising to become the powerhouses within the global capitalist system. Many researchers spent considerable time defining economic theoretical frameworks for the definition of global cities, and constructing global urban hierarchies based on those frameworks. Emphasis was also placed on the relationships between western cities, seen as historically more advanced in their (capitalist) economic development and maintaining that ascendancy in the most recent restructuring, to the exploding megacities and rising economic urban stars in the
rest of the world. The global city, in particular, symbolizes the new form of economic globalization; they are the nodes to the global economy, have a concentration of command and control functions, contain high levels of "producer-service" firms that focus on the global scale, and contain broad social structures, often oriented toward a cosmopolitan society, rather than place-based (Sassen 1994). Hall (1996) would later discuss the sociopolitical tensions that exist within global cities as a result of their global standing, leading to conflict between global and local policies.

Later, other researchers would also begin studying the concept of globalizing cities (e.g. Marcuse and van Kempen 2000). With the study of globalizing cities, emphasis was sometimes placed more on cities in the process of developing into (potential) global cities, a concept of development deplored by Smith (1996) as assuming there exists only one history for cities to follow, with each just being at a different stage of history. Other globalizing city studies treated these cities less as attempting to rise within the global city hierarchy, and more as being those nodes that most facilitated a global network web economically (Oncu and Weyland 1997). Researchers also began to focus on social considerations within a globalizing city that might emphasize or detract from a city’s functioning in the network.

With the concept of globalization, discussion of the re-ascendancy of the city ensued. External influences on an urban space were also re-emphasized, as cities were seen as subsumed within a globalization framework as necessary infrastructure to aid the efficiency of capital, yet part of a de/re-territorialization allowing those same cities to transcend (to some degree) the traditional nation-state territories (Sassen 1998). This created conflict with local needs within the city, and their relation to the external
forces affecting the urban space. Municipal functionaries find themselves balancing their focus between meeting social needs primarily internal to the city-space, and subsidizing economic opportunities that would potentially bring external financing to the city-space.

The urban space became viewed as the nexus between the global and the local, with globalization leading to a forced uneven geographical development to facilitate the (global) demands of capital (Harvey 2000). Swygendouw (1997) would coin the term *glocalization* as an effort to explore the dynamic relation between the global and the local. This relationship can be seen as part of the urban restructuring that is leading to the paradoxical simultaneity of the “implosion-explosion” of urbanization (Brenner 2000). Ironically, some researchers view within these changes a paradox: “the more universal the diffusion of material cultures and lifestyles, the more valuable local identities become” (Knox 1997, 20).

The question, then, became whether a synthesis could be made between global (economic) and local (economic and sociopolitical) forces and their relation with an urban space, or whether they would eventually tear the city apart. (One could potentially argue that suburbanization has done just that, as a physical manifestation of the expansion of capital [Smith 1996].)

In relating the global-local nexus to urban spaces focused upon tourism, cities become “strategic sites for the coordination of global entertainment conglomerates” (Sassen and Roost 1999, 143). Tourism is seen as having “taken place within a wider context of globalization of the world economy” (Suiyarto, Blake, and Sinclair 2003, 683). Growth of tourism is seen as indicative of the rise of the global village and the loss of solitude and isolation within local environments (Chang 1999). With globalization there
has been decreased air travel costs, increasing accessibility to emerging new destinations, increased wealth and income (unevenly distributed), and tourists with a greater knowledge base (Smeral 1998). Of course, with globalization has come increased competition through market extension on ever-wider spatial scales, leading cities dependent on tourism to focus on ever-greater externalities in order to maintain or increase their market share (ibid.). Some view tourism as having “shrunk the globe as much as the revolutions in telecommunications and computers” (Fainstein and Judd 1999, 1).

Conclusion

As cities are looking to attract external capital through tourism, spending is largely focused upon those visitors, who “must be shielded from the city’s residents,” whilst simultaneously tax bases are decreasing and social welfare needs are increasing (Eisinger 2000, 317). Many tourism projects are funded predominantly with public-private partnerships (Turner and Rosentraub 2002), the economic revitalization equivalent of the urban revitalization strategies employed by cities. Cities dependent “on tourism are faced with an over-arching problem: how can the industry be developed while also ensuring that local quality of life is maintained” (Milne and Ateljevic 2001, 370).

Unfortunately, that balance is not easily maintained. Local elites are seen as ignoring or subordinating the local day-to-day needs of the city (Eisinger 2000). Instead, fortified tourist enclaves are created separate from (physically) neighboring less-than-affluent communities rather than “woven into the existing urban fabric” (Fainstein and
Gladstone 1999). This leads to the creation of tourist bubbles with well-defined perimeters, physically separate from the rest of the city (Judd 1999). Tourism, and the cities that depend upon it, (re)produce uneven development across multiple scales (Judd 1999). Milne and Ateljevic (2001) perceive the economy created by tourism, with its external focus, as a proxy for global forces upon the urban space, while the community becomes a proxy for the local. Tourism represents both the globalization of locality (Sykora 1994) and the localization of globality (Featherstone 1993).

This dynamic will play out within the central Florida landscape, particularly as it relates to the Reedy Creek Improvement District. Before exploring these dynamics within that space, however, the context in which those dynamics arose must be explicated. The next chapter will explore the relationships between urban revitalization and urban theming within central Florida since the mid-nineteenth century.
Chapter Three

Embedding Uneven Processes in Central Florida History

Introduction

Orlando and central Florida are often viewed as having sprung upon the global scene in 1971, with the grand opening of Walt Disney World. Yet some ten years before, Orlando had been well-represented at the World Travel Council in Cannes, France (Orlando Sentinel 1961). In fact, many are surprised to learn that central Florida had a mature tourist economy by 1890.

The relationship between urban spaces in the region and tourism has been dominant and receded based on the vagaries of local and global processes, such as the decline of tourism during the Depression. These dynamics, often overlooked in the themed history of the region, have embedded social processes in the area that provide the antecedents for the contemporary uneven geographical development in the region.

This chapter explores the history of urban development and tourism in central Florida. Rather than positing teleological or determinist theories for the current situation in the region, the focus here is on choices made that have led to the creation of uneven structures that are embedded in the region. These structures provide the framework upon which continued uneven geographical development can be built, as posited in the first condition of the theory of uneven geographical development (Harvey 2006; see Figure 3-1).
Creating Orlando

Orlando is a modernist creation, begun in the violence and expansion that dominated Florida during the Second Seminole War (Bacon 1975). Fort Gatlin was constructed in 1838 within the central Florida frontier as part of a string of forts north of the Kissimmee-Okeechobee-Everglades water system connecting the Florida coasts during the war. The war was a move to tame Florida by first removing the Seminole Indians, many of them refugees from other displaced Native American tribes as well as runaway slaves, from the wilds of the Everglades. Fort Gatlin was strategically placed near the headwaters of the Kissimmee River, just north of the wetlands system, viewed as untamed wilderness by the Federals and as the home base of the Seminoles who dared to continue to resist removal. By 1840, a settlement one mile from the fort had sprung up, named Jernigan after the initial settlers. This settlement was considered insignificant in
the large area of Mosquito County, which encompassed modern-day Orange, Osceola, Lake, Seminole, Volusia, and Brevard counties (Blackman 1927).

Florida was absorbed as a state in the United States in 1845, following the conclusion of the Second Seminole War. Mosquito County was re-named Orange County upon statehood for the citrus in the region. By 1856, the town Jernigan and nearby Fort Gatlin became known as Orlando, and was designated the county seat.

Due to its location in central Florida, Orlando and other surrounding communities in central Florida remained relatively small through their creation during the Second Seminole War and development before and during the Civil War. These communities were agricultural by nature, with the economy based primarily on cotton and cattle ranching.

During the late 1850s, “more settlers were moving in [to central Florida] with slaves and cattle, and dreams of agricultural empires” (Bacon 1975, 19). Central Florida’s antebellum society would flourish at this small scale during this decade as agriculture continued to expand into the surrounding swamp areas, drained to create additional land for planting and pasture for grazing.

The communities in the region saw their economies suffer considerably during the Civil War (1861-1865), which ended cotton agriculture in the area. Orlando would take on a frontier-town quality following the war during Reconstruction. Citrus groves would replace cotton as the primary agricultural driver in central Florida in the 1870s.

The area south of Orlando would form the northern end of free range cattle country that extended to Lake Okeechobee. Cattle ranching would prove lucrative to central Florida throughout the Civil War, as a major source of meat (and other
agricultural products) for the Confederate army. This would also lead to additional growth in the area following the war and throughout Reconstruction. Central Florida was homesteaded by “pioneers,” similar to the late 19th century mythos of pioneering the frontier of the west for the U.S. In fact, many of the earliest settlers in the region, particularly those who arrived prior to 1880, were actively referred to as Orlando’s pioneers (Gore 1951). The region was still viewed as an area that required taming, particularly by residents who viewed Reconstruction with scorn and sought a return to antebellum traditions.

Several communities would gain population during the 1870s, including Orlando, which incorporated as a town in 1875 with 22 voters voting in favor of incorporation. Orlando was incorporated as a city by 1885, with its continued population and economic growth, stemmed by tourism throughout the 1880s (see below). These population gains, while large in percentage, were relatively low in absolute numbers, with Orlando having a total population of 200 by 1880 and central Florida as a whole having a population of nearly 7,000 (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1880).

Orlando and the central Florida region were well-known at the time for their “conservative roots,” and did not view Reconstruction kindly (Bacon 1977). While Reconstruction would bring economic growth to the region, particularly through citrus development in the region, the sociopolitical changes brought about following the War were quickly suppressed once the legislative mandates behind Reconstruction were lifted.
Initial Tourist Development

Tourism has a long history in central Florida, pre-dating the advent of Walt Disney World by roughly a century. Yet this history rarely figures into any investigation of the contemporary role of tourism in the region. This has been due to the fact that, firstly, tourism prior to Disney had a much different focus in the region, but secondly, due to the image being produced about both Disney and its role in the region.

Beginning with the population influx into the region in the 1850s, a small tourist trade began in central Florida, facilitated by steamboat. A hotel was built for passengers on Lake Monroe, arriving from travel up the St. Johns River, and tourism focused on outdoor pursuits in the conceived wilderness of the area (Robison and Andrews 1995). While on the one hand the efforts were being made to tame the wilderness to drive the agricultural economy of the region, on the other that wilderness was promoted to encourage visitors to engage it through hunting and sport. Tourism would decline during the Civil War, but by 1866, one year after the end of hostilities, the first hotel was completed in Orlando (Bacon 1975). Tourism would not become a major component in the region’s economy, however, until 1880.

The South Florida Railroad, from Sanford to Orlando, was constructed in 1880. This railroad was extended in 1883 to link Kissimmee, south of Orlando, with the Port of Tampa and with the rail line on the west coast of Florida (Gore 1951). The name of the railway was changed to Atlantic Coast Line in 1902, by which time it had been extended to Jacksonville (Tebeau 1971).

The initial purpose of the railway was to expand access to the agricultural opportunities in the region, particularly the citrus and cattle production, as well as to
connect the eastern coast of the state with the western coast. With the railroad, access to the surrounding area increased in ways that had previously not been possible in an area still considered as frontier (Gore 1951). It was “the railroad” that “made Winter Park, Longwood and Altamonte Springs winter resorts for tourists” (Robison and Andrews 1995, 177).

This becomes the first example of the region’s growth being driven to a large extent by transportation. This, for central Florida, is difficult to overstate: while the coasts were accessible both from the sea, with adequate portage in Tampa, Miami, Jacksonville, etc. and with the clearing of lands for accessibility along the coast, the interior remained difficult to access and was still considered wilderness. In fact, central and south-central Florida was considered a frontier region long after the frontier in the west lost that designation and after it had been connected with the coasts by rail.

With the coming of the railroad also came the first boom for the region, which included land speculation, population increases, and national advertisements to entice yet more people to Orange County (Barbour 1884). These advertisement campaigns were partially underwritten by railroad promotions along the coasts to increase passenger traffic in the region.

In the 1880s, central Florida was actively marketed to “tourists, invalids and settlers” (Kendrick 1976, 131). Florida’s main draw as a tourist destination was its temperate winter climate. Tourism was predicated on Florida being “used as a ‘grand national sanitarium’” (Tebeau 1971).

In the late nineteenth century, local community leaders marketed central Florida for its natural features to lure tourists: fishing in its lakes, and camping and hunting in its
“wilderness” (Gore 1951). Springs were also popular for bathing and water sports (Kendrick 1976). This was often undertaken by visitors from the north of the United States, arriving via train (or steamship to Sanford) and spending several weeks in the region. By 1900 a 52 acre tuberculosis sanitarium, the precursor to Florida Hospital, was built in the region, which increased its popularity as a place for northerners to travel to and regain their health (Dickinson 2003). Central Florida would remain a popular destination for outdoor sports and for health through World War I.

By 1890, Orlando had begun to focus on beautification projects to add to the appeal of the community (Dickinson 2003). The thought behind these projects was that, by improving the urban space available to tourists, more tourists might come to the region, expanding that segment of the economy. In addition, those tourists may find the community one they wish to stay in on a more permanent basis, increasing the resident base of the city. Since tourists tended to be individuals of good standing with income, they would be residents well worth attracting. This proved difficult, however, in a city that until this time was still a frontier cow town.

By the turn of the century, Orlando had theatre and opera that were considered “almost as professional as those seen on the New York stage” (Kendrick 1976, 49). The Armory was also used for entertainment and as convention space for the region. The region also had several hotels, resorts, and lodges for guests to frequent. The focus remained on providing the cultural requirements of visitors, while also catering to the social elites of the region.

While tourism became important in the late nineteenth century, central Florida’s primary economic activity was citrus agriculture, until the freeze of 1894-1895. Cattle
was also a vital component of the central Florida economy from the time of its earliest settlers until its primary economic status was overtaken by citrus and tourism in the 1880s, and for the most part ranching then moved further south of the region into newly-drained regions of the Everglades surrounding Lake Okeechobee (Kendrick 1976).

In 1880, Orlando had a population less than 200. By 1884, the population had increased to nearly 1,700 (Gore 1951). By the 1890 census, its population was 10,000; Orlando’s heavy reliance on citrus agriculture, however, would lead to the population reduced to 2,481 by 1900, following the citrus freeze of 1894-1895. Central Florida’s overall population would increase from 6,618 in 1880 to 12,582 in 1890; again, however, there was a slight decrease in population by 1900 to 11,574. Tourism, however, would continue to impact the region’s economic state, such that, by 1900, the region had begun to recover economically from the freeze (Kendrick 1976). Growth would steadily continue in the region until 1910 (ibid.).

(Re)Developing the City of Orlando

In the late nineteenth century, central Florida was considered one of the last frontiers in the United States, and Orlando was considered “as violent as any cowtown in the West” (Central Florida Heritage Foundation 2005). It was still viewed, both within the area and through national perceptions of the space, as a pioneering community of the fringes of untamed wilderness. The community itself, from a social perspective, was seen as mirroring the surrounding natural landscape. The community was not considered a safe place, and was often overlooked by tourists for surrounding communities that had built up specifically to cater to the needs and desires of tourists.
Orlando also had significant sociopolitical issues, as the legacy of antebellum Orlando returned to the fore following the end of Reconstruction. There was significant violence against African-American communities in the region to (re)enforce segregation. In the 1888 elections, African-Americans were run out of the polls and severely beaten for attempting to exercise the franchise (Bacon 1975). By 1889, a poll tax was enacted in the region in an attempt to prevent any repeated attempts by any other than propertied white males to participate politically in the region.

Many tourists and new residents, however, were from north of the Mason-Dixon line. While segregation and racial attitudes in the north at this time were subtle variants of those in the south, tensions needed to be subsumed beneath a veneer of a happy, stable, safe community. This veneer for the community stated that it should be designed for the health and happiness of its residents and their visitors, while employing sociopolitical violence, including segregation, under the veneer to enforce that image. By the turn of the century, as tourism became more prominent in the local economies, the focus would shift toward redeveloping those spaces to best meet the needs of this new meme.

Much of this new development was actively marketed by local agencies. The Board of Trade, in an attempt to highlight the “thrifty conditions” of the region, would in the early 20th century highlight

“the spirit of improvement and progress … abroad in the city [of Orlando] and surrounding country. New homes are being made and old ones are being improved. Farming and residence property is advancing in value, and the population is increasing through accessions from the states lying further north. If you contemplate a trip to the South, put Orlando down as your objective point” (Orlando Board of Trade, 19nk).

Orlando was also highlighted as a clean, progressive, and cosmopolitan city. Sentinel Print (1910, 2) would portray Orlando as a “busy, clean, and thrifty city.” They insisted
that towns in Florida should be built and expanded to meet the needs not only of residents needing to utilize their day-to-day functions, but also for “the so-called tourist, who is out for pleasure and simply gives a surface look, but demands that nothing shall mar the effect” (Sentinel Print 1910, 3). The region actively improved and marketed the infrastructure for “pleasant walks, fine drives, [and the] best automobile roads in the state” to attract additional visitors and residents to the region (ibid.). Along with marketing these features to tourists, the same time period would see the same tourist and urban development accomplishments used to sell real estate opportunities around the country.

Urban development and beautification projects were seen as an effective way to market the communities both to tourists and for attracting new residents. As part of marketing these projects, “in 1908, Orlando held a contest” to determine a new nickname for the city (Orange-Seminole Joint Planning Commission 1965, 21). The winning slogan, “The City Beautiful,” remains the nickname of Orlando today, and has been actively used since then to promote the city as a place for growth driven by external forces.

Tourism greatly expanded as a result of World War I, as tourists who would normally have traveled to Europe instead were able to use both the railroad and the automobile to arrive in Florida. This led to a new boom in Orlando, in which the town saw significant growth through the 1920s, and transitioned from a small rural town to a small city in form and function (Kendrick 1976). By this time, reliance was less on the railroad corridors but instead on the new highway corridors.
Land booms in the 1920s, while not impacting central Florida as much as they did coastal Florida cities, would lead to redevelopment of many downtown spaces, including Sanford, Orlando, Winter Park, and Kissimmee. New public buildings and downtown shopping centers, in the form of department stores, were built, and new residential communities surrounding the existing downtowns would also increase. Schools and cultural sites, such as auditoriums, were also built during this period. Cities began to develop away from the railways as the center of urban transportation and instead begin to build around the highways that now ran through the region (Orange-Seminole Joint Planning Commission 1965).

