Landscape as spectacle: world's fairs and the culture of heroic consumption

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Abstract. The meaning of a public spectacle, world's fairs, is examined, with particular emphasis on the 1986 world's exposition in Vancouver. Various theoretical readings of mass culture and popular culture are analysed: on the one hand, the view of the culture industry, imposing hegemonic meanings through spectacles onto a depoliticised mass audience, and on the other the view of an active interpenetration of cultural producers and consumers, which includes the capacity for resistance to the web of signification spun by dominant elites. The thesis is considered that world's fairs are an instrument of hegemonic power. Although Expo 86 was organised by a political and economic elite, evidence from 2200 visitors points to a fractured and negotiated power that was never absolute.

"There is no public spectacle without violence to the spirit."

Tertullian, *De Spectaculis*

In 1986 the City of Vancouver held a World's Fair lasting 165 days. By most accounts it was successful. Attendance forecasts were far exceeded, with over 22 million visitors entering the site. Total corporate and government investment was $1.5 billion[1], and 25000 – 30000 full-time jobs were created for six months. Fifty-four nations participated in the Fair. Seventy restaurants were present on the site, and the anticipated income from food sales was $94 million, from amusement rides, $20 million; 450 million Coca-Cola cups bearing the Expo logo were ordered (Carson, 1986). Truly, the 1986 World Exposition was an event of heroic consumption.

The Fair was initiated by the provincial government of British Columbia and operated by a public crown corporation accountable to it. Towards the end of Expo, the governing political party called an election to fall ten days after the closure of the Fair. The party was returned to power in British Columbia with the largest majority in its history.

In this paper we will interpret the meaning of a spectacle. To what extent does the spectacle represent the hegemonic values of an elite, foisted upon a deluded mass public? We shall begin by examining the often competing theories of mass and popular culture. This argument will be extended to a discussion of world's fairs in general. Finally, we shall turn to an empirical study of Expo 86 and consider the thesis that the Fair was an instrument of hegemonic power.

The problem of mass culture: the culture industry and the domain of the spectacle
The urbanisation which accompanied nineteenth-century industrial capitalism was the setting for two apparently opposing processes in social life. On the one hand, the city was the scene of an insidious individualism associated with the increasing mobility and transience of the population, and a market ideology which Engels and others

[1] Canadian dollars have been used throughout the text.

detected as the source of an abnormal egotism in English society. But, at the same time, a new vocabulary was appearing, a vocabulary of the crowd, which seemed antithetical to the theme of individualism. The synthesis of these two descriptions occurred in the identification of an alienated community, a population which was geographically proximate but socially estranged, an army of individuals which did not share the intersubjective bonds of stable community.

This definition of the masses presented both an existential and a theoretical problem. In everyday life, separation bred ignorance. At the end of the nineteenth century, Charles Booth noted that "It is in the town and not in the country, that 'terra incognita' needs to be written on our social maps" (cited in Goheen, 1970, page 15), while his contemporary, William Booth, founder of the Salvation Army, drew upon the same striking metaphor in his own diagnosis of the inner-city slums, *In Darkest England and the Way Out* (Booth, 1890). Ignorance encouraged a stereotypical view of the inner city, which accentuated its deviant aspects (Ward, 1976), and led in consequence to a syndrome of fear and avoidance. Writing of the slums of English industrial towns, one nineteenth-century voice (amongst many) declared "it is an aggregate of masses, our conception of which clothe themselves in terms which express something portentous and fearful" (cited in Briggs, 1965, page 59). This image has proven remarkably resilient, for ignorance, stereotyping, deviance, fear, and avoidance constitute, for current US (and increasingly for British) middle-class households, an impenetrable topography of meaning projected onto their own inner cities and inner-city residents (Ley, 1983).

But the problem of the masses has also been a central, perhaps the central, preoccupation of social theory for more than a century. The status of the masses, alienation, and social disorder are key elements of the varying social theories of Marx, Durkheim, and Weber. For Kierkegaard, authentic individuality was being submerged before the relentless flood of the crowd, the masses, the press, a herd instinct. Gustave Le Bon's *Psychologie des Foules* (1895) was an important reflection of a widespread sentiment, and an inspiration to other theorists, including Freud. "The substitution of the unconscious action of crowds for the conscious action of individuals", observed Le Bon, "is one of the principal characteristics of the present age" (cited in Brantlinger, 1983, pages 166–167).

In nineteenth-century liberal thought, the dissemination of culture through compulsory education was conceived as an important means of 'civilising' the masses. Other vehicles of incorporation included the press, the market, and mass entertainment. Robert Park, who was well aware of the problem of social order in industrial cities, looked to the press as one instrument contributing to a new social consensus. Another instrument was the creation of a mass market through advertising. Even architecture, or so it was believed, had its place in forging a new social consensus; in the cities, wrote Le Corbusier (1927), a pioneer of the modern movement of mass contruction, the alternative was architecture or revolution. But, in each instance, the creators of the new order were to be not members of the masses but members of an elite, whether enlightened, as the professionals thought themselves to be, or more calculating as portrayed in the dominant view of businessmen in advertising or mass entertainment. To learn culture the masses needed interpreters, for it was held they were not capable of generating it themselves. The audience of the motion picture, according to Herbert Blumer, a product of the Chicago School, was "a formless mass" with "no program, no rules, no traditions, and no culture …. In it the individuals are anonymous, have no social positions, no designated functions" (Blumer, 1971, page 131). Even politically progressive professionals were not prepared to concede other than a passive role to the masses. Walter Gropius, an interwar master of modern architecture, did not consult the workers whose

housing he constructed, for he regarded them as "intellectually undeveloped"; his colleague Mies van der Rohe did not give a client the possiblity of choosing among alternative designs: "How can he choose? He hasn't the capacity to choose" (cited in Knox, 1987, page 369).

From the generally disapproving view of the masses emerged the generally disparaging view of mass culture. There was no certainty that the civilising mission of a cultural elite would be successful, and a concern that high culture itself was in danger of subversion by mass culture. Le Bon summarised this viewpoint:

"Crowds being only capable of thinking in images are only to be impressed by images .... Bread and spectacular shows constituted for the plebians of ancient Rome the ideal of happiness, and they asked for nothing more. Throughout the successive ages this ideal has scarcely varied .... The crowd state and the domination of crowds is equivalent to the barbarian state, or a return to it" (cited in Brantlinger, 1983, page 168).

Brantlinger associates such cultural pessimism with the often antidemocratic literature of the late-nineteenth-century decadence movement, including such authors as Emile Zola and Gustave Flaubert, who, like modernist artists and writers this century, sought a genre and style antithetical to mass culture. But theirs is an argument with a more contemporary mainstream ring to it as well. The values of mass culture, and by extension its consumers, have been a consistent butt of criticism, as television, film, and popular music, in particular, have been challenged as sources of latter-day decadence.