Tourism and urban development would falter after the 1926 and 1928 hurricane seasons, and did not recover prior to the 1929 crash and the subsequent economic depression (Kendrick 1976). By 1930 Orlando had become a regional hub as a centralized point of several central Florida highways, and central Florida returned to a focus on agriculture. Citrus, however, would suffer from the Mediterranean fruit fly, first found in the groves in 1929 (Dickinson 2003). The impact of the depression on the local population was uneven, though overall most of central Florida had weathered the economic downturn by the second half of the decade. The 1920s and 1930s would also see renewed violence against African-American communities in central Florida, most prominently highlighted by the burning of the community of Ocoee in 1920, accompanied by lynchings of men attempting to vote in the general election (Gannon 1996).

In the 1940s, the focus of the central Florida economy shifted to the military (primarily training with some industrial production) during World War II. The men who
trained and shipped through the area helped to revive the area’s reputation as a place for leisure and relocation (Dickinson 2003). Both Army and Navy air bases were located in central Florida, in addition to other military bases in the region. In fact, “more than half the pilots who would fight in the Pacific theater got their training” from Sanford Naval Air Station (ibid., 133).

Postwar Urban and Tourist Development

Rapid suburbanization began following the Second World War in Orlando. From 1940 until 1960, the populations of both Orlando and central Florida more than tripled. This was due not only to relocation after the war, but also to the overall draw of Florida as a new retiree destination. This led to rapid urbanization of the region, with redevelopment of urban spaces following similar patterns seen across many U.S. urban spaces (see Chapter Two).

Along with the return to urban development, which had stagnated in the late 1920s, the economy began to shift away from agriculture as a primary economic sector. Industry began moving into the region during and following WWII. While central Florida would never truly industrialize, it became the headquarters for the Martin Company following WWII, and would provide support for the new programs on the Space Coast to the east of Orlando, centralized around Cape Canaveral.

Orlando would remain one of the more conservative urban spaces in Florida. It would earn the distinction of being the last city in Florida to desegregate its polls in 1950 – and only because a new state law forced the issue (Bacon 1977). When African-Americans were given the right to vote, it put the White Voters Executive Committee out
of business (*ibid.*). Even with desegregation of the polls, overall desegregation was greatly contested through the 1970s (Argett 1991). The region would remain governed through the 1950s and 1960s, both officially and behind the scenes, by a small handful of powerful local interests. It would take the changes that began in 1971 both to affect progressive change in the community and to once again subsume the sociopolitical problems of the region underneath the veneer of The City Beautiful.

In the same year as poll desegregation, a slum clearance committee was formed by the mayor “to make a survey of local conditions, to take advantage of the Housing Act of 1949 whereby communities were to be assisted in eliminating blighted areas” (Bacon 1977, 164). The Orlando Housing Authority was established in 1938; by 1951, seven affordable housing projects had been completed. These projects were segregated: four projects were designed for white residents, and three for black residents (*Ibid.*, 172).

During the 1950s, an annual fair with a midway and cockfighting were the most popular attractions in the area, the latter drawing visitors and financiers from around the country (Dickinson 2003). Tourism steadily grew in the region through the 1950s and 1960s, also focusing upon the natural features of the region.

The city commissioners fought to bring Interstate 4 through the city, ostensibly in order to renew interest in the flagging downtown (Robison and Andrews 1995). This was not successful, as such. Public opinion, via the auspices of the Citizens Expressway Association, sought to have the freeway moved west during community meetings in 1956 (Bacon 1977).

By 1961, construction of Interstate 4 began. Not only did that make the region once again more accessible and potentially popular for tourist interests, it also bisected
existing communities of color in the downtown area. It was not, however, successful in attracting interest in the downtown space per se, and in 1965 a new master development plan for the central business district was unveiled. Events that same year, however, would help ensure that downtown Orlando would not again be the central pole in central Florida.

With the decision to bisect central Florida with Interstate 4 came one of many factors that would lead to “the events of the closing months of 1965 [that] changed the complexion of Orlando’s future growth, with the emphasis swinging back to tourism, the area’s original premise” (Bacon 1977, 265). This was the decision by Walt Disney to purchase several thousand acres of land southwest of Orlando. On this land, the Disney Company would eventually build a theme park in its creator’s name. Tourism became “the dominant industry and forever changing this once-agricultural community” with the opening of Walt Disney World in 1971 (Robison and Andrews 1995, 275). While tourism had been important through Orlando’s history, “the impact of [Disney World] has been so forceful, so profound, that one is tempted to append ‘A.D.’ (after Disney) to the years following 1971. Disney World transformed tourism” in the region (Mormino 2005, 116). This phenomenon will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Four.

**Embedding Sociopolitical Processes into the Central Florida Space**

At the end of the 1960s, Orlando would have the reputation of being a sleepy little town, one with little history other than that of being a small agricultural community (Langford 1976). This image of historical Orlando and central Florida remain persistent, despite the reality of a significant historical record of both agricultural and postindustrial
economic development, some industrialization (though never enough to create infrastructural barriers to a formal shift toward a post-Fordist economy), several rounds of urban development – often in support of the tourist economy, and a socio-politically uneven space, particularly in terms of race relations.

Central Florida, by 1971, already had experience as a tourist economy. The decisions by local policy makers to support the needs of tourists in urban development had been made since the 1880s. Granted, agriculture had also dominated the central Florida economy and structure, but that domination had slowly declined following the 1894-1895 freeze, particularly in relation to urban development decisions for a rural economy. Central Florida society was highly stratified, and had not come to terms with its diverse population, particularly its large African-American communities. Transportation decisions that facilitated continual redevelopment of tourism had been adapted since the steamboats used in the 1850s.

In other words, the relations between tourism and urban revitalization in the space had already entailed processes that enabled future development to occur with fewer infrastructural changes – or, where necessary, these infrastructural changes were often easier for communities to accept as part of an ongoing cycle. Furthermore, economies dependent on cheap sources of labor had been the norm in the region, from its earliest settlers and their use of slave labor, through low-paying agricultural dependency, to historical tourism and the low-wages in general for a segregated population.

None of these factors were determined by the history of Orlando. Each time a decision was reaffirmed, however, it became less difficult to convince communities to make the same decisions again in the near future. Those decisions also created physical
and social structures that would need to be actively deconstructed or co-opted in order to change the unevenness of the development of the central Florida space. This is an idea that will be returned to in Chapter Six, when discussing the contemporary unevenness of central Florida in relation to urban development and tourism, and the parallels that exist to similar situations that were in existence in 1885, 1910, and 1965.

This chapter briefly discussed the highlights of the history of urban development and tourism within the often-overlooked history of central Florida. The next chapter will focus specifically on the development of the largest tourist sink in central Florida history, within the context of an environment that included the factors necessary to facilitate such a development.
Chapter Four

Developing the Reedy Creek Improvement District

Introduction

Walt Disney World: the name evokes many images for many people around the globe. Initially meant to be a playground for Americans living east of the Mississippi, a market remaining relatively untapped by Disneyland in Anaheim, California, it has come to be the largest tourist destination in the world. According to Mormino (2005, 117), “Disney World has become the world’s most successful commercial attraction. As a tourist shrine, Disney World is rivaled only by Kyoto, Mecca, and the Vatican.”

Located in central Florida, roughly 20 miles southwest of Orlando, Walt Disney World resides on a 43 square mile tract, primarily in Orange County but also stretching to its southeast into adjacent Osceola County (see Figure 4-1). In 2005 it boasted an attendance of roughly 45 million visitors, mostly from the United States but also consisting of a significant number of international visitors (Rubin 2007). Walt Disney World has at its disposal an autonomous governmental entity under the enactment of the Reedy Creek Improvement District, consisting of four major theme parks, two water parks, twenty-two hotel-resorts, several golf and miniature golf courses, conference facilities, and a major shopping, dining, and entertainment
Figure 4-1. The Reedy Creek Improvement District.
complex (Disney Enterprises 2006), all within a greenbelt separating the activities on property from those off-property.

The story of the place Walt Disney World will be briefly discussed, both within its historical context and an examination of its command of space and control of place through social imagineering. It is through the development of Walt Disney World, and its command of the tourist image of central Florida, that a continuing context for uneven geographical development in central Florida will be established. The Reedy Creek Improvement District becomes evocative of accumulation by dispossession in an unevenly developed space, the second condition of the theory of uneven geographical development (see Figure 4-2).

![Figure 4-2. The Second Condition of Uneven Geographical Development.](source: Harvey (2006).)
Reedy Creek Improvement District?

A unique feature of Walt Disney World, and central to its geographical-historical development, was the creation of the Reedy Creek Improvement District by the state of Florida in 1967. The RCID, as it is known, allows the Disney Company complete autonomous governmental control over its central Florida property. It is, in effect, a public-private governmental entity.

Disney’s developed his ideas for creating the RCID soon after the establishment of Disneyland in Anaheim, California in 1955. As the theme park quickly became a popular venue, land around the park became increasingly developed by other entities seeking to share in the largesse. Not only did Walt Disney have no control over this development, not having had the funds to secure the additional land prior to the park’s opening and the land’s subsequent increase in price, he also had no control over the park’s visitors before entering or after leaving the park (Archer 1997). By the 1960s, roughly two dollars were being spent by tourists outside Disneyland for every dollar spent inside the park (Schickel 1997).

Disney was determined not to make what he perceived as mistakes when contemplating the development of his next theme park (Foglesong 1990; Foglesong 2001; Archer 1997). The mistakes in Disneyland’s development included (among other things) a small space actually purchased for the theme park, continued disputes with the county (Orange County) over legislative and tax issues, and what he saw as the (for him) uncontrollable eyesores encroaching upon his boundaries. For Disney,

"Control was imperative for him for two reasons. One was profit. Outside the gates at Disneyland in California, many others had profited from the tourists that Disney attracted. ... The second reason control was imperative for Disney is more social. Disney considered the world dangerously out
of control. ... This perceived need for greater social control is clear in both Disneyland and Disney World, where strict control is maintained” (Archer 1997, 326).

At the time of Disneyland’s creation, these issues were beyond Disney’s control. The company had not had the money to purchase additional land; as it was, a significant portion of the funds had been secured from the American Broadcast Corporation (Watts 1997). With the popularity of the Disney name, land around the park quickly became too expensive for Disney himself to secure, while others were more than willing to secure the opportunity afforded to them. Disney, however, wanted total control over both his enterprise and its surroundings.

In the early 1960s, he began to scout for land east of the Mississippi River, in order to tap into the eastern seaboard tourist market (roughly 90% of visitors to Disneyland resided west of the Mississippi at that time). Initially, St. Louis was a strong contender, due to its centralized location, multiple transportation systems (road and rail network hubs, as well as the Mississippi itself), and the encouragement of local government officials. This idea would quickly be shattered, however, when August Busch, heir to the Budweiser Empire, declared to the teetotaler Walt that no theme park would be built in St. Louis that did not also serve his products. This effectively ended St. Louis as a contender for the new theme park (Foglesong 2001).

Florida had been an initial contender in the location decision, due to its climate and its already existing popularity as a tourist destination, which Disney could tap into. Its disadvantages, aside from hurricane seasons, included that existing tourist market, which was predominately a beach culture, and transportation infrastructure. By the 1960s Interstate 75 arrived in western Florida via Michigan; Interstate 95 arrived in eastern
Florida via Maine, traversing the eastern seaboard. These were connected by Interstate 10, which roughly traversed the southern border of the United States from Santa Monica, California. There also existed a strong railroad infrastructure and port system, with major airports to the west in Tampa and to the southeast in Miami.

Neither Tampa nor Miami were ever strong contenders for the location of Walt Disney World. They already had their own long histories, and were rapidly exploding as a result of post-World War II suburbanization. Walt also wanted to locate the park between I-75 and I-95, in order to centralize access for those driving to the park. He also wanted to locate the park in an area with limited (perceived) historical legacy, so as not to influence the reputation of the new park in any pejorative way. I-4 had just recently begun construction across central Florida, and would end up bisecting a small, relatively (it seemed) undeveloped urban space by the name of Orlando. Not only was it a central location in Florida, it also did not have existing power structures that might threaten what Walt wanted to accomplish.

Instead, the power structures that did exist were ones that would work effectively to facilitate Walt’s desires for complete control over space. There was an abundance of undeveloped land, and zoning and tax regulations (at the time) highly favored corporate interests, allowing for a far more favorable relationship with policy-makers than Disney enjoyed in California (Foglesong 2001). It did not yet, however, have a major airport (the local Air Force base allowed some commercial flights), but local and state political powers were eager to attract the star of the west coast to this area.

With the help of discretion from Martin Andersen, the then-editor of the Orlando Sentinel, Billy Dial, a local bank executive; and other local political figures, Walt in 1964
secretly began to amass large tracts of land southwest of the urban space, near the area where the new interstate would be built, using front companies and dummy names (Robison and Andrews 1995, 269). Disney also took the risk of buying land in discontiguous pieces across the boundaries of both Orange and Osceola counties, only slowly coalescing into a single large land mass. This was in an attempt to procure as large a piece of property as possible without raising too much suspicion. By crossing county boundaries, it also served the purpose of creating a competition for services that could be played between the two counties for any concessions within the property, a situation unavailable in Orange County, California for the smaller Disneyland.

Disney was able to “purchase 27,500 acres” (Foglesong 1995, 4), a parcel of land the size of San Francisco and twice the size of Manhattan, all under conditions of anonymity with the seller, to prevent the rumor speculations in the area from becoming financial in nature. This continued until Emily Bavar, an Orlando Sentinel reporter not privy to Andersen’s role and discretion in the matter, inadvertently stumbled upon the story in 1965 (Mosley 1985). Andersen was able to delay the story long enough to allow Walt and Roy Disney, his brother and chief financial officer, to make the announcement on their own terms. True to Disney’s concern, land prices surrounding the newly-acquired property immediately skyrocketed. By this time, though, a significant-enough property had been formed to allow for physical control of all activities within and immediately surrounding the park, as well as to "create a greenbelt between their built-up theme park and neighboring land uses" (Foglesong 1995, 4).

For Disney, this was not enough. Physical control had to be absolute, in his mind, in order to create absolute social control. Walt still saw this as an opportunity, not only
to gain control of tourists during the entire length of their stay at his theme park, but also to implement his EPCOT utopia. In this stage of his life, Disney not only saw this new theme park as a way of keeping the Disney Company afloat following several decades of roller coaster-like finances, he was also seeking to create a new form of community, one in which the disruptions of 1960's urban spaces could never occur, for he would maintain authoritarian control.

This was to be his Experimental Prototype Community of Tomorrow, or EPCOT, which was to become

“a utopian model of modern urban life, a celebration of technological rationality and the virtues of a corporate-designed future. EPCOT would provide a paradigm of how corporations would solve the problems of society through their technological wizardry” (Giroux 1999, 37-38).

EPCOT would originally focus on becoming a model community for any industry that wished to align, even if only spatially, with Disney; it would also be the residential location for park employees (Schickel 1997).

This would make EPCOT an expanded, contemporaneous twentieth century company town. This community was to be fully enclosed within a geodesic dome, such that everything occurring within EPCOT could be controlled, including the climate (Eliot 1993). This community would also be all-inclusive, providing residences, employment, recreation, services, and transportation within the community, with no need for community members to engage in external interaction. The catch, however, was that, in order to create such a radical community, the Disney Corporation must have full and complete control over their acquired property. On the eve of Walt Disney’s death, this community would be the crux of an argument made to the Florida legislature to grant the Disney Company autonomous rights within its land.
Using a video made of Walt prior to his death discussing the wonders of an entirely private community, the Disney company convinced “the Florida legislature [to] create an entity known as the Reedy Creek Improvement District (RCID), in essence granting the Disney company its own private government” (Foglesong 1995, 4). This legislation, passed in May 1967, gave the company immense powers to control their property as it saw fit, creating what amounted to “a private government for constructing and managing an amusement park” (Hiaasen 1998, 26).

In addition, the legislation included "a clever perpetuity clause [stating] that if the provisions of future law should conflict with the charter, the charter would 'prevail,' unless the new law repealed the relevant section of the charter" (Foglesong 2001, 71). This amounted to

"a wholly private political structure, controlled by one corporation and exercising unaccountable authority over a significant amount of central Florida. The Reedy Creek Improvement District has the power to levy property taxes, issue bonds to borrow money, organize and manage its own police and fire departments, develop and manage an airport, and provide utilities (including the ability to build a nuclear reactor if Disney sees fit). In short, [the RCID] enjoys all the political powers generally vested in publicly accountable governmental units" (Archer 1997, 327).

The RCID legislation granted the Disney Corporation almost full immunity from state and local laws and regulations, and a grandfather clause that prevented future laws from impeding Disney’s governmental and corporate rights in their boundaries (Foglesong 1995, 17).

Eminent domain was granted, to allow Disney to finish consolidating their property against the few remaining holdouts. Disney was exempt from zoning and land use restrictions, including future environmental protection laws, which becomes important to consider when realizing that much of the RCID is wetlands (Fjellman 1992,
The RCID is also exempt from paying environmental impact fees on the wetlands they do develop within the district (Bryman 1995, 117).

The RCID “has since operated like a privately owned county. Reedy Creek … has almost all of the powers of a county government” (Hollis 2005). They maintain the rights to build such infrastructure as a nuclear power plant and its own international airport, as well as “cemeteries, schools, a police department, and a criminal justice system” (Hiassen 1998, 27); so far, it has only gone so far with these as to institute a shadow police department in the form of private security, as well as autonomous fire and emergency services. They could, and would, compete with other municipalities and counties for governmental bonds, pitting their theme park sewage improvements against affordable housing in Orange County in one infamous episode in 1990; the RCID ended up winning the $57.7 million in bonds (ibid., 34; St. Petersburg Times 1990).

There were only two strings attached to the creation of this autonomous district. First, the company still had to pay property taxes to Orange and Osceola counties, based on the land use classification of the property residing in each respective county. Second, any permanent residents on property would have voting rights within the RCID. After all, the ultimate purpose in developing the district was to allow for the creation of a new, utopian community, but that community would then have the same rights afforded to any other municipality in the state.

Within the RCID there does exist two incorporated towns: Bay Lake and Lake Buena Vista. In theory, the residents of these cities would have a voice in the direction taken by the RCID, as a governmental entity. In order to prevent any population from potentially gaining control of Disney’s corporate decisions, however, only high-level
executives are allowed to maintain residence in this area (Foglesong 1990). This maintains the illusion of municipality function, whilst ensuring that all control remains vested within the corporation. The primary responsibility of these corporate residents to RCID development is that, “by law, they must vote on general obligation bond issues. As [district administrator Tom] Moses recalls, the cities of Bay Lake and Lake Buena Vista have never turned down a bond issue” (Olinger 1996). Legally, the RCID and Walt Disney World are separate entities, though in practice that line becomes nonexistent (Hiaasen 1997).

At any given time, however, several thousand people (temporarily) live in the RCID in one of many available hotel rooms. Several thousand more will spend their days in the not-so-public spaces within the RCID. And the RCID employs more workers than any other single-site employer in the state of Florida. This relatively self-contained district is one of the most visited locations in the world, and must provide the infrastructure necessary to cope with the flow of resident-guests and workers in and out of the space.

While the RCID is a governmental entity, it should never be forgotten that it is a “private government” (Foglesong 1990, 21) and that Walt Disney World is a private capitalist enterprise. It is an authoritative space in which both labor and the consumer must accede to the social demands, and participate in the place’s continued social construction upon the Disney storyline. This is mainly achieved through the imagineering of the World, both physically, as with the construction of the quintessentially utopian Main Street, U.S.A., and socially, with the behavioral mandates and control within the World.
Walt Disney World as a Themed Urban Environment

Magic Kingdom, the first theme park in Walt Disney World, opened in 1971. The roads leading to the park arrive from the south, from Interstate 4 at the southern boundary of the Orange County portion of the RCID property. Magic Kingdom is built in the northern corner of the property, which allows for control of visitors from the moment they leave Interstate 4, or the Other world, and enter Disney’s World. The images, flow of movement, must all be controlled during their stay at Walt Disney World. Here, unlike originally at Disneyland, visitors not only played in the parks, but remained on property at one of its resorts, or in its campground. During that time, Disney would control imagery, movement of people, behavior, and promote the use of peer pressure to attempt to regulate attitude. This World had its own rules and codes of conduct, seen as independent of the Other world, outside its domain. The first three hotels would create a semi-circle along the southern end of the Magic Kingdom, and be connected to each other and the park with a monorail: guests would not need to use their automobile, further increasing the likelihood of their remaining on-site.

EPCOT opened in 1982, but not as originally envisioned. With Walt Disney’s death in 1966, and the security of the RCID already ensured by the following year, the company had decided not to risk their future vision of the property by allowing permanent residents (except for the already-mentioned company executives). EPCOT, instead, would become a theme park sequel to Magic Kingdom, and the last part of the Disney World property to be connected to the monorail system. Its two sections, Future World and World Showcase, would highlight attractions in pavilions that were
reminiscent of a world’s fair. Each pavilion is sponsored; in Future World by a major corporation, in World Showcase, by the country being highlighted in the pavilion.

Disney-MGM Studios (now Disney Hollywood Studios) would open in 1989. It was built in direct competition with Universal Studios Orlando. Universal Studios purchased property and began building months before Disney, but Disney’s park would open a year before Universal. This was because Universal had to meet all of the legal requirements of the city of Orlando and Orange County, being located within the municipality, while Disney controlled their own zoning through the RCID. This park is meant to highlight the movie industry, and has more of a focus on thrill rides, rather than the tamer themed attractions of the other parks. The rides are themed either around movies in general, or based on a specific movie or television series.

The final theme park, Animal Kingdom, opened in 1998. The centerpiece of this park, which is the only theme park which competes with the zoologically-themed Busch Gardens in Tampa, is the Tree of Life. Made of concrete and steel, with vinyl leaves, and nearly 300 animal images carved into the trunk, the themed lifeless structure houses a “4-D” attraction (a 3-D movie with special effects throughout the theatre timed to the movies) in its base. The focus is on regions and their zoological inhabitants: Africa, Asia, the zoology of the past in Dinoland USA, and the animated zoology of Camp Minnie-Mickey.

While none of the other parks are located as deeply inside the RCID as Magic Kingdom, all would be maintained within a massive greenbelt, along with the hotel resorts built to accommodate their visitors. This greenbelt would physically remove visitors from the Outside world, further reinforcing the social engineering constructed
within the park, which would involve a “sanitize[d] amusement” (Mormino 2005, 101). This would allow Disney “to control the park’s environment so [the company] could edit out the negative aspects of reality and manage both the view the public had of the outside world and the imaginative possibilities open to them once they were met by Mickey Mouse at the gates of the Magic Kingdom” (Giroux 1999, 37).

In addition to the theme parks, the RCID includes two water parks, more than 20 resort areas, an official Downtown, which consists of several retail, restaurant, and entertainment venues, four golf courses, two miniature golf courses, a Boardwalk, a fire department, security detail, and other functions normally associated with a metropolitan area. Walt Disney World can be said to be “a viable representation of a real city, built for people from the middle classes that have escaped from cities to the suburbs and exurbs,” the consummate gated city, restricted both by its private autonomy, greenbelt, and cost of admission (Zukin 1995, 53). The property averages well over 100,000 persons on property on any given day, and provides employment for more than 50,000 to residents in the surrounding central Florida region.

In fact, most of what people consider Walt Disney World is incorporated in one of two urban spaces. The first, Bay Lake, includes all four theme parks. The second, Lake Buena Vista, includes the Downtown Disney retail complex. Both were created the same day at the Reedy Creek Improvement District was signed into law (May 12, 1967), though until 1969, Lake Buena Vista was known as the city of Reedy Creek. These cities do not meet the Florida statute guidelines for incorporation, as neither meets the 1,500 person stipulation for urban areas of less than 50,000 persons (Florida League of Cities 2007). The two cities combined had a population of 39 in 2000, with only 2.65% of the
population, or one person, being Other than non-Hispanic white (U.S. Census Bureau 2000a; see Table 5-1). This earns the two cities the distinction of being two of the ten smallest incorporated cities in the state (BEBR 2005). None of the land in either city is actually owned by its residents: all property in the RCID, which includes Bay Lake and Lake Buena Vista, is owned by the Disney Corporation or one of its subsidiaries. While there are some families living in these cities, this is due to a family member holding a prominent position within the Disney company. These are the only permanent residents allowed in the RCID.

Table 4-1. Reedy Creek Improvement District Demographics.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Bay Lake</th>
<th>Lake Buena Vista</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Population</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Hispanic or Latino</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>97.44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or African American</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>56.40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>43.60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under the Age of 18</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 65 and Over</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15.40%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2000a.

At any given time, however, several thousand people (temporarily) live in the RCID in one of many available hotel rooms. Several thousand more will spend their days in the not-so-public spaces within the RCID. And the RCID employs more workers than any other single-site employer in the state of Florida. This relatively self-contained district is one of the most visited locations in the world, and must provide the
infrastructure necessary to cope with the flow of resident-guests and workers in and out of the space.

The RCID constitutes a themed urban space: one in which all participants participate in a temporary, ephemeral way, then return to a separate space that constitutes a more permanent residence, whether it is nearby in the case of workers or farther afield for the visitors. Except for those executives living on property, however, none of the visitors can participate except temporarily; this, in turn, further concentrates the power to control the space and its themes, particularly in removing individuals who might disrupt the image espoused for the RCID.

Though the persons involved in this urban space are temporary, the built environment is fixed, as is the social environment, which is (re)created by all those attending as a model, utopian urban experience:

“Although these parks were designed in the first place to appeal primarily to children and teenagers, … they usually have at their heart a surrogate urban experience, but one purified of all the inconvenience that living in a real town involves. As a toy town, the theme park holds up a distorting mirror to the reality of urban living. It offers an urbanity without surprise, yet one where planning has been rigidly enforced” (Rykwert 2000, 151).

Interestingly, this form of urban existence has its supporters. Walt himself saw his theme parks as “a utopian escape from the real world” (Stewart 2005, 60). From this he would build “his urban community, in the best American tradition, as a city on a hill,” which would represent a “utopian expression of the postwar American way of life” (Watts 1997, 445). The urban space that Walt Disney World encapsulates is very much utopian in nature: while the cities of Bay Lake and Lake Buena Vista are incorporated, and Walt Disney World very much exists as a physical place, the social and human urban spaces are no-places, as few permanently remain in order to build a community. If anything,
Disney World could be said to constitute a very cosmopolitan urbanity, at least cosmopolitan in terms of the spatial scope of its social space, while relatively communitarian in the social scope of its physical space and the thematic versions of history and the future offered therein.

Ultimately, the World has come to embody “a privatized, homogeneous, and risk-free city that embodied [Walt Disney’s] versions of American virtues, a city politically autonomous and embodying” the virtues of Main Street USA (Giroux 1999, 38). The urban space becomes a nostalgic representation of the American mythos (see below). Disney World then becomes viewed as a place that “idealizes urban public space. … Visual culture, spatial control, and private management make Disney World an ideal type of public space” (Zukin 1995, 54). This space, however, is but a utopian ideal, as it is anything but public. The RCID and all space within is private and under the control of a single corporate entity, within the bounds of an autonomous governmental entity. There is no public space within the RCID. Yet it has become viewed as an ideal for public spaces to emulate, rather than keeping in mind the fact that Disney World “is the first copyrighted urban environment in history” (Sorkin 1992, 206). The fact that such a space could entail such an image, is indicative of the role of imagineering in the command of the spatial image of the RCID.

**Walt Disney World and Social Imagineering**

According to Archer (1997, 322), “imagineering involves attempting to construct the reality of goods or places on the basis of nostalgia and amnesia, or partial memory and partial forgetting.” This term, originally coined by Disney, involves the creation of
entire theming of a space or situation: not only the beginning, middle, and end to its totality, but also the creation of a plausible “back story” in order to convey a sense of history to the creation. This imagineering then extends beyond an attraction or theme park, to the space of Walt Disney World itself. In order for Disney World to be imagineered, though, the guests themselves must be active participants in the construction.

The process of imagineering the theme parks creates a situation in which the focus of Walt Disney World becomes control (Bryman 2004; Wilson 1994). This includes controlling the movements and behaviors of people (both visitors and “cast members”) within the parks / property, the imagery that visitors are exposed to and its myopic treatment of imagination, to the point where control, typically of nature, becomes the theme in and of itself (Bryman 1995). The greenbelt afforded by the additional property and the control over that property’s use increases the control over the imagery experienced by guests; to the point that guests believe they are entering Walt Disney World when passing under well-themed arches welcoming them with the likes of Mickey Mouse and Donald Duck, when in actuality they typically entered the Disney space several miles prior to that “official” entrance. Imagineering becomes a form of “totalitarian image-making” where the image becomes the means by which to define interactions within the space (Zukin 1991, 222).

The themed control over the message and dynamics of the space leads to an “erasure of spontaneity [which] has largely to do with the totality of the built and themed environment” (Klugman, et. al. 1995, 184). Guests at Disney World treat this imagineering dynamic as creating a situation in which they are “‘freed up’ … by the
experience of relinquishing control over the complex problem-solving thoughts and operations that otherwise define their lives” (ibid., 185). Walt Disney World epitomizes time-space compression in its “juxtaposition and mixing of diverse epochs and cultures,” in its attempt to become both placeless and timeless in order to further facilitate the (re)creation of this dynamic (Bryman 1995, 163).

Walt Disney World is socially constructed, not only by the Disney Corporation, which attempts to maintain full control over its World and its imageries, but also by those who attend the parks, dream of the parks, even those who despise the parks. The space of Disney World is constantly being recreated by several thousand persons daily.

By using its command of park space, Disney would control not only the physical place, but the social place as well (per Harvey 1990, 234). Fantasy itself becomes a “landscape of power” (Zukin 1991, 221). Little in the built environment is left to chance within Walt Disney World, in order to ensure the fantasy is totalizing as possible (ibid.). Through this command of the spatial landscape comes the ability to effect control over the existing social places within the space. The imagineered images of Disney are then perpetuated by guests, once they have left the space, to the rest of the world. This, along with targeted advertising campaigns over the course of nearly 40 years, develops the reputation of Walt Disney World around the globe. The Disney space itself, and its reputation, becomes in itself a form of “reflexive theming” (Bryman 2004, 20).

The place of Walt Disney World would evoke a sanitized, homogeneous, hegemonic vision of American society as it was, is, and will be, in contrast to the diverse, contentious, and not-always-savory realities of historical and contemporary America (per Agnew 2002, 5). The imagineering project, both physical and social, would involve the
creation of simulacra (Harvey 1990, 300), a hyperreality that expresses utopian ideals from Disney’s perspective of the United States (or, in the case of EPCOT, the world). These ideals leave their imprint upon visitors through the effective dynamic of imagineering, whether that imprint is accepting or reactionary. For example, most people who have experienced a particular ride in Fantasyland, Magic Kingdom, known for a specific tune and having an international theme that is devoted to a juxtaposition of homogeneous audio-animatronics and sanitized exoticism, while espousing a theme of peaceful global co-existence, are able to forget neither the tune nor the images, regardless of their impressions of them.

The impressions, however, can only be controlled to a certain extent. Walt Disney World also creates heterotopias, in which incompatible and contradictory spaces are superimposed upon the World’s place (Foucault 1997, 354). Those contradictions, however, are often buried within Disney’s control of definitions and the overall narratives, to the extent that the contradictions become socially internalized, and often escape evaluation by the guest (Harvey 1990).

Disney also has the advantage of defining the interpretation of those images into a seemingly cohesive whole, creating a perceived “thematic unity” as part of the imagineering efforts, particularly in the development of back-stories (Foglesong 1995, 3). Openly questioning or challenging these contradictions, or just appearing to not-conform, are cause for both conflict and removal from the World. It is an authoritative space, perceived to represent an earlier, simpler time where one knew one’s place and had a sense of stability and certainty, not one that has opened places for democratic processes and dissent.
Walt Disney World’s simulacra, however, can be viewed less as a postmodern movement than an imitation (perhaps a simulacra?) of postmodernism, all while maintaining (or attempting to maintain) total control using utopian imagery of modernism (Bryman 1995). This is in keeping, however, with the utopian imagery not only existing within the space, but also socially surrounding the conceptualization of the space, both by Disney and by park guests. The simulacra of imagineering can almost be viewed as the fantasy created by fantasy embodying reality, though reality as defined by those in command of the space. Disney World, to some extent,

“is presented as imaginary in order to make us believe that the rest is real, when in fact … the America surrounding it [is] no longer real, but of the order of the hyperreal and simulation. It is no longer a question of a false representation of reality, but of concealing the fact that the real is no longer real” (Baudrillard 1983, 25).

Walt Disney himself is said to have claimed that his park represented reality, with the rest of the world representing a dystopic fantasy (Findlay 1992). It becomes reality because it is imagineered, dynamically (re) created, both within the space, and by those influenced by the narrative of that space.

The World’s Place in the World

The relationship between Walt Disney World and central Florida has always been relatively conflictual (Foglesong 2001). On the one hand, according to Mormino (2005, 117):

“Metropolitan Orlando, perhaps more so than any place in America, has been reinvented by Disney World and tourism. A modestly important agricultural city in 1950, Orlando now enjoys a global identity as an international destination, a place/region/shrine synonymous with mouse ears and theme parks.”
On the other hand, Orlando and Orange County are dependent on Walt Disney World as a source of taxes and employment, yet neither entity has any jurisdiction over the World. And while Orlando is known for Disney and tourism, it is a city that must maintain a safe, sanitized image to secure future income, yet still attempt to become a full-fledged globalizing or global city in its own right, independent of its relationship with the RCID. To create and maintain the veneer, the illusion of a safe, diverse, happy city, many of its problems cannot be admitted or addressed, for fear of damaging its reputation; oftentimes when addressed, it is to attempt to regulate it away, rather than address the issue itself (Pinsky 2007; Schlueb 2007). In the case of homelessness in Orlando, once the city could no longer ignore the problem, it attempting to regulate and criminalize homelessness, such that it is now, after previous laws were found to be unconstitutional, illegal to feed anyone who is homeless, lay down on public benches, or shave in public restrooms in Orlando’s city limits (ibid.). This was done in order to keep such sully images away from the tourists, who might then be reminded of the world that exists beyond the utopian fantasy so carefully and continually constructed.

Walt Disney World is still a major economic force for the state of Florida, as well. The World is the largest single employer in the state, with roughly 51,000 “cast members,” many of whom are part-time workers making less than a living wage for the region. It also helps to promote the state, which relies heavily on tourism for revenue. The state, however, rescinded several decades ago its control over the World, a decision that at times has been regretted, due to the increased bargaining power that the World enjoys as its role not only as a major corporate interest, but also as a governmental actor.
As for the World’s place in the rest of the Outside world, it has become synonymous with American tourism, both in the United States and internationally. Cinderella’s castle, the central image of Walt Disney World, the fortress of an authoritarian monarch, is a symbol often equated as a representation of American culture. After all, “this form of manufactured tourism, which Disney has perfected, now sets the global standard for tourist destinations” (Malecki 1997, 48). It becomes “a concentrated form of global homogenization” as embodying the qualities that successful tourist locations should aspire to (Klugman et. al. 1995, 32).

The creation of the Reedy Creek Improvement District, and development of Walt Disney World, materially embedded themed urban capitalist processes into the material life of central Florida. It has created both an employment and economic sink in the region with the largest workforce in central Florida, as well as the largest tourist dollars brought into the economy. This has set the stage for the (re)creation of a specific hegemonic definition of the space of central Florida.

The granting of governmental rights to a private space/entity, the commodification of simulacra, and the non-permanent population of the space all highlight accumulation by dispossession within the space. One could conceivably argue that Disney has managed to imagineer the accumulation process. Make no mistake, however: this imagineering of a private/public space facilitates uneven geographical development throughout the region.