Although these sentiments are often an expression of conservative moralising, they reappear in a more radical reading, where mass culture, often represented as the culture or consciousness industry, is indicted as an instrument of false consciousness, as a form of social control by an economic elite in the advancement of its own interests. The ideology of the elite becomes hegemonic, as it is internalised by the masses. This depiction of mass culture as thought control has constituted an important stream in social science since the 1920s—and in literature as well, not least in George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Interpreting the rise of mass advertising in the 1920s, the Ewens portray the captains of consciousness as engaged in an organised, calculating, and successful campaign to control the desires of a mass market (Ewen and Ewen, 1982). Equally pessimistic was the view of the culture industry advanced by members of the Frankfurt School. The enlightenment promises of democracy and freedom were beset by a new bondage, for the "reified false consciousness of industrialised mass culture has settled like a pall over history" (Brantlinger, 1983, page 226), concealing and distorting social realities to an increasingly entranced and passive population. Art, which should break the spell, was itself the deceiving potion, and only in corners of high culture was there the possibility of a refuge for utopian ideals. This position of Horkheimer and Adorno's was developed further by Marcuse who hoped that the aesthetic dimension of art and beauty would transcend the deadening oppression of one-dimensional society and its stupefying mass culture (Marcuse, 1978).

But this utopianism encountered a disquieting present, that of relentless social control, where "the culture industry has molded men as a type unfailingly reproduced in every product" (Horkheimer and Adorno, 1972, page 127). The culture industry is imposed, not spontaneous, as it "intentionally integrates its consumers from above" (Adorno, 1975, page 12) into a mass consciousness and a mass market. And, most disheartening of all, even the services of high culture were in the process of incorporation. The result was a general state of stupefaction, where not only was resistance unsuccessful but, worse, it was inconceivable, for hegemonic power was complete: "The misplaced love of the common people for the wrong which is done

them is a greater force than the cunning of the authorities" (Horkheimer and Adorno, 1972, page 134). Indeed, their very pleasure manifests their helplessness, their laughter before spectacles offers a parody of human nature. The consumer is trapped, and in his alienated life "becomes the ideology of the pleasure industry, whose institutions he cannot escape" (page 158). Any pretence of individuality is a sham for, through the culture industry, the individual is "mass-produced like Yale locks" (page 154). A sameness of inputs ("ready-made cliches to be slotted in anywhere") leads to a standardisation of consciousness, a passive mass market.

In *Society of the Spectacle*, Debord (1973) extends this uncompromising picture of social control. His argument elaborates an initial thesis that "The entire life of societies in which modern conditions of production reign announces itself as an immense accumulation of *spectacles*" (paragraph 1). The scope of the spectacle is total; it has invaded "The entire life .... Everything that was directly lived", it represents "the *total occupation* of social life". For Debord, the spectacle is the material manifestation of the ideology of economic production, and of its mastery beyond the range of production, to consumption, and yet further to consciousness. The spectacle is the manifestation of the power of commodity relations, and the instrument of hegemonic consciousness. From this it follows that it defends unequal class power, extending to the masses only "the impoverishment, the servitude and the negation of real life" (paragraph 215). It neutralises resistance as "the sun which never sets over the empire of modern passivity" (paragraph 13). It casts a deceptive unreality of images and signs.

There are important lines of continuity here with some recent semiological and poststructuralist theory. Using myth as in many ways synonymous with ideology, Barthes (1972, page 143) writes that "the function of myth is to empty reality", to depoliticise it. Although there is no shortage of myth on the political left, the dominant mythology is on the right where "It takes hold of everything" (page 148). Against this "well-fed, sleek, expansive, garrulous" ideology, there is little capacity for effective resistance, particularly when mass culture is seen as a work of nature, not a product of history. In this viewpoint, the opiate of the masses has found a new social location, but its delusory effects remain intact. Baudrillard keeps the metaphor alive: we live "in an 'aesthetic' hallucination of reality", floating and depthless (Featherstone, 1987, page 56). Modernism is projected "towards a kind of slow but painless spiritual death" (Wernick, 1984, page 18), a culture of consumption whose reality has contracted "into a dense, seductive, and entirely nihilistic society of signs" (Levin and Kroker, 1984, page 10). And, in this onward march of the spectacle, mass culture is fully implicated. Cinema contributes to the full-blown 'aestheticisation' of everyday life (Polan, 1986). In art more generally, images without substance, text without context (as in the fragmented vividness of hyperreal art) are said to lock the audience in to the logic of the unreal and the spectacular (Foster, 1985, page 83). Perhaps the most successful penetration of everyday life is in profesional sport, for "The [sports] spectacle requires and fosters a social milieu of masses, of atomised individuals who have lost a commonality or an intersubjectivity grounded in [traditional] values ... situated in the mass, the self is dependent upon the gratification proferred by the spectacle" (Alt, 1983, page 98).

Popular culture: alternative views of hegemony
But other recent work challenges this watertight system of hegemonic control, of powerful elites and passive, deluded, consumers (Lears, 1985; Williams, 1977). Such a system is seen to be an oversimplification. It posits a unidirectional rather than a circular relation between base and superstructure, removing the possibility that, as an active process, hegemony can bubble up from below. It presents the

consciousness of the masses as monolithic and unproblematic, passive, and without the potential for resistance. It locates mass culture ultimately in economic relations, overlooking very real status dimensions, such as race, religion, gender, and lifestyle. The state is either absent from analysis or is treated unsubtly as an extension of dominant elites. Societal flux, the pervasive change which constantly dislocates and provides opportunity for opposition, is missing, and society is portrayed as frozen and hermetic. In contrast, Jameson (1979, page 144) has suggested that mass culture "of even the most degraded type" contains also a utopian potential, "negative and critical of the social order", and he seeks to discover such content in an interpretation of two unlikely emblems of mass culture, the films *Jaws* and *The Godfather*. Jameson's point is well taken (and we shall return to it shortly in considering postmodern art), but, like much of this literature, it does pass over the question of *why* the masses so readily internalise the allegedly manipulative values of mass culture. One set of answers suggests that commodities supply a set of needs deemed important by the public itself (for example, see Diggins, 1977). Investigation of the relations between definitions of utopia used by the public and the critic is, then, a significant issue, but one notable by its absence in the literature we have reviewed.

Two further points emerge at this juncture. The view of mass culture expressed by its critics is distant and elitist, upholding the mantle of true (adversarial) art and culture as belonging to an avant-garde and beyond the comprehension of a deceived public. As Marcuse (1978) puts it: "would not an art which rebels against integration into the market necessarily appear as 'elitist'?" (cited in Brantlinger, 1983, page 232). Second, there is also an elitism of method, for the interpretation of the meaning of mass culture is invariably inferred rather than direct. There is a surprisingly consistent gap between the theory of social control and any empirical examination of the meaning of mass culture to its market. A web of signification is thrown over the experience of mass culture, but it is a web which is not informed by utterances from the consumers themselves. There is a separation here no less profound than that which led to the application of the metaphor of terra incognita to the homes of the masses in the inner cities of the nineteenth century. Barthes (1972, page 149) has observed that we know very little about "The social geography of myths ... the lines which limit the social region where it is spoken." But perhaps we know equally little about the multiple meanings of these myths. Indeed, might the very concept of mass culture as culture industry be one of the biggest myths of all?