When Comcast attempted a takeover of Disney in 2004, the state legislature conducted its first review of RCID's status, considering what to do should such a takeover occur (Mussenden 2004). No final decision was made to change the status of the RCID,
but it did raise concerns of how shifting corporate relations would affect this governmental entity to legislative consciousness.

In the next chapter, the act of dispossession from the Reedy Creek Improvement District, in order to create a new community, called Celebration, will be explored. In addition, the intersection of urban development and urban theming in Celebration, and its demographic place within central Florida, will be investigated, to further contextualize uneven geographical development in central Florida by examining accumulation through space/time.
Chapter Five

Celebration, Florida: Imagineering Urban Development

Introduction

Celebration, Florida is considered a traditional neighborhood development by the Congress for the New Urbanism (2005). Created by the Disney Company in 1994 in Osceola County (see Figure 5-1) as a company town catering to the desires of consumers, Celebration highlights the relationship between urban development and urban theming. It also provides a case study to accumulation in space-time as it relates to the theory of uneven geographical development.

Walt Disney’s original EPCOT concept, as discussed in Chapter 4 and initially considered “Disney’s answer to the perceived lack of community in America” (Wasko 2001, 179), never materialized, but the concept for a utopian, privatized, permanent community only faded for a quarter-century. To begin with, actually creating the EPCOT community would have resulted in a loss of control for the Disney company, for the residents would be able to vote on any change made within the property, creating enormous economic ramifications for its corporate interests (Ross 1999). The land was also seen as being too valuable, both for further theme park development and for the green moat it created around its empire. With Walt's death, the new CEOs had little interest in idealistic utopian communities when they had created a material consumer
Figure 5-1. Celebration, Florida.
utopia in Walt Disney World. A true community could not control a populace from the moment they entered until the moment they left, as in fact they had been able to accomplish in the theme parks. This is indicative of the third condition of the theory of uneven geographical development (see Figure 5-2).

Figure 5-2. The Third Condition of Uneven Geographical Development.


Revisiting EPCOT

The catalyst for the re-emergence of the concept of a permanent Disney community was Osceola County's threat either to: begin taxing the RCID land in its boundaries at the highest potential land use classification, rather than its existing agricultural designation; or, under state legislation that emerged in the early 1990s, appropriate the undeveloped land for environmental purposes (Frantz and Collins 1999; the second threat, however, may have technically been a bluff when considered in relation to the original RCID legislation giving it grandfathered immunities from new
legislation. Property taxes were the only control that either Orange or Osceola County could exert on the RCID, and while it was limited control, it would also create negative publicity for the company if the issue was pressed. This was particularly the case in Osceola County, which was the poorest county in central Florida.

At this same time, a Disney executive named Peter Rummell was attempting to regain favor for the idea of building, not the futuristic community of EPCOT, but a new community that would rather look to the past for inspiration (Frantz and Collins 1999). While still building upon Walt Disney’s original utopian concepts for the functioning of the community, it would also incorporate the burgeoning new urbanism movement. In essence, the concept became one in which the design of the community would be based on past architectural and small-town forms in Florida history, while incorporating technologies and infrastructure that would be state-of-the-art, in keeping with Disney’s image for quality.

The key to the decision to develop such a community was the division that exists between the RCID property in Orange and Osceola counties. The two sections are split by Interstate 4, one of the most heavily traveled corridors in the nation. Building theme parks up to the interstate, or across the interstate into Osceola County, would defeat the purpose of the green belt separating the “World” from the world. A community, however, could be placed on this section of land without affecting Disney's Orange County profit base. Michael Eisner, then CEO of the Disney Corporation, approved of the idea (Ross 1999; Frantz and Collins 1999), and so the town that would become Celebration was green-lighted.
There was one major issue left to be resolved. As a part of the RCID, any residents in Celebration would have voting rights within the district. This had been one of the primary reasons the original EPCOT concept had never been enacted. In order to avoid allowing Celebration residents any voting rights within the RCID, early in the development phase the land specific to Celebration was de-annexed from the RCID. It would still be privately owned Disney property, but no longer within the governmental jurisdiction of the RCID. Instead, it would now fall within the jurisdiction of Osceola County, and have to abide by the zoning and construction regulations of the county.

This meant that residents would be residents of Osceola County, not the RCID, and could not affect profitable ventures within the district. It also meant that Osceola County, a county with a minimal tax base, would be responsible for providing public services that before would have been the governmental responsibility of the RCID, including fire and police protection at the county level, utilities, educational services, among others. Disney, in return, would only be responsible for the normal developer and impact fees assessed by the county, rather than paying all direct and indirect costs, as would have been necessary as part of the RCID.

In return, however, the development of Celebration created a new and higher property tax base for Osceola County, with homes that were considerably more valuable than those in the rest of the county. Osceola County is the only county in central Florida that has more apartments than single family houses, and also houses more Disney employees than any central Florida county (Foglesong 2001). All homes sold in Celebration would rank in the upper quartile of home values for the county (US Census 2000b). The upfront costs to the county were seen as being worth this tradeoff. It also
created an economic boon for Disney, where “apparently, the company paid about $200 per acre in the 1960s for land that was sold for Celebration in quarter-acre lots at $80,000 each” (Wasko 2001, 179). Celebration now could receive the corporate blessing necessary for construction.

Ground was broken in Celebration in 1994. Once the construction in the area began, “the Disney Co. made the strategic decision to build the downtown before the residential areas were completed” (Foglesong 2001, 165). As part of the promotions for the new community, tourists, visitors, and prospective homebuyers could experience not only the model homes, but also the downtown area, being run as a loss-leader to attract interest. Lotteries had to be held in order to determine who might become the first residents in this town that had the Disney stamp of approval, and early phases sold out quickly (Ross 1999). The private town officially opened in the summer of 1996 (Wasko 2001). It would include nearly 10,000 acres of land, of which only 5,000 acres were to be developed, the rest providing a greenbelt to surround the community (Mannheim 2002).

**Contemporary Celebration: A Model Community?**

Celebration is an imagineered community, along the theme of a small, tight-knit community of early Florida history, one that is secure from the ravages of the present and instead carries the torch of a golden past. It is safe, comforting, secure, isolated from the vagarities of the Outside world. It is a community designed to uphold Walt's values of “patriotism, family-life, and free-enterprise.” Significantly, such values are essentially antidemocratic, instilled rather than critically engaged in a public setting, and embodied
in social institutions hierarchically organized and directed” (Archer 1997, 228). In the case of Celebration, imagineering is employed in the commodification of the urban space, in which “we see with Celebration the selling of a city-as-product” (Batling 2004, 384). The commodity, in Celebration, is a particular image of community.

Celebration symbolizes the use of nostalgia to return to the concept of knowing (and keeping to) one’s place; of course, in Celebration, this “is predicated on the assumption that a viable public sphere is essentially middle class and white” (Giroux 1999, 69). This, however, is in keeping with the theme of a community that is based on the pre-WWII central Florida town, which was highly racially segregated, as discussed in Chapter 3. This is where the amnesia of imagineering dynamically results: while a segregated community is what is being modeled, that pejorative aspect of small town early twentieth century Florida is to be ignored or forgotten. This amnesia, however, becomes that much more telling in seeing the town, modeled on a given time period, recreating similar socioeconomic dynamics of the type being forgotten in the nostalgic quest for community.

Celebration could be called a covenant community, but that would be understating the circumstances, considering the additional rigor that the corporation went to in order to ensure its financial and legal rights were protected above all else. The contracts signed by each resident (including renters) at the closing ceremonies were volumes outlining every detail, most physical or financial, some social, to which the residents must adhere in order to become and remain a resident. Clauses also outlined procedures required for leaving the community. No negotiations were allowed - it was Disney's way or no way at all. Stipulations include a requirement to remain in the community a minimum of nine
months out of the year and refraining from complaints about the local mosquitoes, among other major and minor details (Ross 1999; Frantz and Collins 1999; Thomas 2007).

In addition, “every new home must be selected from a pattern book containing distinct and varied options prepared by Disney’s master-plan architects” (Wolf 1999, 169). This is further complicated by the injunction against having homes of the same style and color located adjacent to each other on a block. In addition, “offering further protection, Disney retains veto power in perpetuity over any substantive decision by the owner association. … Their veto is good as long as the company owns a single piece of property” in Celebration (Foglesong 2001, 164).

Non-conformists have had a difficult time adjusting to this community (many have been unable, and have left). It is literally an attempt to socially engineer an entire community space through all temporal shifts. Creative destruction of social patterns and relationships is a constant fact of life in the efforts made to create, then continue, a static social system, innovative in its imagineering the designs of past social systems. Any aspect of community life that refuses to conform is immediately “dealt with” by the Celebration Company; how it is dealt with varies based on the severity of the infraction (Frantz and Collins 1999). The community has become known as one “where anyone who does not fit into the homogeneous mold is shunned” (Thomas 2007, 187).

In the minds of many, this community has been a penultimate success. It is neat and tidy, with no litter, perfectly manicured lawns, cars and trash bins removed from conspicuous sight, a downtown that does not include a homeless or loitering problem, and little crime has visibly occurred within the community. An isolated space such as Celebration, while nearby to services desired by residents, is viewed “as a sanctuary” to
escape from the perceived ills of the urban space (Giroux 1999, 67). Of course, it is completely privatized, which means anyone homeless, loitering, or perceived to be out-of-place will be forced to leave; crime, including domestic violence, has been stifled by the private governance body (Frantz and Collins 1999); and community life is orchestrated, with little room for plurality and spontaneity (Giroux 1999).

The diversity of the community is also a superficial entity. The population itself is predominately white and upper-middle-class (see Chapter 6). There is no housing in Celebration that qualifies as affordable housing: Disney made a deal early in the negotiations with Osceola County to subsidize affordable housing in south-central Osceola County with a $300,000 concession to the Housing Assistance Plan in exchange for an exemption for meeting the affordable housing statute within Celebration itself (Foglesong 2001; Ross 1999). In addition, “by Disney’s own numbers, almost two-thirds of the eventual 15,000 employees at Celebration could not afford to live there” (Foglesong 2001, 160). This fully exacerbated the affordable housing deficit in Osceola County, as many of its residents needing affordable housing were already Disney employees, one of the reasons for Osceola County raising tax rates on the RCID property in the first place (ibid.). For most homes, the price starts at $200,000 and up, in a county with an average per capita income of roughly $17,000. In fact, the median value for homes in Celebration, compared with the rest of the county, was already more than four times greater in 2000.

The diversity within and between those homes is also superficial. There are six major styles of homes to choose from, for which there exists statutes regarding any colors, molding and trim, windows, porches, and any other externally visible portions of
the home. This is to ensure that no two homes that are identical in nature are built next to one another. While the floorplans and amenities are identical within each pricing category, the exteriors must show the illusion of housing designed for individuals over a long period of time (each style corresponds to a different architectural style in pre-1940s Florida) in different socioeconomic groups (Frantz and Collins 1999). Ironically, housing in Celebration does tend to be segregated by pricing category, albeit only block by block, rather than on a community-wide scale.

Once again, emphasis must be placed on the fact that this is a privatized community. It will never be incorporated, at least as long as Disney retains involvement. This means that all governance actions at the local level are done by a private long-arm of the Disney Company. As mentioned above, a clause is written into all Celebration contacts that states Disney will retain any and all veto rights within the community as long as it owns just one parcel of land (Frantz and Collins 1999) – and, of course, the parks, and the greenbelt surrounding the isolated community are all owned by Disney, as is the residential property not yet sold. Though Disney had sold the downtown area and the golf course by 2004 (Goodnough 2004), it still owns significant quantities of land within the community and retains development rights for the yet-to-be developed residential periphery. Disney has, in essence, developed a way of retaining social and political control of Celebration, while passing the economic costs on to the developers, residents, and Osceola County.

Ironically, residents have been more than willing to sell their rights in order to live in Celebration (Ross 1999). They lose many political and economic freedoms when living in Celebration (the housing prices begin in the six-figures for apartments, and
many are almost bankrupted in maintaining payments) in order to willingly lose social freedoms. Many move to Celebration out of an intense faith with the Disney company and the values it promotes (Ross 1999; Frantz and Collins 1999; Archer 1997; Foglesong 2000). The sense of isolation is seen by residents as the appropriate buffer between their community and the forbidding Outside world; Celebration creates a situation in which responsibility is no longer requisite in order to achieve the “perfect” community, rather the responsibility was given to Disney to create it for them. It also creates a situation in which residents no longer have to feel responsibility for those in that Outside world, for they are safe within their secured haven. Those unfortunate enough to work outside Celebration can swiftly retreat at the end of the work day to the fortified social and green walls of the community. In essence, Celebration “is symbolic of a new communal age where privatization is seen as a desirable solution to the corruption, crime and violence currently taking place within suburbs and cities throughout the country” (Thomas 2007; 195).

**Intersecting Urban Development and Urban Theming in Celebration**

New urbanism appealed to executives in the Disney Corporation partly due to the image it promoted of community. As a concept that focuses primarily on urban design, it allowed Disney the discretion of developing the initial social narrative of the town, one that it could enforce within the private space and also act as a marketing tool to attract new residents.

The theme settled upon for Celebration was implicitly “the town that Disney built.” Originally, however, the imagineers at Disney were asked to develop a back-story for the new community (Ross 1999). This was a similar process to that employed for
every new attraction at Disney World: there needed to be a back-story developed, and in some way incorporated into the opening or queue area of the ride, in order to making the theming as seamless as possible. In Celebration’s case, the idea morphed into one of frontier and pioneering. The secondary focal point of the community (the primary focal point being Market Street) would be Founders Square (see Figure 5-2). This square was originally conceived as a small park area that would include statues of the founding members of Celebration, and a commemorative plaque discussing the history of its founding. The founders would be portrayed as pioneers, developing a new type of community in the frontier of central Florida. The twist, however, was that this conceptualization would not be quite so metaphorical to the circumstances around which Celebration was actually developed in the 1990s, but would rather be quite literal. A new history for the town, set in the 1880s, was to be developed. While still allegorical in nature, there was to be no pretense of reality involved. At the last minute, it was decided that developing a fictitious themed history for a real community might not be the best scenario to employ, and the idea was shelved (Frantz and Collins 1999). Founders Square instead became a small corner of Celebration Park, across from the school, with seating area, wrought-iron fencing, and its own specially designed signs.

The true focal point of Celebration, however, was always meant to be Market Street (see Figure 5-3). Originally the plan was to name this focal point, in grand Disney tradition, Main Street. Florida law, however, prohibits the use of a street name in multiple municipalities within the same county, and the name had already been taken in nearby Kissimmee. Instead, the name chosen would have double-meaning. First, it is meant to convey the sense of old-town USA, not by being designated the main street, but
by its streets lined with market stalls and locally owned storefronts. The second meaning, not necessarily intentional, belies the true focus in the development of this community by a multinational corporation: market forces. While meant as a social experiment, the ultimate objective, as with any venture, was to turn a profit for the Disney Corporation.

This was the first section of Celebration that would open, months before any of the residential communities were ready, and has from the start been designed to cater to tourist traffic. To this day, most of the stores do not supply sundry items that can be used by community residents. This requires residents to leave the greenbelt of the community and return to State Road 192, which belies the new urbanist theme of the community (see below).

Figure 5-3. Founders Square, Celebration.

Source: Bezdecny (2007)
The design of Market Street is meant to invoke Florida prior to World War II in design. This is in line with the theme of new urbanism, which is to return to design elements used prior to the mass democratization of automobile ownership and usage following the war. The entire street, which as a commercial center is only one block long, is lined with palm trees, has wide open sidewalks for pedestrians, and is mixed-use space. The second and third floors above many of the shops are apartments, with parking behind the shops. This is in keeping with the mixed zoning tenets of new urbanism. The lack of practical shops for residents, however, is not. Market Street is a theme within a
theme: the appearance and selection adoption of new urbanist tenets, while still catering to visitors, rather than residents. All on-street parking is meant for visitors to utilize during the day.

The only enterprise on Market Street that could be said to cater more specifically to the residents is the grocery store. Gooding’s was an upscale market, with a wine section as large as the grocery area, and featuring mainly deli and high-end prepared items (see Figure 5-4). It was the only grocery store in the community, and sold a few limited sundries. By 2007, however, the grocery left Celebration, and was replaced by a restaurant-style delicatessen. There is now no place in the community to buy groceries, sundries, or any other daily necessities. Contrary to the tenets of new urbanism, which require such availability within a quarter-mile walking distance, residents must leave the community altogether and conduct their shopping along US 192. This represents not only the closest major thoroughfare, but this stretch is also known as a major tourist trap with shops set up in direct competition with Disney World, down the street.

Ironically, such businesses within Celebration would have increased Disney revenue, as the property on Market Street was privately owned by the Disney Company until 2004 (Goodnough 2004), with the lack of such spending in the community reminiscent of the perceived revenue losses from Disneyland to surrounding retail. The cost of rent, however, and the fact that all design elements were strictly within the purview of Disney (and continues through its subsidiary the Celebration Company), are contributing factors to the externally-focused Market Street.
While Market Street has most of the shops of Celebration, Front Street is the entertainment strip in town (see Figure 5-6). This serves both the family-focus of the town and tourists, particularly for daytime traffic. Front Street, which runs as the lakeside frontage road, contains restaurants, a fudge shop, and a movie theater. Where it intersects with Market Street, along the lake-side of the street, is a small pavilion with benches and rocking chairs for people to congregate. This area is meant to be used as
public space, but is very much private property: meaning that activity and behaviors exhibited in this area must fit within the parameters of the image of the town.

A recognizable national chain would be considered an antithesis of both early twentieth century small town Florida, and the theme of Disney’s involvement. Some regional chains have been allowed, including Gooding’s, the Columbia restaurant, and SunTrust Bank, which first financed Walt Disney’s central Florida land purchases, as well as the AMC movie theater. Most of these have had previous agreements to operate on RCID property, which were then extended to Celebration.