The authors of a number of works in popular culture studies have reacted strongly against a posited mass culture. "With the notion of 'mass'", writes Laba (1986, page 109), "the social reality of the forms of popular culture is either generalised and trivialised or ignored completely." The influential view of mass culture as manipulation homogenises both the product and its consumers, reduces them to passivity, and does not consider culture as process, as a form of active negotiation. It overlooks, for example, the common regularity that entrepreneurs follow styles as often as they create them, that commodities frequently emerge from expressive forms of popular culture (Laba, 1986; Martin, 1981).

Popular culture is turbulent and multilayered, heterogenous, and actively negotiated. As such, it includes oppositional elements. Many of the social movements of the past twenty years have been associated with the liberal culture and politics of the new class, including environmentalism, civil rights, feminism, cultural nationalism, and the antinuclear movements. In conservation, heritage, and particularly neighbourhood protest, opposition has focused around the nexus of place (Eyles and Evans, 1987; Ley, 1987; Ley and Mercer, 1980). Oppositional subcultures which do not present a face of passivity are also found around the margins of

mainstream society. In Britain, in its empirical research, the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies in Birmingham has documented numerous examples of resistance, particularly in youth subcultures (Hall et al, 1980; Willis, 1977). Similarly in the US inner city, the stylised social worlds of the street-gang member and the graffiti king include rituals which invert the value system of straight society. Like the mainstream, these adolescent subcultures seek to excel; but, unlike the mainstream, the contours of their own existence encourage them to excel at being outrageous, at being bad (Ley and Cybriwsky, 1974). Ethnic displays also present an opportunity to nurture alternative realities, through the performance of an ethnic carnival (Cohen, 1982), or the creation of street murals reviving folk histories. The Chicano murals of the East Los Angeles barrio present a particularly resilient expression of folk culture, and it is within the barrio that a distinctive popular music has developed, a music which, like the murals, includes a cultural politics of historic folk memory and contemporary community struggle against poverty and cultural prejudice (Lipsitz, 1986–87).

The postmodern debate: popular or mass culture?
With its distinctive historic memory, double coding, and bricolage, Lipsitz identifies Chicano music with the idiom of postmodern art. This is a significant association, for the theoretical debates about mass and popular culture have been focused with renewed intensity around postmodern cultural forms. Particularly in the United States, criticism of postmodern architecture, for example, has been vehement. Employing much of the vocabulary of the critique of the culture industry, critics attack postmodern design as superficial, garish, tasteless, deceitful, and manipulative (for example, Foster, 1985). Its use of the idioms and even the clichés of public consciousness has been assailed as merely confirming the established order. But in this criticism they characteristically overlook the active negotiation of symbolic forms that *may* occur in postmodern design. The use of recognisable popular elements is a key constituent of the double coding of postmodernism, but their rearrangement, often in an unconventional bricolage of forms, commonly permits an ironic or parodic interpretation which challenges their taken-for-granted status. Postmodernism offers, in short, "a model that is profoundly implicated in, yet still capable of criticizing, that which it seeks to describe" (Hutcheon, 1986–87, page 180).

The critical potential of postmodernism is apparent when we remember its adversarial stand against the elitist designs of the modern movement and their patrons in corporate capitalism and the corporate state. Not the least significant of Jacobs's arguments against centralised modern planning twenty-five years ago was her challenge of its hermetic and elitist epistemology, against which she posed a radical populism based in part upon the everyday experience of the rhythms of her own street in New York. From this basis in popular culture she launched her "attack on current city planning and rebuilding" (Jacobs, 1961, page 16). The radical penetration of everyday life into a planning prospectus formed the focus of her critique of modernism. Ontologically, she revealed the vibrancy of the meeting of people and place, where the planners had only seen (and permitted) homogeneity and standardisation. Epistemologically, she showed a new appreciation of the strength of folk knowledge and personal knowledge. And, politically, she advocated a participatory method which established direct communication between everyday life and planning practices. In this manner the perception from below was reformulating the perception from above.

The success with which Jacobs's prospectus infiltrated public planning challenges any view of hegemony which denies the place of active negotiation in popular culture, the capacity for opposition, and penetration from below. Her success

supports, too, the proposal that the localities of everyday life present an important base for opposition to hegemonic powers (Eyles and Evans, 1987). Jacobs's ontology, epistemology, and politics diffused more rapidly into the public and nonprofit sectors. By and large, beginnings of a break with modernism came later in the private sector. As Laba (1986) observed with popular music, the apparent monolithic control of the culture industry does not survive intact from empirical study, for, in reality, powerful enterprises are rarely the source of innovation and change and are often laggardly in their adaptation to it.

The ambivalent content of postmodern design, and its capacity for criticism, is illustrated by the work of SITE (Sculpture in the Environment) Projects of New York (Fischer, 1985; Restany et al, 1980). This partnership of architects and artists displays Hutcheon's argument that, although working within mass culture, the architect may yet, through parody, turn the idiom against itself. As such, SITE exemplifies the argument of its mentor, Robert Venturi, and his use of irony in *Learning from Las Vegas* (Venturi et al, 1972). SITE has accomplished its parody with a particularly unpromising client, a national department-store chain located in large suburban shopping malls, the epitome of much-abused mass culture. There, SITE has developed a method which inverts and transforms familiar elements into a parody of themselves. The uniform boxes of the modern department store have been denaturalised by striking architectural devices. The obsolescence which is built into mass merchandising is turned against the building itself, and its bold modernist rectangle is pricked by an apparently fatal flaw signifying the mortality and transience of the structure. In the first project in Richmond, VA, one corner of the building was given the appearance of being dog-eared and peeling. A second project in Houston included a facade with an apparently crumbling wall which cascades in a shower of bricks, an apocalyptic scene which might have been derived from a disaster movie of the period. More recent ecological themes stress the permanence of a displaced nature against an emplaced but transient building. This postmodern artistry is clearly more than cosmetic: "Comment is made on the soulless, exhausted, and ruined environment by using means familiar in the environment, and indifferent nonarchitecture becomes striking antiarchitecture" (Fischer, 1985, page 261).

In the parking lots of their stores, SITE sometimes include a further parody, sculptures of immobilised automobiles, buried and paved over by the surface material. This theme was developed extensively at Vancouver's World Fair in an outdoor sculpture, Highway 86. The sculpture was a characteristic parody of the fair's theme of transportation and communication. The highway rose out of the waters of False Creek and followed an undulating course for over 200 m across the site. It was buckled, in two sections submerged beneath water, and ended suspended in midair, as if brittle and snapped off. On it were fixed over 200 vehicles, from a tricycle to a light plane, a lunar rover, and a submarine. Each was sprayed with a uniform grey paint matching the concrete surface of the highway. The appearance was awesome, an excavated ruin of a long-dead civilization: "The vehicles on the highway look like they are covered with a millenium's worth of dust, mute testimony to a future where the automobile is an extinct mode of transportation" (Reid, 1986, page 29). In the midst of a fair committed to promoting and selling travel and transportation technology, Highway 86 struck an ambivalent note. This was the objective of its designer, James Wines of SITE.