As the current decade has progressed, some national chains have slowly crept in. A major exception to the national chain prohibition is the Starbucks currently open in downtown Celebration. Originally a Barnie’s coffeehouse, when bought by Starbucks, they were able to maintain the lease. Whether their lease will be renewed, however, remains to be seen. Bank of America, by contrast, was invited into Celebration, along the west side of Market Street. Slowly, other professional services, particularly real estate and mortgage offices, have moved into nearby Bloom Street and Celebration Avenue. The downtown space was purchased in 2004 by Lexin Capital, and rethemed as the Celebration Town Center. Prior to this, the focus had been nearly exclusively on Market Street. With the new owners, many of the restrictions have loosened; however, little has changed in the availability of services specific to the day-to-day needs of residents.

Market Street and Front Street intersect lakeside, which is the downtown environmental focal point (see Figure 5-7). Adjacent to the lake to the west is Celebration Hotel; to the east a park with a playground. Boating and fishing are allowed on the lake, and seating and gathering areas exist along the border of the lake and Front
Figure 5-6. Front Street, Celebration.

Source: Bezdecny (2007).

Figure 5-7. Lakeside, Celebration.

Source: Bezdecny (2007)
Street. The lake is the transition between Celebration development and the additional wetlands within the property space. These wetlands, while protected, also serve to create a greenbelt surrounding the community. This continues not only to create a discrete barrier between Celebration and any future encroaching development, in order to maintain its distinct space and separating the rest of the region from Celebration, but it also serves to separate Celebration from the rest of the region. There are few areas in Celebration where the “outside world” is visible; to the north, the golf course serves as part of the greenbelt, and a hedge has been erected to limit visibility of the interstate where it nears the community.

Celebration is meant to have the appearance of being self-contained, though the reality is a community that must commute beyond its boundaries for employment, then retreats back within its green walls. As for employees within Walt Disney World, “only 10 percent of cast members could afford the minimum … home price” within Celebration (Foglesong 2001, 159-160). More than two-thirds of Celebration employees would be unable to afford housing in the community (ibid.).

Each major building in downtown Celebration was designed by a different architect, each using different symbologies to create a postmodern eclectic mix in contrast with the remainder of Market Street, and the surrounding residential areas. The post office is located along the northern half-block of Market Street, and was designed by Michael Graves (see Figure 5-8). Celebration shares a postal zip code with nearby Kissimmee, which becomes its official postal city.

To the left of the post office is the town hall (see Figure 5-9). The pillars in the front and sides of the building are meant to represent the pillars of democracy. Inside, the
Figure 5-8. Post Office and Town Hall, Celebration.

Source: Bezdecny (2007)
town hall holds the offices for the Celebration Company, the private entity, subsidiary to Disney, which runs the unincorporated community. As long as Disney remains the primary stakeholder in the community, which will be the case for the foreseeable future, the town will never be incorporated. Until such time, all governance in the town will be private and corporate-controlled. In essence, “rather than being citizens of Celebration, residents are more like Celebration consumers” (Wasko 2001, 180).

The Celebration School was controversial from its opening (see Figures 5-10 and 5-11). Disney was to have full control over all aesthetic and pedagogical aspects of the what-would-be K-12 institution. As was common in the theme parks, even the functions
Figure 5-10. Celebration School, Building Corner.

Source: Bezdecny (2007).
of each participant would be re-named. Teachers were to be mentors, students were to be learners. The school would only be open to residents of the town, and Disney was to subsidize the funding of the school (Frantz and Collins 1999).

The problem: Celebration School was to be a public school within the Osceola County School District. Disney’s plans for the school ran counter to the policies of the school district. While Disney was allowed to extend some funding to the school, unless the school was private or a charter school, it was against policy to fund the school to a level greatly exceeding other schools in the district. Also as a public school, Osceola County became responsible for the majority of the funding in the school. In return, however, the school had to abide by mandated county and state curricula, rather than

**Figure 5-11. Celebration School, Side of Building.**

*Source: Bezdecny (2007).*
follow Disney’s educational experiment. In addition, to meet integration requirements, students from the surrounding county were bused into the school (Ross 1999).

The campus of the school is designed with open breezeways, and a relatively open campus space, across the street from Founders Square. The dilemma with such an open space has historically been tourists, who at times have not been as considerate of the educational needs of the students as could be hoped. The fence now in front of the school is meant to provide a barrier between the school and others within the community. While tourists are not as common as they were when the community originally opened, Celebration still draws many.

Figure 5-12. Townhouses, Campus Street, Celebration Village.

Source: Bezdecny (2007)
There are eight neighborhoods developed in Celebration, each of which is called a village (Frantz and Collins 1999). The first village, closest to downtown and the only one within a quarter-mile walking distance to all services, is Celebration Village. Its residents, in keeping with the original theming ideas for the town, are known as Celebration’s pioneers. Their demographics are very similar to those that would have made up the nineteenth century pioneers originally imagineered for the community (see below).

In keeping with the tenets of new urbanism, houses are built close together, with emphasis on the street frontage. Celebration has numerous townhouses, or attached homes, that are meant to convey a sense of community in miniature with nearby neighbors. The townhouses on Campus Street are across from the public school and Celebration Park (see Figure 5-12). Townhouses are by no means new to Celebration, nor to new urbanism as a concept, but they do provide a more affordable means of gaining residential access to the community, relatively speaking. All townhouse buyers are subject to the same legal contracts and restrictions as single family home buyers, which includes any decoration on their doors or in their miniscule front yardage, adjacent to front stairs.

Celebration residential neighborhoods were developed along the theme of organic urban development (see Figure 5-13). Neighborhoods are meant to look as if houses along the block sprung up during different decades or architectural periods. To promote this image, no two houses of an identical style or color are officially allowed to be built next to one another (Frantz and Collins 1999). The architectural diversity is meant to stand in contrast to what are seen as suburban “cookie-cutter” developments. In
actuality, though, this diversity is merely a façade. In each price range, the interior of each home follows an identical floor plan, and all feature advanced technological amenities. Only the exteriors, and any features of the home visible to the exterior, must conform to an early twentieth century theme.

Single family homes are built quite close together, with small side and backyards. The front yards, though still small, are large relative to the space behind and beside each home. The front of the house is recessed, and required to have a front porch or verandah. This is to encourage the removal of people from private, secluded back yards and return focus to the street frontage and other members of the community. While keeping with new urbanist design principles, it becomes a theme of the homes, with air conditioning allowing many residents to remain indoors during the heat of the day.

Figure 5-13. Single Family Homes, Celebration Village.

Source: Bezdecny (2007).
The alleys in Celebration are designed to put those functions that are not valued by new urbanist tenets in a de-emphasized spatial location (see Figure 5-14). Residents are supposed to park in the alleyways behind their homes, not on the street frontage. Originally, garbage and postal services were also relegated to the alleyways. Due to complications in accessing many of the tightly-designed alleys, however, the postal service now only provides service to the street frontage. The postal service does not provide pedestrian mail service, but still utilizes postal trucks for mail delivery in the community, which created limitations in the alleyways. The alleyways were to provide space for those functions which required the usage of vehicles, to then allow the front of the homes to become the community focal points. Residents would walk to services around town, congregate and chat, sit on front porches, or otherwise de-emphasize those activities that were considered external to the community.

In reality, many of the homes in Celebration are now built in areas beyond the recommended quarter-mile / five minute walking distance from downtown. Services necessary for day-to-day activities are not available within the community. And, in a community that is promoting new urbanism and a de-emphasis upon auto culture, there is not a single zero-vehicle household in the community (U.S. Census Bureau 2000b). The community does accommodate the usage of bicycles and electric controlled vehicles (ECVs), which are similar to golf carts. Parking for these vehicles is available on all commercial streets in the town. Sidewalks are also wide and well-maintained, in order to promote pedestrian traffic within the community.

Residents in Celebration are required to keep up appearances, even in the event of selling their homes. For Sale signs are not allowed within the town; only what are
Figure 5-14. Alleyway, Celebration Village.

Source: Bezdecny (2007).
Figure 5-15. Selling a Home in Celebration.

*Source: Bezdecny (2007).*

deemed more understated Home Available signs are approved by the Celebration Company (see Figure 5-15). In order to maintain a sense of community, the process of selling a house is to be de-emphasized – communities are meant to be stable environments, not ones in which people change residences and leave the area on a regular basis. The investment in Celebration is meant to be an investment in its ideals, as much as in its property. That, and the theme of stability, and, thereby, success as a community, must be maintained. Residents are also required as terms of their contracts to reside in the community for a minimum of nine months out of the year (Frantz and Collins 1999).

Again, this is meant to show that Celebration is a stable, functioning community, not an investment for northern “snowbirds” looking for residence for only a few months.
out of the year. This would turn the community into a relative ghost town or seasonal resort, not an annually functioning place.

**Urban Development, Theming, and Uneven Geographical Development**

New urbanism, in theory, creates a community that is diverse racially, ethnically, and socio-economically with near-continuous face-to-face interactions among its residents. It is a focus on creating a community as a place, from which it is assumed community as a state of being/becoming will follow. In reality, Celebration has created an enclave that is spatially and socially separated from the surrounding county, which happens to be the poorest in the Orlando region, as it is primary location for low-paid tourist employees to find residence. The primary source of interaction between the community and the surrounding region are the workers for the downtown Market Street establishments, who commute into town daily. These workers are not paid at a rate that can afford them local residence. Ironically, such interactions within Celebration are also strained: except for the original development, all other residences are not within the “walking distance” criteria for a new urbanist community, and instead must focus on vehicles in order to reach the downtown or the school.

New urbanism becomes one of the themes developed within Celebration. In design, it has some of the features new urbanism is known for: a compact downtown space, compactly built residential areas that seek to minimize automobile focus, and mixed zoning in the commercial area. This design, however, becomes part of the theme of what the community should look like, in order to create a “true” social community. This theme of community by design is (re) produced daily by residents and visitors to the
community. The theming of Celebration, and its employment of (some) new urbanist tenets, tend to reinforce one another within this space, creating the appeal for many of the residents. Harvey (2000) has argued that, in application, new urbanism can become nothing but an urban theme in and of itself.

The dynamics of Celebration, on the other hand, include an absolute and relationally homogeneous population, where the primary differentiating characteristic is between the haves and the have-mores. While there are families in the community who struggle with gaps between their income and their housing prices (Frantz and Collins 1999), this is not a community that has found any place for federally-defined affordable housing within its boundaries. This is also an urban space providing few economic opportunities, through the expansion of employment opportunities by local or external companies moving into the town, nor are there many mundane commercial or social services within this unincorporated community. In addition, though Disney has greatly de-emphasized their involvement in recent years, works to reinforce the imagery of the region developed as a condition / consequence of Walt Disney World’s sociospatial hegemony (see Chapter Six).

Celebration does not truly constitute a new urbanist community, from a theoretical perspective (Njoh 2009). For Celebration to truly become a new urbanist community would require as a minimum the following changes: affordable housing must be made available within the community at least at the 20% guidelines of the county; a diversification in the marketing and theming of Celebration away from the nostalgia of white middle-class suburbia in order to truly be able to attract a diverse population; allow for a more democratic form of policy and governance (now in the hands of the
Celebration Company: Celebration is unincorporated, and hence is not required to have a democratic governance structure); allow for authentic diversity in housing styles and other cultural happenings; and create a small public transit system in order to adequately tie the community’s periphery into the original core of the town.

Finally, at some point the issue of the gate around Celebration must be addressed for it to truly be a community that is both internally diverse but also engaged within its region. For make no mistake: Celebration is a gated community. Instead of bars, locks, and a security checkpoint, there is a 5,000 acre greenbelt that spatially segregates the outside world from encroaching. There is an automobile dependence for arriving in the town. There is the lack of affordable housing or other resources for the less financially lucrative (for example, all the shops on Market Street are for those with money to spend: even the former grocery stocked primarily gourmet food items). The social patterns of the community must be altered in order to allow more inclusion. The current busing of students into Celebration School for the past few years is at least an attempt to bring Celebration and its inhabitants into contact with the rest of the county. The gates are both spatially and socially constructed, and both must be identified and deconstructed for Celebration to truly be a new urbanist community.

There is considerable debate as to whether the theories of new urbanism hold veracity. This debate is not being engaged in this chapter: it is an important debate, which has important ramifications in the overall context of urban globalization, gentrification, and sociospatial polarization. It is the practice of new urbanism which is instead being addressed, with the same ramifications. If communities are to become this segregated, isolated, and removed from democratic and social processes at the local level,
it then becomes far more difficult, if at all possible, for them to engage in such processes at any other spatial scale.

The next chapter will discuss Celebration and Walt Disney World, the two main components of the original Reedy Creek Improvement District, within the context of the theory of uneven geographical development. The place of the RCID within central Florida will be analyzed within the context of struggles for defining the space of the region.
Chapter Six
Uneven Geographical Development in Contemporary Central Florida

Introduction

In the previous three chapters, the history of tourism and urban development in central Florida has been explored, the role of Walt Disney World as a tourist urban space has been investigated, and Celebration as a themed urban environment has been described. All three of these have represented conditions of uneven geographical development in central Florida.

In this chapter, the elements of the three previous chapters will be tied together by examining their places within the central Florida space contemporaneously. This highlights the overall picture of urban development and tourism in the urban space; it also examines the fourth and final condition of uneven geographical development (see Figure 6-1).

Tourism’s Economic Impacts in Central Florida

As discussed in Chapter Four, the opening of Walt Disney World in 1971, followed by Sea World in 1973 and Universal Orlando in 1990, returned central Florida to an economy primarily dependent upon tourism. By 2006, direct revenue from tourism in Orange County alone was $29.8 billion (Orlando/Orange County CVB 2008). Orange, Osceola, and Seminole counties, the three counties most dependent on tourism in the
Figure 6-1. The Fourth Condition of Uneven Geographical Development.


Central Florida is home to seven of the top 15 theme park attractions in the world, making it a global tourist sink (Themed Entertainment Association 2007; Figure 6-2). The three tourist sinks in the region, Walt Disney World, Universal Orlando, and Sea World, are also three of the ten largest employers in central Florida (Orlando EDC 2008; Figure 6-3). Tourism accounts for 23 percent of all employment in Orange County, and over 17 percent of all employment in the four-county metropolitan region (ibid.; Orlando EDC 2008). and tourism accounted for $8.3 billion in wages in the county (Orlando/Orange County CVB 2008).

The region is a global tourism sink, and the local economies depend on global tourism for their well-being. This also means that the region is globally recognized for its tourist activities. Walt Disney World is by far the largest local employer, and its four major theme parks rank in the top eight theme parks visited locally (with Magic Kingdom
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Total Visitors (in millions)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Magic Kingdom</td>
<td>17.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Disneyland</td>
<td>14.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Tokyo Disneyland</td>
<td>13.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Tokyo DisneySea</td>
<td>12.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Disneyland Paris</td>
<td>12.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>EPCOT</td>
<td>10.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Disney’s Hollywood Studios</td>
<td>9.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Disney’s Animal Kingdom</td>
<td>9.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Universal Studios Japan</td>
<td>8.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Everland (South Korea)</td>
<td>7.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Universal Studios Florida</td>
<td>6.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Sea World Orlando</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Disney’s California Adventure</td>
<td>5.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Blackpool Pleasure Beach</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Islands of Adventure</td>
<td>5.43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 6-2. Top 15 Theme Park Attractions in the World.**

*Source: Themed Entertainment Association (2007).*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Total Employees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Walt Disney World</td>
<td>62,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adventist Health System – Florida Hospital</td>
<td>16,002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publix</td>
<td>15,606</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universal Orlando</td>
<td>13,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orlando Regional Healthcare</td>
<td>10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lockheed Martin</td>
<td>7,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marriott International</td>
<td>6,312</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Florida Investments</td>
<td>6,155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Darden Restaurants</td>
<td>5,950</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SeaWorld Orlando</td>
<td>5,500</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 6-3. Top Ten Employers in Central Florida (not single-site).**

*Source: Orlando EDC*
ranking first overall in the world). This begins to signify the power the RCID can have in the region, when it has this much importance across the global-local spectrum, as a global attraction of visitors, and a local employer.

By 2007, the total number of visitors to Orlando was nearly 49 million; this actually had dropped in 2006, following a record number of visitors in 2005 (Orlando/Orange County CVB 2008; Figure 6-4). Orlando had experienced record numbers of visitors through the year 2000; by the recession in 2001, numbers dropped by nearly three million visitors. Visitors to the region increased in 2002, and by 2003 had again posted record numbers.

Total theme park attendance in the region also achieved overall record numbers again in 2007 (Coaster Grotto 2008; Figure 6-5). The seven major theme parks in the region had record attendance numbers in 2000, but experienced slumps from 2001 through 2003, with recovery beginning in 2004. The fastest theme park to recover was Islands of Adventure; this is partially attributable to its opening in 1999, making it the newest theme park in the region. By 2007, each individual theme park in the Disney property and Sea World had recovered or surpassed its 2000 attendance numbers. The exception to this has been Universal Orlando: both theme parks saw an uptick in 2007, but had dropped from 2004 through 2006. Both 2007 and 2008 saw an aggressive national advertising campaign by Universal Orlando in order to improve its overall attendance and revenue.

Tourism in the region is still greatly dependent on capitalist crises cycles. When people can afford to visit, they do so, with larger numbers each year. During national and global recessions, however, attendance drops precipitously. This makes the entire region
Figure 6-4. Total Visitors to the Greater Orlando Region.

Source: Orlando/Orange County Convention and Visitors Bureau, various years

Figure 6-5. Total Theme Park Attendance, in Millions.

Source: Coaster Grotto, various years
more vulnerable to these economic crises than it might be, were other economic sectors in ascendance. (This is speculation, as there have been few, if any, sectors that have not suffered directly as a result of recent economic cycles. Tourism, however, is dependent on large numbers having the disposable income to travel, making it acutely sensitive to drops in income and unemployment.)

Disney is now the nation’s largest single-site employer (Jackson 2008). With its “site” roughly the size of San Francisco, however, this needs to be considered critically. The InfoUSA (2004) employer dataset breaks down each individual location by employee across the central Florida region. This has the benefit of spotting locations with the highest concentration of employees beyond the RCID. The dilemma, however, is that employment information for Bay Lake is not included with the InfoUSA dataset. Employment information for Lake Buena Vista is included, but this includes employment primarily for many of the hotel resorts and the Downtown Disney complex. It does not include the employment for each of the four Disney theme parks, which are included within the boundaries of Bay Lake; other Disney holdings in Lake Buena Vista are also missing from the dataset. It is difficult to make a full determination without the Bay Lake information, but even when broken into its constituent parts, the Reedy Creek Improvement District still includes several employment sinks (Figure 6-6). It is intriguing to note that Walt Disney World, for the sake of this dataset, is not treated as a holistic entity – instead it is treated as any other urban space, with each major economic entity in the space documented individually.