"At the Great Paris Exhibition, they exalted the notion that technology would save the world and so their view of technology was totally optimistic. Now we're at the end of the 20th century and we see it as good and evil. We wanted to capture the somewhat ominous quality it has yet, at the same time, celebrate it" (cited in Murray, 1986, page 42).

Here is an essential postmodern idiom, familiar and yet distant, inverting the meaning of the recognisable cultural artifacts, by their presence acknowledging and participating in their function, and yet through the composition of the art form presenting them in a different context as problematic and historically transient. Highway 86 revealed the capacity of the postmodern refraction of mass culture actively to negotiate that culture and its ideologies from within.

World's fairs; instruments of social control?
But how typical is such an act in the history of world's fairs? Like mass culture, the modern fair has a nineteenth-century origin and has invariably been the project of social elites. Their intent, it is held, was to consolidate "ideologically coherent 'symbolic universes' confirming and extending the authority of the country's corporate, political, and scientific leadership ... [they were] triumphs of hegemony as well as symbolic edifices" (Rydell, 1984, pages 2 - 3). Walter Benjamin was more specific in his denunciation of the nineteenth-century Parisian expositions, which "opened up a phantasmagorical world, where man entered to be entertained. The amusement industry made this easier for him by elevating him to the level of a commodity. He had only to surrender himself to its manipulations, while enjoying his alienation from himself and from others" (Benjamin, 1970, page 442).

Let us examine more closely this interpretation of the world's fair as an instrument of social control. The partisan nature of its sponsors appears to consolidate readily around commodity relations. In the United States, the initial sponsors of a major exposition invariably hailed from the municipal boosters of the chamber of commerce. Typical was the group which incorporated the New York World's Fair of 1939 - 40, which included the heads of twenty-four banking and trust companies, thirty-one corporations, fifteen Wall Street law firms, nine insurance companies and retail firms, and eight business associations. In contrast, the three levels of government mustered only fifteen representatives, the arts and education eight members, and organised labor one member (Cusker, 1980). This coalition was similar to many other Exposition sponsors up to the present, including the 1992 Corporation in Chicago, assembled to celebrate the five-hundredth anniversary of the voyage of Columbus. The role of financial institutions and corporations is critical, in part as guarantors of financial stability. At the 1893 World Columbia Exposition in Chicago, for example, exposition stock of over $5 million had been sold even before presidential approval for an exposition had been given. Overwhelmingly, it was the corporate elite who were the purchasers, and who raised another $5 million in 24 hours when additional financial guarantees were required on short order by a congressional committee (Rydell, 1984, page 42).

The role of the state should not be oversimplified. The state was arbiter between cities who were competing claimants as an Exposition site, between, for example San Francisco, San Diego, and New Orleans for the 1915 Fair, and five cities for the 1893 Fair. The state can cancel a fair, despite the endorsement of powerful economic elites; the collapse of plans for the 1992 Exposition in Chicago has resulted from the opposition of critical groups in the city and the state legislature. Part of the significance of the state's involvement has been its financial support. A survey addressed to San Francisco businessmen in anticipation of the 1915 Panama - Pacific International Exposition asked them first if they favoured the Fair and, second, "Do you know any other event likely to occur about that time that would better enable us to secure state and government aid?" (cited in Dobkin, 1983, page 79). This attempt to bankroll funds for local purposes has become increasingly explicit. In recent world's fairs, the public sector in the United States has underwritten in grants and bonds 76% of the cost of San Antonio's 1968 Fair,

over 80% of Spokane's 1974 Fair, and 74% of Knoxville's 1982 Fair. Indeed, senior government funds have commonly been procured through expositions to finance lasting legacies, including a new transportation system (Montreal, 1967; Knoxville, 1982; Vancouver, 1986, etc) urban redevelopment on the margins of downtown (San Antonio, 1968; Spokane, 1974; Knoxville, 1982; New Orleans, 1984; Brisbane, 1988), and cultural, sporting, recreational, and convention facilities (Seattle, 1962 and many others). Besides the dominant economic objectives of increasing trade, land development, and tourism, political objectives have, moreover, added a separate dimension to a number of world's fairs. The Anglo–French Exhibition of 1908 celebrated the entente cordiale between the two nations, as the 1855 Fair in Paris had similarly a major objective to foster a rapprochement between Britain and France and simultaneously consolidate the legitimacy of Louis Napoleon (Chandler, 1986).

But trade, local boosterism, and political ambitions were insufficient to draw a mass public to an exposition site, and here we encounter the second theme in the social control argument, the place of spectacle, fantasy, and entertainment to enchant and divert the masses from more serious matters. From the beginning, the fairs were certainly a dramatic expression of mass society, and grandeur was a ubiquitous theme. The original 1851 Exposition in London attracted over 6 million visitors to a Crystal Palace containing almost 300000 panes of glass. The fairs were home to the superlative, and each attempted to outperform its predecessor. The main building of the 1867 Paris Exposition was a mile in circumference, and the 1889 Fair built heavenwards with the Eiffel Tower. A beaux arts White City of considerable splendour at Chicago in 1893 propelled US planners toward city-beautiful principles for a generation. A jewelled tower was the glory of the 1915 San Francisco Fair, whereas by 1939 pervasive modern design tendencies prescribed the primitive geometries of a 610 foot high triangular tower, the Trylon, and a globular Perisphere as the Fair's central symbols. Exhibits sought to impress through their exaggerated proportions (both monuments and miniatures), their beauty, their exotic character, and their freakishness. The aesthetics of architecture, colour, decoration, and lighting added to the sense of spectacle, particularly at night (Harrison, 1980).

The 'midway' or 'joy zone' was the area of greatest popularity, with its rides, curiosities, and burlesque entertainment. But, in the earlier fairs, even the midway had a less constant presence. In the 1876 Centennial Exposition, the Philadelphia organisers did not permit a midway onto the site, as its entertainments were seen to be incompatible with the Fair's tone of moral improvement. In 1893, the Chicago midway included extensive ethnological exhibits and public education "ran riot" at the Exposition (Rydell, 1984, page 46; Harris, 1978). It was at the Columbian Exposition that Frederick Jackson Turner presented his frontier thesis to the meeting of the American Historical Association, and the historians represented only one of many congresses and conventions whose meeting coincided with the Exposition and who conveyed an erudite tone to the proceedings. By 1915, over 900 congresses convened at the San Francisco Fair, representing medicine, science, religion, social policy, and the arts.

Indeed, the arts were a major feature of the international expositions along with raw materials and manufactured goods. In the Parisian fairs arts and education ranked first. At San Francisco in 1915 there was a concerted effort for art to be "uplifting" and the exhibits and their browsers were both "intent on self-improvement" (Starr, 1983). For this audience, passivity "was the exception not the rule". Although the 1939–40 Fair was described as the consumer's fair, and promoted widespread access to consumer goods and services, it similarly included avant-garde art and a central message demonstrating the potential partnership between

technology and society in promoting progressive planning within a democratic context. This message was most fully developed in the Theme Center, the Fair's central exhibit, where a scale model of Democracity, a totally planned future community, expressed fully the ideology of the Fair (Cusker, 1980).

In this section we have sought to explore the varied objectives of international expositions. Although the trading function is central, it would be incorrect to see the fairs as only merchandise marts. Education and entertainment have also been high-ranking goals, as have municipal, national, and international political objectives. Nor should we oversimplify the response of visitors. Most likely the same middle-class visitors sought both "uplift and entertainment" simultaneously (Starr, 1983). We need, then, to broaden the dimensionality of fairs and their visitors beyond a simple bread and circuses metaphor: "the fairs were not only selling goods, they were selling ideas: ideas about the relations between nations, the spread of education, the advancement of science, the form of cities, the nature of domestic life, the place of art in society" (Benedict, 1983, page 2). But this simply broadens the potential scope of hegemony to a wider range of social experience. Before 1914, for example, the ethnological exhibits were strongly influenced by social Darwinism and, as such, reinforced racist attitudes. Moreover, the values displayed in the fairs were contained within the limits of middle-class society. Part of the fantasy of the expositions was their optimistic portrayal of a middle-class present and future, aesthetic, hygienic, pleasurable, self-improving, and consensual, where conflict and scarcity were no more evident than in any other middle-class setting. Admissions charges barred large elements of the poorer population from entry. At Philadelphia's Centennial Fair a 'poor man's day', with reduced admission, was held. Even earlier, in Louis Napoleon's 1855 Exposition in Paris, the attendance of the common folk had been disappointing. The obstacle of high admissions charges against the entry of large sections of the population has been cited as recently as the ill-fated 1984 fair in New Orleans (O'Brian, 1985). In 1939 a Gallup poll indicated that 63% of respondents who had not visited the New York Fair, had stayed away because they could not afford the costs of attendance (Susman, 1980).

Imputations of hegemony and social control in existing studies are, however, little more than inferences from above, and include minimal evidence of the actual perception of the public. The New York exposition set out self-consciously to be "the People's Fair" for "the average American", but, even here, few documents have survived to assess how the people themselves perceived the Fair and the degree to which they internalised its values (Susman, 1980). In this context the existence of a large (if imperfect) data set of visitors' perceptions of the 1986 Exposition in Vancouver is of particular interest for the light it throws upon the meaning of this culture of heroic consumption to its audience.

Expo 86: learning within a context of fun
We have seen that international expositions are the product of elites including businessmen, politicians, designers, and artists. The fairs are built in their image and thus project a dominant ideology. This does not, however, mean that the ideology is fixed, for elite attitudes toward such matters as public morality, public education, racial differences, urban planning, and the role of the arts, amongst others, have not been constant over the past century. So, too, the elites, although overlapping, need not have identical interests. Business and political agendas both converge and diverge and both are refracted through fair managers and designers who have their own definition of the goals of a successful fair.

As much as any recent fair, the 1986 World Exposition in Vancouver opened an instructive window on its time and place. It represented both an integration of themes common to most world's fairs with the personalities, interests, and opportunities of a unique setting (see the varying accounts in Anderson and Wachtel, 1986; Government of Canada, 1986). Expo 86 was planned and operated by the state. It was initiated by the provincial government of British Columbia and managed by the Expo 86 Corporation, a crown corporation responsible to Cabinet. The theme of the fair was transportation and communications (originally its title was Transpo 86), to commemorate the centennial of the City of Vancouver and the arrival of the first transcontinental passenger train. In an initial press release in June 1979 the provincial government declared that "The primary purpose of the Exposition is not, however, to make money. It is to mark this important double anniversary" (Province of British Columbia, 1979). But the objectives of Expo 86 were varied and changing. At an early stage, an important objective was to secure federal funds for urban redevelopment, including some or all of a convention centre, a sports stadium, and a rapid transit line. The best chance of gaining these funds was through their amalgamation in a package including a world's fair. Political mobilisation also coincided with a marked downturn in the fortunes of the provincial government (Ley, 1987). As the economic recession deepened, job creation and economic development were given pride of place in government press releases.

The organisation of Expo 86 captured a number of pervasive regional themes. Bitter disputes raged between all three levels of government about the financing and even the holding of the Fair, with the Mayor of Vancouver in opposition, and by early 1982 these conflicts seemed likely to lead to its cancellation. A second crisis followed, concerning labour disputes. Under pressure from the right-wing provincial government, the Expo Corporation awarded construction contracts to nonunion firms, despite the high level of unionisation in the building trades (Mickelburgh, 1986). With building contracts valued at between $600 million and $900 million, the stakes were high for the unions, and disputes including work stoppages and demonstrations led to renewed crisis. On this second occasion, the Chairman of the Expo Board recommended cancellation, but was overruled by a deeply divided cabinet. A third theme, symptomatic of the neoconservatism of British Columbia during the 1980s, was the dominant private-enterprise orientation of Expo 86. The Chairman of the Expo Board (and also President of the Board for the final 15 months) was the province's most eminent entrepreneur, a rags to riches multimillionaire. Indicative of his style of management was his endorsement of multinational corporations on the site ["McDonald's stands for everything Expo stands for" (Kuehn, 1986, page 10)], and the firing or abrupt departure of over two dozen senior Expo executives. The Board itself was dominated by businessmen, though on a number of occasions it was overruled by a direct intervention of Cabinet. Indeed, the true architect of the Fair was the provincial Premier who made the public announcement of its full-blown conception in January 1980 and who became ever more closely identified with it. By 1984, facing a growing deficit and labour unrest on the site, he described himself "as the father of Expo suffering through its birth" (Tafler, 1984, page 1).

It is clear that, like other fairs, Expo 86 was an elite creation, foisted upon a mass public from above. Indeed, even powerful actors like the Mayor of Vancouver and construction unions were steamrollered into compliance. The Expo Board consisted of local business leaders, but the strategic decisions (such as an open work site, announced by the provincial Premier) came from Cabinet. Indeed, the political mandate of the Fair gave it remarkable powers. The legal status of a

crown corporation conferred empowerments upon Expo 86 greater than a private corporation. It enjoyed the freedom to raise and disperse its own funds, the power of expropriation, and authority to override all city bylaws, zoning regulations, and planning policy. With easy access to the public purse, a megaproject mentality toward spending readily arose. Any comparison between Expo 86 and the calamitous 1984 Fair in New Orleans was, according to an Expo director, "like comparing the Queen Mary to a canoe". The distinction he saw was significant: whereas the New Orleans Fair "had a total budget of $400 million to work with, Expo 86 and its participants are spending more than three and a half times that amount—$1.5 billion" (*British Columbia Business Bulletin*, 1985, page 2). Of this figure, $800 million was to be spent by the Expo Corporation, $300 million by the federal government, and the remainder by other Fair exhibitors. Government control gave a new meaning to the bottom line, as it had earlier to Expo 67 in Montreal. The projected deficit grew from $12 million in 1980, to $75 million in 1982, and $311 million at the beginning of 1985. In the Fair's closing ceremonies, the Chairman of the Expo Corporation triumphantly announced that Expo 86 had been achieved on budget—what he had in mind was the projected deficit of $300–$400 million.