Tourism is extremely valuable to the central Florida region, particularly to local businesses. Revenue increases during the peak tourist seasons, particularly during the
spring-to-summer season (Hale Meitner 2005). This revenue helps drive the regional and local economies. It also helps fund local governments through tourist tax revenues. Tourist visitors are in demand, and many efforts are made to continue attracting visitors to the region as an economic driver.

With tourism slumps in 2001, due to recession and travel decreases following the September 11 events Smith and Jackovics 2001), and in 2004, due to an active hurricane season (Shamlian 2004), central Florida and the rest of the state tourism boards focused on attracting Northern tourists during the winter months (Kassab 2006). This was an attempt to increase tourism during the hurricane off-season to offset potential losses during future hurricane seasons.

Central Florida also focused on attracting local and state residents to the region’s tourist attractions (De Pari 2005a). The increase in local visitors, however, was a secondary tactic for the local tourist sector, since local visitors spent less overall than other national and international visitors (Pack and Oliver 2003). The sector’s players also worked at recovering international visitors, which began to increase again after its slump following 2001 (Kassab 2005).

By the middle of the decade, the tourist sector helped Florida lead in job growth at a rate double the national rate (Hamburg 2005). The Orlando MSA grew as the second-leading area of job growth in the state, behind the greater Miami area (ibid.). Tourism was the fourth leading sector to increase jobs. The seasonal hiring during 2004, however, was relatively stable compared to the previous year, with only Sea World and Universal hiring more seasonal employees during that season (Pack 2004). The job growth also had
Figure 6-6. Large Employers in Central Florida.
Figure 6-7. Annual MSA Unemployment Rate for Central Florida.


Figure 6-8. Unemployment by County, 2000-2007.

little effect on unemployment, with many residents working multiple jobs and a growing work force competing for the new positions (Flynn 2004).

While tourism in the region has, for the most part, continued to thrive, the economic outlook for residents of central Florida has been somewhat less secure. Unemployment has been an issue in the region for the first half of the decade, which corresponds with the recession of 2001-2003 (Figure 6-7). To put the unemployment rate into perspective, however, for the years 1990-1994, unemployment was over 5 percent. What this means, however, is that unemployment in the region, and in the tourist sector in particular, is not directly tied to the economic health of tourism in central Florida. Unemployment dropped between 2003 and 2006, while attendance numbers remained stagnant or slightly dropping. In 2007, however, unemployment actually increased as the local/global tourist sinks posted record numbers. The increase in visitors and in revenue did not correspond to improved conditions for those whose livelihoods depend on tourism.

At the county scale, Osceola and Lake counties consistently have higher unemployment rates. Since 2001 Osceola County, the location of Celebration, has had the highest unemployment rates in the region (Figure 6-8). This places Celebration, a community designed for those with higher incomes and rates of employment, at odds with a county whose residents are otherwise relatively consistently low-income, heterogeneous, and with higher unemployment rates within the central Florida region.

Post-industrialism in general, and the tourist economy in particular, has created a two-tiered urban space. One tier is designed primarily to attract those temporary residents and their disposable income to the region. In addition, similar to the efforts
made at the end of the nineteenth century, the attempts are being made to convince visitors, particularly those in the creative class (Florida 2002) to make the region their home. The economy, as a sign of some success in this effort, is becoming bimodal in nature: professional services employment is now nearly equal to employment in the tourist industry in the region (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2007).

The second tier to this two-tiered space involves the working class: those who are employed by the tourist industry and its related industries. This is the group first and hardest hit by economic changes in tourism. Many employees of the tourist industry, particularly those working near minimum wage (either below or above) lack job security. This can lead to loss of jobs, loss of hours worked, non-seasonal jobs becoming seasonal, and reduced income. All this in an urban space with a cost of living that is not supported by an income at or below the average wage (see below). Economically, there is significant struggle between those who are driving the economic revenue of the region, and those dependent on that revenue for survival.

**Demographics of Urban Development in the Region**

Before going into more detail about urban revitalization and its impacts on the region, it is beneficial to understand the overall demographics of central Florida. The demographic figures focus primarily on the permanent residents in the region. At some scales, such as the scale of Celebration and a few of the other smaller communities in the region, the picture is of homogeneity. At the regional level, some of the heterogeneity of the region appears, but is not significantly different than the overall heterogeneity found at the national level. The mesoscales of the block group to census tract, however, best highlight the uneven geographical development of the region.
Table 6-1. Total Population in Central Florida by County, 2000.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Lake County</th>
<th>Orange County</th>
<th>Osceola County</th>
<th>Seminole County</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Population</strong></td>
<td>210,528</td>
<td>896,344</td>
<td>172,493</td>
<td>365,196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>White</strong></td>
<td>184,147</td>
<td>615,706</td>
<td>133,590</td>
<td>301,008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>African-American</strong></td>
<td>16,878</td>
<td>161,558</td>
<td>12,873</td>
<td>34,106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Native American</strong></td>
<td>810</td>
<td>2,862</td>
<td>493</td>
<td>1,434</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Asian-American</strong></td>
<td>1,422</td>
<td>28,748</td>
<td>3,642</td>
<td>8,682</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander</strong></td>
<td>44</td>
<td>853</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other Race</strong></td>
<td>4,293</td>
<td>52,568</td>
<td>15,286</td>
<td>10,515</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Two or More Races</strong></td>
<td>2,934</td>
<td>34,049</td>
<td>6,506</td>
<td>9,335</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hispanic</strong></td>
<td>11,836</td>
<td>168,191</td>
<td>50,742</td>
<td>40,656</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


In terms of absolute population, the areas of concentration by 2000 were in the suburban and exurban regions of Orlando (Figures 6-10 and 6-12). This exceeds the boundaries of Orange County, with overflow into southeastern Lake, southwestern Seminole, and northern Osceola counties. In the intervening six years, that external growth in the region would continue to expand, while the lowest areas of population would continue to be sporadically dispersed in outlying block groups and concentrated within downtown Orlando (Figures 6-11 and 6-13).

Comparing population in absolute terms, across uneven areal spaces, does not adequately address the relative distribution of population across central Florida. Population densities in central Florida show a slightly different picture of population across the space. Like much of Florida, there is little dense urban development within the region; most of the density is concentrated in or on the outskirts of the city of Orlando. This is consistent with much of the region expanding after World War II, both in overall population but also in space consumed by low-density development away from the urban...
pole of Orlando. The region of central Florida is unevenly developed in population
distribution and density, and consists not of an urban core with hinterland model, but
instead as a multipolar patchwork space (Figure 6-9).

This relational urban development is partly the result of competing poles as well:
with Walt Disney World as both the tourist and economic sink of the region, yet having
no appreciable residential population of its own (see Chapter Four), residential
communities must therefore compete socio-politically as well as economically internally
within the region. That competition, however, is often contradictory as much of the
population in needing of residential space, those employed by the tourist industry, do not
provide the tax base communities see as necessary for their survival.

Osceola County is the fifteenth-fastest growing county in the country by percent
growth, largely due to a fast-growing Hispanic population, particularly Puerto Ricans
from Puerto Rico and the five boroughs of New York, NY. Lake County is also the 28th
fastest growing county by percent growth in the United States (U.S. Census Bureau
2007). When looking at numerical growth, Orange County has the 17th largest population
increase in the U.S., Lake is 41st, and Osceola is 43rd in population increase.

The racial and ethnic distribution of population in the region is relatively diverse
(see Figure 6-14). The focus on tourism in central Florida often belies its multicultural
diversity (Brotemarkle 2005). The minority population of central Florida is similar to the
demographic makeup at the federal level. The relatively large African-American
population has a long history in the region, as briefly discussed in Chapter Three. The
Hispanic population, at 16.5%, is relatively small by Florida urban space standards, but
has been increasing since 1970 in the region.
Figure 6-9. Total Population in Central Florida by Census Tract, 2000.
Figure 6-10. Total Population in Central Florida by Block Group, 2000.

Figure 6-11. Total Population in Central Florida by Block Group, 2006.
Figure 6-12. Population Density in Central Florida by Block Group, 2000.

Figure 6-13. Population Density in Central Florida by Block Group, 2006.
At smaller scales, however, African-American and Hispanic populations are actually quite concentrated. The same spaces that have high numbers of African-American and Hispanic populations also have high densities of the same. This denotes populations that, across the space, are not well integrated, but instead exist primarily in enclaves. This trend is not a new one, as discussed in Chapter 3; it continues from the 2000 census through 2006, as it has for well over a century.

The largest concentration of African-American population in 2000, at the census tract level, was in west-central Orange County along the I-4 corridor. Historical black communities, such as Eatonville, in northern Orange County also account for census tracts with higher than average African-American populations.

At the block group level, the trend continues, with the largest concentrations of African-American population in Orange County block groups ringing Orlando. Looking at the population densities in 2000 at the block group level, the block groups in west-central Orange County, as well as pockets in northern Seminole County and northwestern Lake County, have the highest African-American population densities.

By 2006, the demographics for the African-American population at the block group level had shifted: while the block groups ringing Orlando in Orange County still had the largest African-American populations, the block groups to the east had gained population, while some of the block groups to the west had reduced populations. In terms of population density, however, the results are almost identical in 2006 to that in 2000: the only significant difference being a few small block groups in Lake County having greater African-American population density in 2006 than in 2000. In other words, the uneven geographical development of African-American communities in
central Florida has remained consistent, and to a small degree has actually increased, in the contemporary space at the block group level.

The Orlando region experienced the largest percentage of African-American population growth of large urban areas during the 1990s, with Atlanta experiencing the second largest percentage of growth (Burch 2002). New residents evoked the images of good schools, low crime rates, and affordable housing in explaining their decision to move to central Florida (ibid.). Orlando is particularly attractive to higher-income African Americans for its safe, sanitized image (Echegaray and Stanley 2005).

This belies the fact that Orlando is not well integrated, and socio-spatial polarization is still a concern in the space. It is an indictment of integration in the state of Florida, however, that Orlando is the second-best integrated space for African-
Figure 6-16. African-American Population in Central Florida by Block Group, 2000.

Figure 6-17. African-American Population in Central Florida by Block Group, 2006.
Americans, behind Jacksonville, within the state (Burch 2002). Orlando still has not fully accepted its segregationist past, and continues to select traditionally African-American communities for economic revitalization. While on the surface this may be seen as a boon for these communities, residents fear that external changes imposed on the communities will lead to their removal from those communities. Communities such as Parramore were themselves created by earlier rounds of revitalization that instead led to further socio-spatial polarization within the urban space (see below).

A similar pattern emerges for Hispanic populations in central Florida. At the census tract level in 2000, the largest concentrations of Hispanic population were located in south Orange County / north Osceola County, east Orange County, and southwestern Osceola County (see Figure 6-18). There is also secondary population concentration in southern Lake County.

At the block group level, the trend remains similar: the large concentration of Hispanic population on the central-western Orange/Osceola counties border, eastern Orange County, with secondary concentrations in southwestern Osceola County and southern Lake County (see Figure 6-19a). The population density in 2000 becomes more variegated, however: additional population centers appear in western Lake County, Seminole County, and on the Lake/Orange counties border (see Figure 6-19b). Interestingly enough, one block group that displays a significant Hispanic population density is in southwestern Orange County, just east of the block group occupied by the Reedy Creek Improvement District.
Figure 6-18. Hispanic Population in Central Florida by Census Tract, 2000.
Figure 6-19. Hispanic Population in Central Florida by Block Group, 2000.

Figure 6-20. Hispanic Population in Central Florida by Block Group, 2006.
In 2006, there is some minor variation in the population distribution of Hispanics across block groups, but remained, for the most part, consistent with 2000 (see Figure 6-20a). The same is the case for population density, with some variation in the block groups with significantly greater population density (see Figure 6-20b). Overall, though, as was the case for the African-American population, much of the Hispanic community in central Florida remains unevenly developed across the space. Sociospatial polarization is still very much a part of the fabric of central Florida.

The Hispanic community is also often seen as competition by the working poor and the more historical African-American populations (Archer and Bezdecny 2009). Many Hispanics directly compete for the same jobs that both of these historically disenfranchised groups seek. There is also a higher percentage of Hispanics in lower-paying tourism-related jobs, compared to other demographic groups, often jobs in which they are to be invisible in order to maintain the theme of happiness and magic promoted by the industry (ibid.).

The age distribution in central Florida includes a quarter of the population under the age of 18 (see Figure 6-21). The region actually has a relatively low population aged 65 and over, compared with much of Florida. Lake County has the largest population aged 65 and over, while Osceola County has the greatest population under age 18 (see Table 6-2).

At the census tract level in 2000, the population under 18 is dispersed away from and around the boundaries of Orlando; there is also a large under-18 population in eastern and northern Lake County (see Figure 6-22). At the block group level that same year, a similar pattern emerges, though the proportion of the population in each block group
actually shows a trend of youth in Orlando – the absolute number of youth in the space is lower, but overall, out of the city population, youth are higher proportionately than in immediate suburbs (see Figure 6-23).

![Age Distribution, Orlando MSA, 2000](image)

**Figure 6-21. Age of the Population in Central Florida, 2000.**

*Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000.*

**Table 6-2. Age Distribution by County, 2000.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Lake County</th>
<th>Orange County</th>
<th>Osceola County</th>
<th>Seminole County</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Population</strong></td>
<td>210,528</td>
<td>896,344</td>
<td>172,493</td>
<td>365,196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Under 18</strong></td>
<td>42,690</td>
<td>225,579</td>
<td>46,212</td>
<td>92,283</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>18-64</strong></td>
<td>112,289</td>
<td>580,780</td>
<td>106,784</td>
<td>234,388</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>65 and Over</strong></td>
<td>55,549</td>
<td>89,985</td>
<td>19,497</td>
<td>38,525</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000.*
Figure 6-22. Population under Age 18 in Central Florida by Census Tract, 2000.
Figure 6-23. Population under Age 18 in Central Florida by Block Group, 2000.

Figure 6-24. Population under Age 18 in Central Florida by Block Group, 2006.
In the exurbs of the region, however, the proportion of youth is also higher than average. By 2006, the trend remains, though some of the intermediate suburban block groups show an increased proportion of youth residing there (see Figure 6-24). Based on the absolute trends in 2006, this seems to display a shift in where families were choosing to reside within the region – this could be in terms of both inter- and intra-regional migration and population increase, though this data does not provide information that can determine which is influencing the trend.

Household income in central Florida is well distributed (see Figure 6-25). There is no dominant income bracket within the region as a whole. This would seem to suggest that the Orlando region is a mixed-income region and that, as far as household income is concerned, it is equably developed, at least for most of the population. This would, of course, disregard those in the lower income brackets, but it would suggest opportunities for household income are prevalent.

Looking at the county scale, Seminole County has higher median household and per capita incomes, followed by Orange County (see Table 6-3). Osceola County has a higher median household income than Lake County, but a lower per capita income, meaning household sizes in Osceola County are, on average, larger than those in Lake County.

At the block group level in 2000, however, the median household income is higher in west Orange County, northwest Osceola County, and western Seminole County than the surrounding region, a trend that continues in 2006 (see Figure 6-26).
Figure 6-25. Household Income in Central Florida, 2000.


Table 6-3. Income and Home Values by County, 2000.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Lake County</th>
<th>Orange County</th>
<th>Osceola County</th>
<th>Seminole County</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Per Capita Income</strong></td>
<td>$20,199</td>
<td>$20,916</td>
<td>$17,022</td>
<td>$24,591</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Median Household Income</strong></td>
<td>$36,903</td>
<td>$41,311</td>
<td>$38,214</td>
<td>$49,326</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Median Owner-Occupied Home Value</strong></td>
<td>$83,700</td>
<td>$100,300</td>
<td>$92,500</td>
<td>$115,100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


An interesting distribution is the block group distribution of median owner-occupied household values (see Figure 6-27). Higher values can be found in Seminole County, southwestern and southern Orange County, and a single northwestern block group in Osceola County. The block groups in southwestern Orange County surround the block group that is part of the RCID; the block group in Osceola County includes
Figure 6-26. Median Household Income in Central Florida by Block Group, 2000-2006.

Figure 6-27. Median Owner-Occupied Home Values by Block Group, 2000-2006.
Celebration. Strangely enough, the few homes in the core RCID block group increased in value by 2006. Southern Osceola County and northern Lake County, with their distance from the economic core, remain more impoverished and with lower home values. Southern Osceola County in particular has traditionally been the home of many tourist industry employees, where the average wage for a full time employee is less than the $13.15 an hour they would need to afford fair market one-bedroom rent; for those making the state minimum wage of $6.15 (or lower in exempt positions, such as maids and serving staff) are that much more vulnerable (Orange County 2005).

Demographically, the Reedy Creek Improvement District and Celebration are not representative of central Florida. This in and of itself is representative of the struggle to command space and control place: the demographics, particularly of the RCID, are directly related to attempts to socially engineer the space in order to socio-politically control place. There is no affordable housing in the RCID or Celebration for lower paid employees of the space. The spaces of the RCID and Celebration are not heterogeneous by income, race, or ethnicity. While choice is a definite factor in this, the lack of income and the ability to live in the RCID are also powerful factors affecting this disparity.

The total population of Celebration is 2,744 (U.S. Census Bureau 2000). Celebration’s population is 96% white, 0.7% African-American, and 6.7% Hispanic. As for age distribution, 32% of the population is under 18, while 5.4% of the population is 65 and over. Only 54% of the working population of Celebration works within Osceola County. The median household income is $74,231, with a per capita income of $39,521. The median home value in Celebration is $384,100. Updated statistics for 2006 are not available through the ACS series, since Celebration’s population is less than 65,000.
The census information for the two communities in the Reedy Creek Improvement District is problematic when using Summary File 3. The data for Summary File 1, the total count of the population and used in Chapter 4, is as close to a complete count of the population with every decennial census (issues with the undercounting of marginalized populations will not be addressed in this chapter). Summary File 3, which is only a sampling of the population, when combined with the small populations of Bay Lake and Lake Buena Vista, and the suppression introduced in order to respect the privacy of individuals, creates significant sampling error in the data.