But the government as sponsor had more than legal and financial power. Provincial ministries were coordinated to focus their special jurisdictions toward the success of the Fair. The Ministry of Education sent packages to schools around the province advising them to form an Expo steering committee and develop an Expo school program. Resource kits for special instruction were made available and speakers were on call for what was described as "the largest and most spectacular event in North America since Expo 67". At a time when a bitterly disputed restraint program was cutting deeply into educational funding, new grants were available to spread the word about Expo 86. Information penetration was extremely thorough. A budget of almost $12 million was allocated to television advertising; supplements appeared also in over 100 North American newspapers (Government of Canada, 1986, pages 45–70). The attempt to rivet public consciousness on Expo 86 was intense. Planning and social control were as complete as it is possible to imagine in a democratic state.

In July 1982, Michael Bartlett joined the Expo Corporation and by the end of the year was appointed President. He was an experienced developer of theme amusement parks for a US corporation, and had presided over the construction of Canada's Wonderland, a theme park outside Toronto. This background was a significant pointer to the philosophy that would guide the content of the Fair: "I knew how to build theme parks. There's not much difference between this [Expo] and building those" (Schreiner, 1985, page 35). Numerous criticisms arose (including resignations inside the Corporation) that Bartlett had in mind a Disneyland model of mass entertainment for Expo 86. This concern was not allayed by Bartlett's own pronouncements: "when you ask me about Disneyland I have to say that it's one of the highest quality theme park experiences around, and what we'd like to see is that kind of operational quality applied to the product of a world's fair .... We're committed to high quality education and entertainment" (cited in Wyman, 1983, page B6). Even more intriguing was his widely cited, off-the-cuff remark to a colleague: "You get 'em on the site, you feed 'em, you make 'em dizzy, and you scare the --- out of 'em".

Not surprisingly, advertising material highlighted entertainment rather than science and education, though the latter were certainly included. But the matrix of the Fair, into which other activities were cast was having fun, putting on and enjoying a good show (Kahrl, 1986). Its Creative Director described the concept as "learning

within a context of fun" (Murray, 1986, page 6); "I try to bring people to a teachable moment. To charm and delight and make them laugh while introducing some new information" (Orr et al, 1986, page 50). The planning theme which emerged was intended to integrate pleasure and knowledge in a celebration of individual and social creativity. Against the spectre of social disillusionment, the message of the fair was to be the achievement potential of human ingenuity in all fields. As such, the Fair would counterpose its historic context: "the look, feel and content of Expo 86 above all responded to the event's moment in time. It was imperative that this expression transcend the reality of a troubled decade" (Government of Canada, 1986, page 75).

Entertainment was for all palates. Over 250 World Festival events brought opera, dance, and theatre from major troupes and performers around the world; the highlight was a presentation of La Scala, to an audience of 40000. The numbers involved in entertainment were substantial. Some 43000 free on-site performances were given (or 260 a day) and there was strong participation from amateur groups, numbering almost 80000 performers (Government of Canada, 1986, pages 82–92). Special features included an exhibit, The Great Hall of Ramses II, theme weeks, and a wide array of special events. Most popular were on-site happenings given by more than 800 street performers, jugglers, mimes, musicians, impromptu performers, horse-drawn caravans, and clowns. The site had the air of a carnival, a colourful animation of space and time, vertiginous in the density of its stimuli.

For the design of the site "Images rather than words were stressed, with colour as the backbone of the vocabulary" (Government of Canada, 1986, page 9). Here is the disembodied realm of fantasy, the persuasive architecture of the sign, here, perhaps Baudrillard's "aesthetic hallucination of reality" achieved to perfection. The design theme was "festive technology", its vocabulary "Exuberance. Festivity. Exhilaration. Charisma. Fantasy. Vibrance. Surprise. Optimism. Spirit. Joy. The objective was to satiate the site with a level of colour and kinetics so intensely stimulating that the resulting memory would last a lifetime" (page 76).

The pavilions themselves carried on the mix of "learning within a context of fun". The sixty-five pavilions included international, regional, and corporate sponsors. They varied widely in their exhibits: some offered little more than national gift shops and travel promotion. Others were resolutely serious and scientific. A few showed considerable artistic flair. But, if "Too many pavilions simply sell you their native version of the hot dog, [and] show you where the national airline flies" (Wong et al, 1986, page 13), a number displayed themes which revealed more diversity than a tightly woven view of hegemony might accommodate. Of the forty national pavilions, seven came from socialist states, including China, the Soviet Union, and Cuba—a catholic selection for a free enterprise host government. The United Nations pavilion was devoted to the achievement of peace, the perils of war, and the capacity of individuals to effect positive change. Two pavilions offered strong religious themes, Christian and Muslim (Saudi Arabia). Two regional pavilions in Canada presented significant themes from local popular culture: a sensitive examination of native culture (Northwest Territories) and the human face of out-migration (Saskatchewan). The Folklife area focused on different aspects of ethnic, native, and popular culture. Most interesting of all was the ambivalent view of technology included in two of the corporate pavilions. The Canadian Pacific exhibit had two imaginative shows presenting social impacts of new technology and user conflicts. Equally unpredictable was General Motors' "Spirit Lodge", a reflection on the meaning of new technology. In a pavilion which included an automobile display, the narrator of "Spirit Lodge", an old Indian, challenged the claims of new technology and offered his own

standard: "Are our machines making us more like humans? Or are they making us more like machines?" (Fulford, 1986, page 12). The final report of the Expo Corporation suggested, in retrospect, that the Fair's "mood was post-technological" (Government of Canada, 1986, page 75).

Here is the same ambivalence as shown in SITE's environmental sculpture, Highway 86. We sense the opportunity for oppositional themes to appear in even the most improbable of sources. Hegemony does not appear without paradox and inconsistency. So how enchanted were the consumers?

The meanings of Expo 86: public perceptions of a mass event
In the final weeks of Expo, a city newspaper included a questionnaire asking readers to send in their perceptions of the Fair. Five questions appeared:
1. What will you remember most about Expo?
2. Has it made us a world-class city?
3. What was its single best aspect?
4. Its worst?
5. Expo's deficit is now estimated at $300 million. Was it worth it?
To the editor's surprise over 2200 replies were submitted.[2] About a quarter were received from the City of Vancouver, and about half from its suburbs; an estimated 99.5% had attended the Fair. Although the representativeness of this sample cannot be gauged, the results indicate a group well disposed to the Fair, with 85% claiming that its large deficit was well justified. The perceptions of so large a group are significant in their own right, for any insights that might be offered on the nature and extent of hegemony and social control in the consciousness of the public.

For the respondents the single best aspect of the Fair (question 3) had little to do with the economic objectives the government had been declaring repeatedly for several years. Only 4% of respondents mentioned international visibility for the City as preeminent achievement (though question 2 showed that over 80% felt this had been accomplished), only 3% nominated tourism and business generation, 2% cited longer term legacies for the City, and only 1% job creation. The economic mandate hammered home by provincial politicians was of minor significance to this public. Nor did educational objectives loom large, for only 3.5% of respondents saw education as the Fair's major achievement (though educational themes did appear as a secondary theme elsewhere). Instead of these lofty goals, the majority of respondents measured Expo in more personal terms, reflecting their own experience of the Fair, its activities and people. Indeed there was considerable overlap between assessments of question 3 and question 1, which raised the more personal matter, "what will you remember most about Expo?"

Because the public did not reiterate the public pronouncements of politicians does not of course mean the absence of hegemony. The concept is both more subtle and more slippery than that. More subtle because the manipulative edge of the concept might well involve concealment and distortion of the true content of ideology, as the naturalisation of hegemonic values engenders a false consciousness. More slippery, because the presence of hegemony is, as a result, not easily demonstrated. To restate politically dominant values might imply manipulation, but it might also imply agreement, free of coercion. Not to restate politically dominant values might imply a manipulated (and depoliticised) consciousness; it might also point to independent thought in a lifeworld where hegemonic values have not penetrated and may have been resisted. It is perhaps indicative of the frequently

[2] The quesionnaires were made available to the research team under the guarantee of complete confidentiality against individual disclosure.

nonempirical use of the concept of hegemony that these ambiguities are rarely addressed.

As we have seen, during the years of conceptualisation and planning, the Fair had proven controversial, and although the tone of the questionnaire was upbeat, a minority of questionnaire responses (6%) were squarely critical. Interestingly, these writers tended to discuss broader issues rather than relate their personal experiences at the Fair. More than four fifths of them dealt with such contextual matters as the cost to the province, social service cutbacks, political boosterism, and neglect of unemployment. This concern with regional economic and political issues repeated in many ways the criticism emanating from oppositional social democratic groups in the province. It represented the oppositional ideology, for example:

> *Question 1:*
> "Being told there was no money for schools, social services, hospitals or court services, but lots to have a party."

> *Question 4:*
> "It showed that 'democracy' is only for the rich and powerful, and a cheap campaign by the government to get elected."

> "Shallow mindless situation comedy McDonalds hamburgers frothy tinsel circus mentality."

> "The inescapable on-going impression that we have been encouraging British Columbians, Canadians and the world to laugh and dance -- while our 1986 Rome burns and self-destructs unnoticed."

This view was not only a minority one, but also highly unpopular, a bias challenged by a city priest who saw the Fair's worst aspect to be

> "That, if one did resist Expo, boycott it, or tell the negative sides of this expensive party, you're a bad B.C.'er."

This bias was borne out in the replies, particularly to question 4. Only forty-three respondents identified the cost of Expo as its worst feature, whereas 115 denounced "negative people":

> "Political opportunists, Mayor Harcourt, Alderman Rankin, members of the left wing socialist parties ... and the media ... who did everything within their power to ensure that Expo failed for their own personal beliefs and reasons. Fortunately good won over evil and Expo was a smashing success in spite of the foregoing groups."

For almost 500 respondents, the most distressing feature of the Fair was either nothing at all, or that it had to end.

The most memorable features of Expo to this public have been classified and appear in table 1. Of course, any analysis of content fragments and separates statements which may well have been more coherent and comprehensive, as they ranged across a set of categories:

> "Friendliness, as well as vitality and cleanliness of the city and fair and the people as well as the colourfulness of the fair grounds."

> "And what excitement! To see all the colourful pavilions and plazas, the buildings, the exhibits, the flowers and trees, the people and the entertainment! I still have not had my fill of Expo! I feel such pride in the marvellous creativity and ability that produced a World's Fair so loved and so obviously successful."

Positive reaction to a 'successful' fair monopolise the categories; to a sympathetic eye even the line-ups could present an opportunity to speak to strangers and watch street entertainment ("the wonderful line-ups which enabled me to meet the world"). Perhaps the most predictable group of responses refer to the aesthetic quality of the site (categories 5, 6, 8, 11, 12). References to the waterfront setting, the rainbow colours, landscaping, and sculptures indicated that the design process had been effective.

"The whimsy and colour of its beautiful land, sea and air plazas ... the smell of the sea from the quiet promenades."

"The combining of colour and architecture with local landscape in beauty, fantasy and wit."

So too, Michael Bartlett had learned the lessons of successful theme parks in the cleanliness of the site and a well-screened and well trained staff:

"The cleanliness of the entire Expo site. The clean cut appearance of the staff gave the province a definite classy look."

A second major theme explored a suspension of reality, Expo as a time and a place that was enchanting, set aside from a humdrum world. Consider the following:

"It has shrunk this year. This year didn't start till May 2 and will end in mid October."

"Going through the entrance turnstile and being touched by the magic .... Going through the exit turnstile and it's back to reality, the real world."

"I had so much fun. It was a fantasy place where you sensed people had left their problems outside the gate. There was a carefree atmosphere."

There are a number of questions to ask about this spell. How permanent was it? To what extent could people make the separation between fantasy and reality? To what extent did the world of Expo invade life outside the fairgrounds?

For some, a large number, the spell was that of a carnival spirit, it was entertainment, fun, a party. And as such it was the deficit not the show which had

Table 1. Themes found in answers to the question: "What will you remember most about Expo?"

Theme	Numbers	Percentage ($n = 2216$)
1. Friendliness of people/happiness	758	34
2. Atmosphere/excitement	392	18
3. Entertainment/party	382	17
4. International/national meeting place	322	15
5. Pavilions/exhibits	295	13
6. Colour/colour coding	241	11
7. Pride/sense of community	241	11
8. Cleanliness	234	11
9. Courteous staff	234	11
10. Well organised	105	5
11. Setting/site itself	103	5
12. Beauty/aesthetics/architecture	100	5
13. Fireworks and lasers	98	4
14. Line-ups	70	3
15. Education received	60	3
Miscellaneous (thirty other features)	482	

an air of unreality:

"Yes Expo was worth it—worth it above all, *because we had fun!*"

"Emphatically, yes! The fair gave literally millions of hours of pleasure. The deficit is an unbeatable entertainment bargain."

"A party always costs us some and this was an incredible party."

"At any price!!!! Who thinks of deficits when having such fun, only you asses down at the *Sun.*"

For some respondents, the party became their party, and their identification with the exposition became almost obsessive. Here, most clearly, a confusion of realities was occurring:

"What a fantastic five months we have had—Expo has indeed been one big party and we shall miss it very much. I wish we could keep more of it intact ... I hate the thought of more high-rises going up on our beloved Expo site."

Note the personalisation of the Fair which occurs in the final sentence. As such, no cost it seems could be too high:

"What deficit? It is like putting a price on every hug we get from a child."

"How do you measure the cost and reward (love) of having children. Neither can this be put just in money."

"The fireworks—I had a lump in my throat and tears in my eyes the first time I saw them—I was proud to be a Vancouverite."

"With the closing of Expo 86 I personally feel sad to have to say good-bye to such a dear friend, but this friend has left me with such wonderful memories that I will cherish forever."