Having said that, the population is not diverse. Those living in Lake Buena Vista have lower household incomes than those in Bay Lake, though per capita income between the two communities is nearly the same ($26,731 in Bay Lake compared to $25,769 in Lake Buena Vista). The median home value in Lake Buena Vista is higher than that in Bay Lake. Ultimately, though, it should be remembered that these communities have a combined population of 55, and consist of Disney Corporation employees and their dependents. Only those allowed by the Disney Corporation may live in these communities, as they have the power to make decisions regarding Reedy Creek Improvement District policy, as incorporated spaces.

Urban revitalization serves many purposes: it can be an attempt to redesign the form of an urban space, it could be an economic development enterprise, and it could be an attempt at community redevelopment through residential development. In all situations, however, urban revitalization, particular within the context of a tourist economy, will also alter the demographic dynamics of a given place within the overall
Celebration and Urban Revitalization in Central Florida

ORock 105.9 used to be one of Orlando’s hard rock radio stations. On Tuesday, April 25th, 2006, the Morning After Show interviewed Orlando’s mayor, Buddy Dyer, on his use of the tourist tax, among other funding sources, to revitalize downtown Orlando. Mayor Dyer, through the course of the interview, also mentioned his urban renewal philosophy, a mix of faith in smart urban growth, infill and traditional neighborhood new urbanism, and gentrification; he also stated the need to have community input within that community’s revitalization, affordable housing, and such basics as grocery stores and other necessities to relocate within the communities (ORock 2006). This short interview, meant to attract the attention of Orlando residents during their commute to work, is quite intriguing, and very representative of the relationship of urban theming to urban revitalization at multiple scales in the central Florida region: while his philosophy on its surface was designed for local listeners, it belied the use of development funds for attracting more economic growth, in the form of enticing tourists to the downtown space, as well as, through gentrification particularly, attempts to attract higher-income households back to Orlando.

(Re)developing the urban space often provides an opportunity for local and regional powers to regain control over place, or re-assert command over space (see Chapters Two, Four, and Five). Revitalization can also come from the neighborhood itself, yet this is itself a sign of struggle against uneven geographical development: a
struggle for the opportunity to redefine the urban place in a more equitable manner. Urban revitalization from an external source also often leads to struggle, as well: the sociopolitical needs of the community often do not coincide with the decisions made for the community’s changes. Gentrification is often a cause of struggle for that very reason: it reinforces uneven geographical development by revitalizing the neighborhood through displacement.

Urban revitalization has become a major activity of local city governments. Many local communities have community redevelopment agencies (CRAs) that work with government officials, such as the boards of commissioners and mayors, to enact revitalization plans in downtown spaces through taxing districts. Communities such as Winter Garden, Kissimmee, Ocoee, St. Cloud, Winter Park, and Eatonville enacted CRAs to enact revitalization initiatives in their spaces (Mathers 2005a; Jacobson 2005c; Mathers 2005b; De Pari 2005b; Sashin 2009; Sherman 2005b).

These revitalization projects have not been without conflict. In Kissimmee, community members were concerned about the displacement of vulnerable residents, particularly the homeless, in order to develop “luxury condos” (Jacobson 2005c). Winter Garden residents distrusted local officials, who had previously promised revitalization but had failed to follow through in redeveloping the historically poor African-American community (Mathers 2005a).

In Kissimmee, distress by local residents over a lakefront development plan led to its demise (Jacobson 2005b). A second project, a townhouse development project in downtown Kissimmee, went ahead, creating townhomes with a starting price of nearly $300,000 (Pino 2006). Residential development was considered a pleasant surprise, since
most revitalization “work downtown has been to fix up existing homes and convert them to office space” (ibid.). Winter Park residents, also distressed over redevelopment plans, failed to sway the commissioners, and plans went ahead over the complaints (Sherman 2005a; Sherman 2005b; Sherman 2005d).

Local governments also played a role in creating enterprise zones in communities with high unemployment and rates of poverty. Orange County provides job credits and tax incentives to attract corporations to three enterprise zones in the county (Scott 2004). These zones focus on economic revitalization through the creation of jobs and regional revenue, which a county commissioner described as “a needed program that has not been as effective as he'd like” (ibid.). Osceola County also helped to enact an enterprise zone in the northern section of the county. Its goal is to create jobs, but also to attract service-oriented businesses, such as grocery stores to a relative food desert (Jacobson 2005a).

Orlando’s commissioners and mayor have taken a multi-pronged approach to revitalization in the city-space. Downtown revitalization projects have included office condominiums as part of downtown revitalization (Snyder 2004). The city also paid developers $3.7 million to provide space for a grocery store in a development adjacent to Eola Park (Schlueb 2005a). The city paid developers to redevelop the Church Street Station entertainment venue (Kassab 2003b). Mayor Buddy Dyer also sought developers to redevelop the Centroplex area between downtown and Parramore, which is considered the largest revitalization attempt in Orlando’s history (Schlueb 2005b). Most of the revitalization in this region is economic, though some residential space was also planned. Many of these projects were enacted through the Orlando CRA, which stretched its resources thin, and led to it running at a loss on the gamble that “an increase in property
taxes expected from the new projects eventually will cover the expenses” (Kassab 2003a).

With the number of revitalization projects enacted, and the age of the CRA in Orlando, which was enacted in 1982, many city commissioners feel the tax burden of the CRA is no longer necessary. They argue that the downtown space had been revitalized by the middle of the decade, and the funds going to the CRA should be redirected to the general city tax fund (Schlueb 2005c). The minority on the commission, however, argue that the CRA funds are still vital to the revitalization interests in Orlando, particularly for the community of Parramore (ibid.).

The Pathways to Parramore project has been central to Mayor Buddy Dyer’s tenure in office (City of Orlando 2005). The project is an effort to revitalize the Parramore neighborhood in downtown Orlando through new urbanist and gentrification processes. This project has been contentious on many fronts. First, the project commission of 23 people only includes a single Parramore resident, which the community sees as evidence that their voices will not be heard in the process (Brewington and Harris 2003b). Concerned residents worried about the impacts the project would have on current residents who were vulnerable to rising property values expected to accompany the revitalization efforts (Brewington 2003). This is viewed as direct gentrification, in which the poor existing residents will inevitably be removed in order to entice middle- and upper-class residents into the space.

An initial development named City View, adjacent to Parramore, was viewed by residents as evidence of what their future held: only 10% of the units in the “affordable housing” complex were reserved for the lowest income bracket, which priced many
residents out of the community (Harris and Brewington 2003). Home-owning residents were already having their homes purchased by the city to demolish ahead of revitalization, but with no plans for relocation in place (ibid.). Residents viewed the revitalization efforts as a continuation of a racist past that had led to the creation of Parramore in the first place as a bastion for poor African-American residents, following blight/revitalization cycles during the 20th century (Brewington and Harris 2003a). Observers noted that, "while Mayor Buddy Dyer and other city leaders hold up City View as an example of urban revitalization at its best, experts point to such projects as a key weakness in modern-day gentrification efforts” (Harris and Brewington 2003). The project has continued to move forward, and attempts occurred during the process to convince residents that the revitalization plans would create a net gain for residents (Kunerth 2005). Residents still fear that the net gain would be for new residents, while pushing out existing residents from the community.

Questions were also raised about how the Kelo ruling by the Supreme Court, coupled with Florida’s rules for blight designation for urban revitalization, would affect communities as local governments began to consider using eminent domain more blatantly for private economic development projects (Orlando Sentinel 2006). This raises questions about the use of space in urban areas by hegemonic powers in the region, and by local place residents, as the cycle of residential displacement for economic return continued.

Urban revitalization is not new to the central Florida space; neither is using that revitalization to support economic interests rather than the interests of the revitalized area’s residents (see Chapter Three). What is new is the degree to which the revitalized
spaces are themed. In effect, urban revitalization is central Florida is driven by the narratives associated with the theming of the same urban space. Examples include Church Street Station and the new sports arena known as Amway Center. These are catering to nearby attempts to continue upscale developments and to tourists of a more local variety - these continue to progress the image of the urban space, but it is a remembrance that urban revitalization is not synonymous with residential revitalization.

In the central Florida region, 12 new urbanist communities were developed or in development by 2002 (CNU Florida 2002). Additional revitalization efforts are underway in the city of Orlando, including Pathways for Parramore initiative discussed above (City of Orlando 2005), and the recently completed Amway Center construction (City of Orlando 2010). As stated above, the mayor of Orlando sees urban revitalization efforts such as new urbanism and gentrification as key to the revitalization of his urban space. These communities have not lived up to the promise of mixed neighborhood living, or neighborhoods with employment opportunities that reduce journey to work values for their residents. Baldwin Park, indicative of many projects in the region, had homes selling for prices comparable to those in Celebration, with the upper range of townhomes and detached homes selling for more than five million dollars (Congress for the New Urbanism 2010). Unlike Celebration, however, Baldwin Park was not a greenbelt development: it was placed in Orlando on the site of a former military base (Ibid.).

While other revitalization projects were created or matured after 2000 in central Florida, Celebration remained one of the best-known, and often became an example for revitalization. It has also been used as an example of what has not worked in these
communities: the lack of employment opportunities (Reep 2008). For better or for worse, the struggle over commanding the residential space of central Florida by commanding its revitalized urban neighborhood places is often informed through the Celebration instance. This is a struggle over the very conception of the space itself, and the ability to define the dynamic social constructions of that space.

An interesting example of the flattening of information dissemination about Celebration is the entry on new urbanism at Wikipedia. Of all the examples of new urbanism around the nation, Celebration is one of few examples provided in the Wikipedia entry on new urbanism (Wikipedia 27 October 2010). The article states (unsubstantiatedly) that “it has since eclipsed Seaside [Florida, the first new urbanist community] as the best-known new urbanist community” (Ibid.). For many individuals, this provides their first exploration/interaction with the concept of new urbanism, and places Celebration once-again squarely in the national spotlight. The theme of new urbanism becomes congruent with the theme of Celebration. For the community, knowledge transfer from consumer-oriented locations such as this is comparable to the advertising campaigns from a tourism perspective. Like Walt Disney World for tourism in central Florida, Celebration as a community has capital at scales beyond most of the communities in the region. Ironically, a community striving on its surface for introverted communitarianism has become well-known on regional and national scales.

In more recent years, it has become typical to rely on three primary forms of urban revitalization within the region, all of which have themed elements. First is the continued creation of themed tourist spaces as a form of urban revitalization being seen as equivalent by local governments to economic revitalization. That the attractions are
themed is both an homage to the power of theme parks within the regional space, as well as an attempt to siphon off tourist dollars through somewhat-direct competition. This is more valuable to urban spaces, overall, than investing too heavily in residential infrastructure.

Secondly has been the emphasis on gentrification. Upper-middle class communities are seen to spring organically from central urban spaces – with help in the way of zoning and investment from the local governments in order to attract residents with a higher tax base. That the areas were vacant through artificial depression (a la Smith 1984) or already had a residential populace displaced by the development that was ostensibly for their benefit are facts carefully avoided as part of the themed narrative of regenerating a prosperous and safe downtown space.

Finally is the reliance on the popular use of new urbanism. As discussed in Chapter Two, new urbanism is seen as an architectural movement that structurally aids in effecting social justice. In reality, however, many communities use the architectural tenets of new urbanism to create themed spaces that in actuality further stratify the urban space. As mentioned earlier, these communities are increasing in central Florida, such as the greenbelt new urbanist community of Celebration (see Chapter Five), or the infill communities developed in downtown Orlando, such as Baldwin Park. While possessing the appropriate narrative for communities seeking to take advantage of a themed reputation as one of the happiest places on the planet, new urbanism in reality showcasing the imagineering of urban spaces that are unevenly developed.

In reality, there is little difference between the revitalization projects of modern central Florida, and those of the post-WWII era that proclaimed their efforts were to
reduce uneven geographical development, yet oftentimes instead exacerbated it in efforts to meet other objectives. While in the post-War era this involved infrastructural shifts, such as Interstate development (see Chapter Two), in the modern spaces it is to revitalize tax bases lost during that era to the reconstitution of urban spaces following integration and the Interstate that shifted traditional communities in the first place.

What is intriguing remains the reversal of directionality and the circularity of neoliberal urban planning designs. With the ascendance of neoliberalism in the early 1980s, many public projects became privatized, with public-private ventures becoming a popular vehicle in urban spaces. In Orlando at the turn of the millennium, instead it was the public space, through governmental efforts, mimicking the methodologies of private ventures. The city governments act as fronts for private developers in perpetuating neoliberal expansions in their downtown spaces, often at the expense of the people they originally promised would benefit from the development.

The results have been the same, however: public funds in return for privatized spaces. In this case, designs enacted by private firms are becoming readily adopted by local and regional governance agencies as solutions to their sociopolitical dilemmas. At issue, however, is the fact that these modes of design are explicitly representing a displacement of sociopolitical issues, rather than addressing those very issues. New urbanism, which claims a return to an imagineered pre-WWII urban space, in actuality trends toward higher-income individuals (Peck 2005). When developed within existing urban communities, residents are often priced out of this new development. In the case of gentrification efforts, as Glass (1964) notes, displacement of existing communities is axiomatic to that process. And in the case of the creative city, Florida (2003) specifically
states that a creative city is antithetical to treatments of the working class. In other words, to create a creative city, a city must and should remove the working class to some unknown periphery, thought less fortunate for its absorption of the very people necessary to run the infrastructure of that city.

The adoption of neoliberal planning techniques, such as new urbanism, by urban governments, however, highlights the increasing tensions between economic and community development in the urban space. While a local government is mandated to provide services to the area under its jurisdiction, this competes with the desire for additional funds, ostensibly with which to provide those services. In other words, those populations most in need find themselves displaced, ironically in an effort to procure funds for those very services.

In the case of Celebration, the space was originally, and continues to be, defined by the Disney Corporation, which still commands the space, and hence controls the politics of place, of Celebration. With Disney’s lessening involvement in the community, however, the heterogeneity is becoming more apparent, though still actively stifled by private interests and community leaders (often one in the same, since Celebration is not incorporated). The community, however, will always exist within the shadow of Disney, and the experiment they bought into, regardless of its outcome or their sentiments toward that outcome. The community members, not a homogeneous group to begin with, do not have sufficient control of place in order to redefine the space (per Harvey 1990).

Disney maintains ultimate control over the space of Celebration. Though it sold the downtown space, which had been a planned phase of the development, Disney “will still be involved in developing the outer ring of commercial area” in Celebration (Hunt
2003). The terms of the sale to Lexin Capital include continuing town traditions (Hunt 2004). Residents hoped for more residential-focused businesses with the sale (ibid.), but this did not materialize in the years immediately following the sale. The sale of the downtown space and the golf course should not be conflated with the loss of control over the space: Disney still owns the majority of the property in Celebration, and continues to have power accompanying this in the unincorporated space.

Celebration has also represented a major draw. The initial development of the community required a lottery system, due to the number of people seeking to relocate to the community. For many, “Celebration’s community design serves most residents well” (Steuteville 2002). Many residents were attracted because of the value they see in the Disney brand. People made the conscious choice to select this community as the place where they wished to make an investment in property and to spend their time living.

Celebration is a true community, with actual residents. Many residents “are sold on the town's movie-set looks, its spirit of community, its closeness and emphasis on volunteerism and healthy lifestyles” (Haymon Long 2001). As an actual community, however, it has both positive and negative traits that need to be addressed, rather than just existing as a utopian showcase. There are also struggles that the residents of Celebration engage in. For example, there are still residential efforts to become an incorporated town, and achieve representation, rather than being run by the town's management company (Lush 2006).

This is likely to continue as long as Celebration is presented as the face of urban revitalization efforts in the central Florida space. The imagineering of that space is also indicative of the social engineering aspects of contemporary revitalization efforts,
particularly in the case of new urbanism: “The case of Celebration brings out an important consideration in connection with issues of control, namely, that those subject to it do not necessarily perceive it to be a bad thing. Indeed, they may even derive reassurance from being controlled” (Bryman 2004, 144). It also represents the continuing struggles related to uneven geographical development: not everyone within the space is reassured by the inability to define the space through control of place – there still exists “a tug-of-war between freedom and control in Celebration” (Mannheim 2002, 137).

Celebration is a true community, with actual residents. Many residents “are sold on the town's movie-set looks, its spirit of community, its closeness and emphasis on volunteerism and healthy lifestyles” (Haymon Long 2001). As an actual community, however, it has both positive and negative traits that need to be addressed, rather than just existing as a utopian showcase. There are also struggles that the residents of Celebration engage in. For example, there are still residential efforts to become an incorporated town, and achieve representation, rather than being run by the town's management company (Lush 2006).

The image of Celebration has begun to crack. As many of Celebration’s less savory incidents were never highlighted due to the sensational nature of the theme of Celebration, now the sensationalism is in the seeming deconstruction of that theme. Celebration now has a higher rate of foreclosures than the state, with one in twenty residents in foreclosure (Howley 2011). This was directly related to Celebration’s first suicide, which occurred when a local resident was about to experience foreclosure (Mandell 2010; Pilkington 2010). Celebration also experienced its first murder, in a community that, to many, had no crime. This is seen as out-of-character to the theme of
Celebration, “which is why news of Celebration’s first murder was so incongruous and shattering” (Pilkington 2010). As one resident puts it, “you knew the parks and the streets would be clean, the grass cut, all the houses would look the same. It would be family-oriented and everything would work just right” (ibid.). That was the attraction of Celebration: that the physical and social environments would continue to perpetuate the theme of a happy, nearly-perfect community. By denying the reality of Celebration as a functioning community, with weaknesses as well as strengths, there is little preparation for confronting the dark underside of Celebration’s urban theming.

**Defining Central Florida**

Who defines central Florida? Is it defined by the tourist industry, particularly by one of its global tourist sinks, Walt Disney World, in order to attract temporary residents? Is it defined by governmental officials, developers, and others seeking to use the tourist predominance of the region to their advantage in attracting permanent residents? Is it defined at a global scale, national, regional, statewide, or more local scale?