Such personification of the Fair is possessive, and indeed obsessive. One writer sent in a poem extolling "My beautiful, colourful enchanting lady." Another wrote:

"The feeling remembered is the excitement, the expectation, the pride that I got as opening day approached. A great love affair was happening, to me, to Vancouver, to the World. A sound and sight so wonderful that only the music and fireworks could come close to expressing it. EXPO 86, I remember you with passion, colour, lights, music and most of all giving the World exactly what you said you would: the biggest party of the century."

A number of respondents held season's tickets and attended frequently:

"It was a fantastic once-in-most lifetime's experience and I'd do it all again. To date I've been 85 times."

Such obsession is symptomatic of the spectacle. Augustine relates the seduction of a friend by the Roman games (Brantlinger, 1983, pages 79–80). Initially resistant, the immanence of its sights, sounds and excitement became an opiate blinding his moral judgment. Although allusions to bread and circuses were made only by correspondents critical of Expo, it is in such obsessive perceptions that the responses came nearest to the theoretical portrait of willing victims of the culture industry. The distraction of the public from broader issues is accompanied by a preoccupation with amusement and spectacle and its elevation to "a dear friend", an "enchanting lady." But there is a further question to ask. How abiding is this seduction, how lasting the spell? For a number of respondents the boundaries of

fantasy and reality were clearly defined:

> "Let's not worry about the deficit. Let's just accept it. The party's over. Let's pay for it now."

A third group of categories (particularly 1, 4, 7, 15) in table 1 reflect a more active and positive engagement with the Fair. They refer to intersubjective relations of happiness, friendship, a sense of community, and mutual learning. Critical views of mass culture commonly regard its recipients as "a formless mass ... [where] ... individuals are anonymous" (Blumer), "atomised individuals who have lost a commonality ... grounded in [traditional] values" (Alt). Their pleasure manifests only their helplessness (Horkheimer and Adorno), "the negation of real life" (Debord). If these impressions intersect to some degree with the theme of Expo as party, they fail to guide interpretation as usefully through this third set of responses. They pay too little attention to social psychology, to the process and ongoing construction of primary social groups of friends and kin. Very few visitors attended Expo 86 alone. They came in clusters of friends and relatives, and the Fair was an occasion, a resource for *advancing* these intersubjective bonds. Many households in the city organised family reunions during 1986:

> "We invited 60 members of the family and friends; 42 said they were coming, so far we had 52 .... We enjoyed every one of them and had the greatest summer of our life. We are in our 70's."

The Fair was an opportunity for bonding nuclear family relations in learning and pleasure:

> "I'll remember the leisurely hours we spent there—walking around the grounds, enjoying the entertainment, absorbing the information in the displays, watching the happiness of our children's faces."

The Fair's events and memories were *social* occasions:

> "Remembering the time I sang with my friends in front of the world live in a studio was something extraordinary for me."

There were some small, but personally significant, family successes which provided Expo's most memorable moments:

> "It was a first class fair, our first. It got my husband away from the TV set for 18 days, even on rainy days."

These intersubjective bonds extended also to strangers, to other societies and cultures in a celebration of multiculturalism. Mutual learning offered many benefits. For one family the memorable feature of Expo was:

> "The people who talked to you—which made it a learning experience. One visitor told us the exact location of a fishing lake in Utah which we had been trying to locate for years."

> "How educational it was. You could get a real feel for life in other countries and for their people. Prejudices were replaced with friendships."

> "The cultural events presented by international communities .... These have not only been a banquet for eye and ear, but have also helped to promote greater appreciation of one another's culture. Nations clearly have more in common than differences, and the audiences have felt this."

"My 9 year old daughter will have a view of the world as a whole. Whatever else she learns, the world will remain a community."

Within responses such as this are conveyed not only the active engagement of people with the opportunities presented by a mass event. Perhaps also there is indication of learning which may engender independent world views, Jameson's (1979) "utopian potential" within all mass culture, which challenges hegemonic values.

Conclusion

Expo 86 offers a further example of the increasing ludic nature of Western urban structure, the growing intrusion of leisure and the aesthetic into the urban landscape (Ley, 1980). The culture of consumption has an important playful dimension. What do we make of this tendency? How is it to be theorised? Not all theorists would see this development in critical terms. Nor would all critics find themselves on the political left. Kierkegaard regarded the balanced personality as integrating the aesthetic, the ethical, and the religious dimensions; the aesthetic personality shorn of the other two had dangerously lost its moorings. However, it was the aesthetic dimension that was uppermost in the design of the landscape of Expo 86. But how intoxicating was this landscape to its audience, to what extent a diversion and a delusion, an instrument of social control imposed upon an uncritical public?

First we should note that the planning of Expo 86 was fraught with conflict. Indeed it exposed and aggravated the deepest regional tensions: conflict between different levels of government, anger at perceived US cultural imperialism with the hiring of Michael Bartlett and his network of US theme park specialists, and, above all, labour unrest with the decision to make Expo an open work site. While the extravaganza of Expo was being planned, the deep cuts of a provincial restraint programme led to the formation of a popular opposition movement, the Solidarity Coalition, and carried the province within a few hours of a general strike. The deflection of funds into Expo aggravated these tensions. During the preopening period the Fair was a source of social unrest rather than social control. On opening day, the provincial government trailed its social democratic opposition by eight points in opinion polls.

During the next six months a swing of 15% occurred in the popular vote. What effect did Expo 86 have in this transformation? In public sentiment the Fair was a success. We have seen that among our (probably biased) respondents dominant memories of Expo were personal experiences rather than political issues. For a large group of respondents, memories were vivid and positive; indeed for some the Fair became virtually an obsession. In this displacement of reality, the data came closest to describing the condition of the manipulation of consciousness by mass culture. It seems plausible that these powerful sentiments would have extended to the political party which created Expo 86 (if we assume, of course, that this was not already their political niche), consolidating into support at election time, shortly after the Fair ended. But another large group of respondents were less spellbound. They engaged the Fair more actively, used it as a resource for advancing family and friendship ties, were less riveted by its fantasy, and were more intent on learning, including the more expansive issues of global citizenship posed by some of the pavilions. Among this group we have no basis to assume a displacement of reality. They do not fit the description of a passive deluded army of individuals, and we have no justification in narrowing the limits of their decision on election day to the single dimension of a lingering memory of a spectacle. The cultural dupes posed by mass culture theorists are less visible on the ground than they are in nonempirical speculation.

The transition in electoral support for the provincial government is also more complex upon closer scrutiny. A critical factor was the resignation of an unpopular Premier during the course of the Fair and his replacement by a charismatic figure that a lacklustre campaign by the political opposition could not match. Moreover, the political geography of the election adds a further wrinkle. Among provincial municipalities, the City of Vancouver generated the largest number of visitors to Expo 86 and was by far the most favoured economic beneficiary. Yet the electoral swing to the governing party was lower in Greater Vancouver than the province as a whole, while the city itself bucked the trend. In Vancouver, the opposition parties improved their position, winning a plurality of the votes, and unseating a Cabinet minister. We conclude that considerably more empirical research is justified on hegemonic powers in practice, including the manipulative effects of mass culture. The evidence of Expo 86 points to a fractured and negotiated power that was never absolute.

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