Truly, it is defined at all of these scales – but, except at the most local of scales, the definition is often the same, and often begins with “Walt Disney World.” Many narratives become lost in this definition: the racial and ethnic tensions of Orlando’s past and present; a diversifying economic backdrop to the region simultaneous with the region’s continued dependence on tourism for income and taxes; revitalization projects that are often synonymous with tourist attractors; and struggles to find affordable living conditions for those at the lower brackets of the income spectrum while simultaneously
attempting to attract those in the higher brackets to bring their taxable income permanently to the region.

In Orlando, the struggle is between conceptualizing the urban space to meet the needs and perceptions of the temporary residents (or visitors) and those of the residents and workers utilizing the space. These conflicting needs are also indicative of the separate struggles occurring simultaneously across many scales in the urban space. The residents themselves do not constitute a cohesive whole, with additional disputes when considering the workers who commute into the urban space: these conflicting viewpoints, while themselves also a sign of uneven geographical development, often aid in preventing a concerted front in creating an alternative vision of the city to that perceived as most appropriate for the tourist.

The struggles also occur at multiple scales. Nationally and statewide, central Florida is competing for tourism and for high-income population. Within the MSA, and often within each county, there is further competition to attract tourist and residential dollars in order to survive and possibly thrive. Many of the actions taken by the administration in the city of Orlando are attempts to compete within the region against the draw of Walt Disney World and higher-scale communities in the surrounding area, while simultaneously using Walt Disney World to draw people from outside the MSA to the city. In addition, in order to attract visitors to the space, local community governments employ theming tactics to display images meant to attract tourists and their disposable income: images often at odds with reality, and at odds with addressing real problems for real residents and workers within the space. Their needs become invisible,
requiring additional effort to convince local power brokers to address issues within the urban space that require attention.

Tourism remains a prominent component in defining central Florida, and urban revitalization in communities such as Celebration are driven both by people attracted to that tourism (in Celebration’s case, often lifelong fans of Disney) while simultaneously being used to continue to promote a safe, happy atmosphere in continuing to attract tourists. Yet the region has issues with crime, youth homelessness (a direct consequence of reliance on labor at wages below the regional cost of living), and drug use. This has not come to define the space, however, as it has in other cities with comparable problems. That is because the command of space is still driven by tourism, which leads to a control of the perception of place.

The economic story of Orlando, which is driven principally by its role as a tourist city, allows those tourist sinks in the region to command the economic space and, as a result, control the message that persists regarding the region. Orlando is known as home to Walt Disney World, a place of happiness and safety, not as one of the most crime-ridden urban regions in the country (O’Leary Morgan 2007). Yet that crime is as much a result of Orlando as a tourist city as the perception of a sanitized environment has become. The issues and struggles of the heterogenic places within the region are subsumed and suppressed by the omnipresent need to cater to the tourist visitors, or temporary residents, of the space. While seen as necessary for the continued economic viability of the overall region, it also often places the needs of the temporary residents in a position at direct odds, and in direct competition, with the needs of the permanent residents who provide the labor infrastructure that allows the tourist city to continue to
function. In the hegemonic view, however, the importance of residents is in helping to maintain the façade of happiness, with their livelihoods often at risk should appearances not be kept.

This command is still necessary with the bimodal economy that is emerging: while some rebranding has taken (and continues to take) place to attract IT and professional services and their employees, that brand still needs to promote an image of a safe, sanitized place. This is to attract new affluent residents, often to the very neighborhoods that have been recently renovated to meet their expectations of a cosmopolitan space, at the expense of residents who do not have the same levels of disposable income, or property values that achieve as high a tax rate.

A weakness of the control of place through the command of space is highlighted here, however. Many of the issues central Florida currently experiences are not controlled by the powers in the region; only the image is controlled. This opens opportunities for those struggling against the uneven development in the region – while the subversion currently occurring is often the result of efforts to control that image, it also means that, even in a region with such global authority and power located in the space, the place cannot be completely controlled.
Chapter Seven

It’s an Uneven World After All

Introduction

On September 27, 2001, the president of the United States informed citizens that they should “Fly and enjoy America’s great destination spots. Get down to Disney World in Florida. Take your families and enjoy life, the way we want it to be enjoyed” (Liebovitz and Purdum, 2009). As late as May 31, 2010, Walt Disney World acts as an example for using the online search gazetteer for many Websites, such as weather.com (see Figure 7-1). Commercials for this destination are regular occurrences on national and local television stations across the country.

Figure 7-1. Weather.com Search Gazetteer Example.

Source: The Weather Channel (image captured May 31, 2010).
Tourism, urban theming, and urban revitalization all exhibit processes that result in “the creation and re-creation of ever newer space relations for human interactions [which] is one of capitalism’s most signal achievements” (Harvey 2010, 189). While the focus of this research has been to expose uneven geographical development within central Florida, it is important to recognize the value of the RCID in and to the region. Walt Disney World could not be the largest single-site employer in the nation or the number one theme park attraction in the world without having millions of visitors choose to visit this site. As part of this choice is the spending of disposable income that provides profit for the Disney Company and revenue, in the form of tourist taxes, for the region. For many people, Walt Disney World really is the place where “the magic begins the moment you tell them” (Breaking Travel News 2011). This has helped the Disney Company to an eight percent increase in visitor spending and a two percent increase in attendance figures in the last year (Smith 2011).

The role of the Reedy Creek Improvement District within central Florida is unique in the contemporary U.S. sociopolitical landscape. Through its theme park incarnation as Walt Disney World, it has become the symbol of safe, family-oriented entertainment. It is also the aspect of the RCID that is well-known through the U.S. and the world. Its residential incarnation in Celebration, which juxtaposes the tourist aspect of the region, is less well-known, but has still become an example for future urban development. The political concessions held by the RCID are far less known – for this is not consistent with the image being promoted within the space.

Orlando is potentially the quintessential 21st century tourist city: yet dark side of Disneyfication of region’s problems while dependent upon low-wage, highly variable
economy. Simultaneously, Orlando also is unique in its global notoriety, meaning that the image control it achieves many places would be unable to accomplish. This is a space that is successfully able to further suppress its local problems in favor of its national and global image. This allows those with power within the space to continue to place emphasis on attracting more external customers, which in turn requires the continuing perpetuation of the appearance of safety and a problem-free environment.

The central Florida case study is a valuable introduction to exploring the relationships between tourism and urban revitalization within a region. While other urban spaces have similar relationships, such as Orange County, California, Las Vegas, and Dubai, none of them exhibit the unique relationship of a tourist entity given equal footing with its surrounding political containers. This research has shown that, in the case of central Florida, the strength of and dependence on tourism in the region both highlights and obscures uneven geographical development in the region: highlights it in that this uneven development is often necessary in the current urban tourist paradigm, while obscuring it in order to promote an image more palatable to those being attracted to the space. As a result, urban environments become themed, both conceptually and, through the use of urban revitalization techniques, physically. This theming of the urban environment creates a situation in which it is more convenient, and economic beneficial, to focus on the suppression of local issues at the expense of engaging those issues.

**The Theory of Uneven Geographical Development**

While the relationship between tourism and revitalization in the urban space provided for a valuable research endeavor, the purpose of the central Florida case study
was primarily to test the theory of uneven geographical development, as espoused by Harvey (2006; see Figure 7-2). The question, then, is how well the theory applied within the case study presented.

Figure 7-2. The Four Conditions of Uneven Geographical Development

Source: Harvey 2006.

The first condition of uneven geographical development, as given by Harvey (2006), is that uneven geographical development occurs in areas where uneven geographical development has previously existed. At first glance this would seem to be a circular argument. In reality, it highlights the spiral-like nature of a dialectical argument. If uneven geographical development already exists, its inertia would trend toward the continuance of uneven development. Theoretically, the converse would also be true. The
criteria, however, belies its inherent nuances – that trends can be altered, and that trends do not dictate the future.

This condition holds up in the case of central Florida, with the caveat that it is not necessary for uneven development to exist in the same or similar fashion, but that pre-existing conditions of unevenness make it far more likely for that unevenness to be perpetuated throughout the space over time. Once a power or group of powers gains command of space, it becomes far more difficult for others to (re)gain control over place in a region.

In the case of Orlando, the pre-conditions for uneven geographical development through the relationships between urban revitalization and urban theming were set in motion in the late nineteenth century: as shown in Chapter 3, occasions had already occurred where powers in the urban space would attempt to redefine that space in order to meet the perceived spatial desires of external economic drivers.

That trends can be altered is also highlighted in the example of Orlando. Historically uneven geographical development ran along the fault lines of race and class. How that uneven development has played out, and the newer uneven development involving the burgeoning Hispanic population and the rise in young tourist employees, continues to be adapted (Archer and Bezdecny 2009).

The second point, that trends do not dictate the future, is an important one. Trends are a normalized representation of a past that is most probable to continue. That does not determine that this representation will become fact: merely that, if circumstances are not altered, this is most likely to continue to be the dominant thread. Again, using Orlando as an example, as its economic base continues to shift from primarily tourism to
tourism as one of many dominant economic activities, uneven geographical development in general can be altered and potentially mitigated. Perhaps to some, the attempts at urban revitalization, using gentrification and greenbelt new urbanism, is truly a utopian attempt at abolishing uneven geographical development altogether.

The actual criteria, then, is a valuable one: similar to creating a first step of evaluating the issue of uneven geographical development as admitting the problem exists in the first place. Understanding contemporary uneven geographical development requires an evaluation of how uneven geographical development has historically played a role within the space in question.

The second condition of uneven geographical development is accumulation by dispossession. This referred to the ability to accumulate without requiring a means of production, but rather taking advantage of pre-existing resources in a space. This can include physical accumulation as well as sociopolitical accumulation. As discussed in Chapter Four, the Reedy Creek Improvement District was created by dispossessing the region of political authority over the space. It allowed the Disney Corporation the ability to remain politically autonomous over the space, and to actively compete for resources in the region with other governmental agencies in the region; it also allowed the company the ability to set its own policy framework for development in their property. In addition, the company was able to take advantage of the unknown and seemingly nonexistent history of the region, coupled with infrastructure already in place to support tourism (and new infrastructure, such as the interstate), to construct a tourist empire with the image of safety, diversity, and inclusiveness: as long as you could afford the trip, of course. This
led to the creation of the greatest tourist draw in the world, and much of the accumulation for this site achieved by dispossession.

Celebration also was developed through accumulation by dispossession. The RCID took the drastic step of de-annexing the space from its political boundaries, which placed the burden for funding the services necessary in the community on Osceola County, instead. Other political entities would not necessarily have had this type of option available to them when developing land within their boundaries. Celebration still benefits from its association with the RCID, however, and has been able to cash in on the cachet of being “the town that Disney built.” As is the case with the RCID, accumulation by dispossession has been as much about co-opting, then redefining, globalized images of the local space. The Disney Company then profits from localized and globalized “buy-in” to these images.

The third condition of uneven geographical development becomes more difficult to assess. This condition, according to Harvey (2006), is accumulation of capital across space-time. This proves to be a vast yet vague condition to address in the context of uneven geographical development. While in most literature from the historical-geographical materialist perspective treats the processes and theories of capitalism as inherently uneven and tending toward producing a zero-sum game with a few monopolistic ventures at the top of a pyramid of dispossessed, it becomes difficult to treat this as a singular condition to uneven development.

It might be more appropriate to consider uneven geographical development as a pre-condition of capitalism, rather than the other way round. More appropriate would be to recognize that a dialectic exists between the two conditions, since uneven geographical
development can and has occurred in non-capitalistic societies; some might argue that capitalism could also occur in a society that is not unevenly developed, though an example of this has not yet manifested. While it is understood that Harvey was specifically focusing upon uneven geographical development as it manifests in capitalist spaces, it is still important to consider what it is that alters the processes of uneven geographical development in these spaces, rather than stating that factor is capitalism itself, Q.E.D.

Perhaps the third condition should be reconsidered as more than one condition, and to become more focused in study. While there is still considerable validity to the condition, it is difficult to test in and of itself. In the case of Celebration in Chapter Five, a proxy was used for the accumulation of capital space-time by exploring the relationships between urban theming and urban revitalization. In the case of Celebration, which was a new development, the bounds of defining urban revitalization become slightly stretched; the reason this still works is that the theory of design and development applied to the space, new urbanism, is meant as a revitalization process; it is also a theory that is well-themed. Accumulation in the space-time of Celebration in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries used theming and revitalization design elements to create an attempt at a utopian community – one that many socially, then economically, bought into.

The fourth and final condition of uneven geographical development is struggle at multiple scales simultaneously. This also incorporates the situation where development may be equitable at one scale, yet completely uneven at another. This struggle tends toward issues surrounding command of space and control of place. Struggle can be both
physical/absolute and conceptual/relative/relational. In the case of central Florida, the top-down view shows a space in which command has been acceded to external actors, yet limited unevenness is apparent. This is in keeping with the image promoted by those external actors and by powers internal to the space of a wonderful place to visit and to set down roots.

At other scales, however, a different pattern emerges: one in which sociospatial polarization is apparent, and those who provide the labor resource for those who visit the region struggle to gain some control of place, particularly the right to remain in their existing residences in the face of new urbanist and gentrification projects. This control is not only about image and having voices heard, but also for expanded socioeconomic security within the space commanded by others. Struggle also exists internally to local spaces that are both attempting to define themselves beyond the theme of tourism, while simultaneously taking the opportunity to expand the local economic base by leveraging those existing images.

In reassessing the theory of uneven geographical development, it is a theory that provides valuable information at first glance, but still needs considerable refinement. The first, second, and fourth conditions do provide evidence of unevenness within a region when applied to central Florida and its historical-geographical context. Additional work will need to be done, however, to fully explicate the value of these three contexts within a practical application.

The third condition, however, needs to be further explicated and refined to become more effective in assessing the unevenness of a given space. The conditions of capitalism and accumulation across space-time have become near-universal globally, yet
the direct impacts, and the degree of unevenness, still varies widely from location to location. This differentiation in the face of supposed global convergence needs additional conditions to be further identified, explained, and predicted.

Conclusions

The concept of studying uneven geographical development is treated by some as unnecessary, seeing this as a natural state of affairs. Others, however, see it as virtually non-existent in a globalizing world. Some authors, such as Friedman (2005), view the world as flattening as a result of globalization, with its participants converging toward a single (neoliberal) vision of political economic well-being.

This belies the many people within this process who have been systemically left out of the vision by those with command of space. Commanding space affords those who benefit most from the contemporary neoliberal project the benefit of defining the framework by which the stability and well-being of the structures imposed on place are measured. Uneven geographical development is also a social construction. It is what underlies the messages of the global elite; it also drives the everyday lives and activities at the local and personal scales.

Since these structures are primarily social in nature, they can also be deconstructed socially. That this, the infrastructure can be subverted, but for the most part, it has not been. The human-environment relationship has been probabilistic in favor of continued structural uneven geographical development, with decisions existing to the present to further that pursuit.
The example of central Florida was presented in this research from the inception of what would become the city of Orlando through 2006. This was the original timescale of the research; it also avoided attempts to address the consequences of the global recession which began in late 2007. The recession, however, is an important facet of the Orlando landscape at the present, and is already the subject of additional research projects that look at the role of uneven geographical development in this space from a perceptual framework, which will in the near future incorporate ethnographic methodologies into the project, as well as post-structural and deconstruction refinements to the existing theory.

The unevenness of the central Florida landscape will not be resolved easily, nor will it be resolved any time soon. Since the recession of 2007 took hold, and actually prior to its official recognition, tourism again began to suffer in the region. Attendance and revenue were down until recently, unemployment and underemployment is up, and no viable alternative exists economically to replace, even temporarily, the enormous impact tourism has on the region. In addition, revitalization plans continue to focus on economic generators, many of them external to the region, than on creating viable communities internal to the space that has seen housing values, and their accompanying equity, plummet.

The arguments regarding the need of one (economic generators) to produce the other (affordable housing) becomes facile when examining which are completed, and which are not; if that were truly the case, then both must be pursued simultaneously, complementary rather than competitively. The revitalization is instead an economic tool for producing greater revenue in the region; not necessarily a problematic stance, except that it is at further expense to residents already suffering due to the vagarities of the local
market. The intersection of revitalization and theming continues to focus on attracting economic interests, creative class patrons, and the temporary residents with socioeconomic means known as tourists. The existing working class residents, smaller economic forces internal to the region, and the temporary residents without means, also known as the homeless, will not be afforded the same considerations by those who command the space they occupy. In other words, uneven geographical development will continue to be a driving force within central Florida.

Additional research is still needed on this phenomenon in the region. This work focused primarily on structural aspects existing in the region, as well as the actions taken by a few specific actors with authority and power in central Florida. Additional research is needed to explore the perceptions and day-to-day realities of unevenness as it affects residents and labor in the area. This work will include an active focus on agency against the backdrop of the structural processes of the region.

Research is already being conducted to compare the relationships between urban development and urban theming in Orlando to other spaces, such as Las Vegas, Nevada, the communities in Orange County, California, Dubai, and Ixtapa/Zihuatanejo. Additional work will also begin examining the impacts of the economic collapse in late 2008 and its direct impacts on this space: exploring the urban space of the Orlando region as the nexus between global and local dynamics. Finally, additional research is needed on the theory of uneven geographical development, in order to create a robust, dynamic theory that can serve as an alternative to the convergence theories of globalization espoused by many researchers today (e.g. Friedman 2005).
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Kris Bezdecny came to geography the long way, through Applied Mathematics (B.S. 1997, Metropolitan State College of Denver), History (B.A. 1998, Metropolitan State College of Denver), and a minor in Physics. She earned her master’s (MA) in geography in 2003 from the University of South Florida. During her master’s program, and while waiting for the Ph.D. program to begin, she taught geography for USF on the Tampa and St. Petersburg campuses, and worked as a GIS Analyst for the Center for Urban Transportation Research. After achieving A.B.D. status, she left CUTR to teach for a year at the USF Sarasota-Manatee campus. A year later she then joined Esri as an Educational Specialist, where she creates curriculum materials for GIS training classes, specializing in Esri’s mobile products. Kris lives in Mentone, California, with her husband Dick and her daughter Tra’a.