# 7 The city

## ■ 7.1 The city

Millions of people live in cities around the world. They are thus hugely significant spaces. Geographers have focused not only on their size and physical features (architecture, communication networks), but also on the people, goods and information which flow through them and the sort of social relations and spatialities these flows produce.

In particular, the size and density of urban populations mean that cities are places where all different sorts of people are thrown together. This diversity and the juxtapositions it produces offer many positive possibilities but they can also produce tensions and conflicts (see Chapter 6). Likewise, the density of city living also raises issues about the sustainability of this lifestyle and about the relationship between human residents, their environment and other urban dwellers such as animals and wildlife.

This chapter explores the differentiation of urban space. It begins by examining geographical work on ethnic segregation, gentrification, the underclass and sexual dissidents in the city. It then moves on to think about city life. In the 1970s and 1980s cities in the affluent West were generally in decline, being characterized by de-industrialization, population decline and structural unemployment. However, the end of the twentieth and beginning of the twenty-first centuries have witnessed efforts to revalorize city centres by converting their cultural capital (as sites that contain cultural heritage and are sites of cultural production) into economic capital. This chapter considers attempts to reorganize city centres around consumption in which an emphasis is being placed on reviving the act of wandering the streets (flânerie) and on

promoting consumer goods and leisure-time activities such as shopping, restaura[n]t
and clubs. Part of this process has also involved the re-imaging of cities. From [the?]
emphasis on culture the chapter then turns to focus on the relationship between hum[an?]
and nature within the city, particularly the place of animals in the city and ur[ban?]
environmental politics. It concludes by reflecting on the emergence of virtual ci[ties?]

## ■ 7.2 The heterogeneous city

Cities are characterized by *density* in terms of their populations, buildings and tra[ffic?]
and by *intensity* in terms of the pace of life, social interactions and the range of opp[or?]
tunities they offer. The density and intensity of cities also means that they are abo[ve?]
all else sites of *proximity*, the 'place of our meeting with the other' (Barthes 198[?])
with all the emotions of excitement, frustration or anxiety that this heterogene[ity?]
engenders (see Chapter 6).

Yet, within the heterogeneous city it is also possible to differentiate relatively hom[o?]
geneous areas (see Figures 7.1 and 7.2). Urban sociology and geography have a lo[ng?]

**Figure 7.1**    The percentage of the population in ethnic London by ward: white. Redrawn
from Pile, Brook & Mooney *Unruly Cities?* (1999).



White

Per cent White

95 to 100    (99)

80 to 94.99 (383)

65 to 79.99 (183)

0 to 64.99   (117)

Numbers in brackets refer
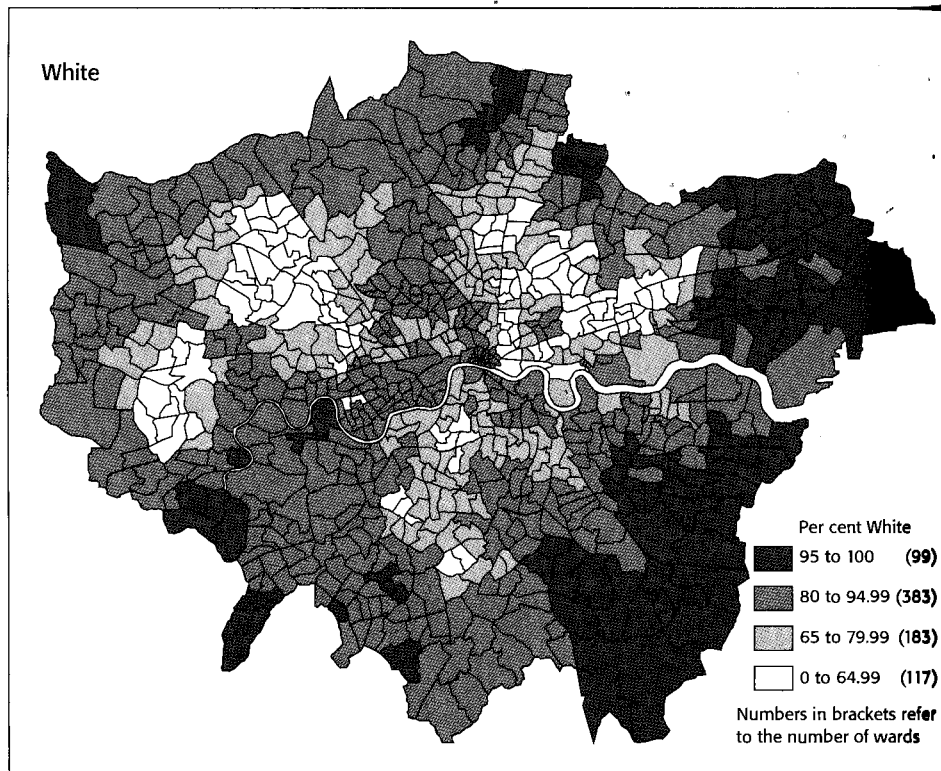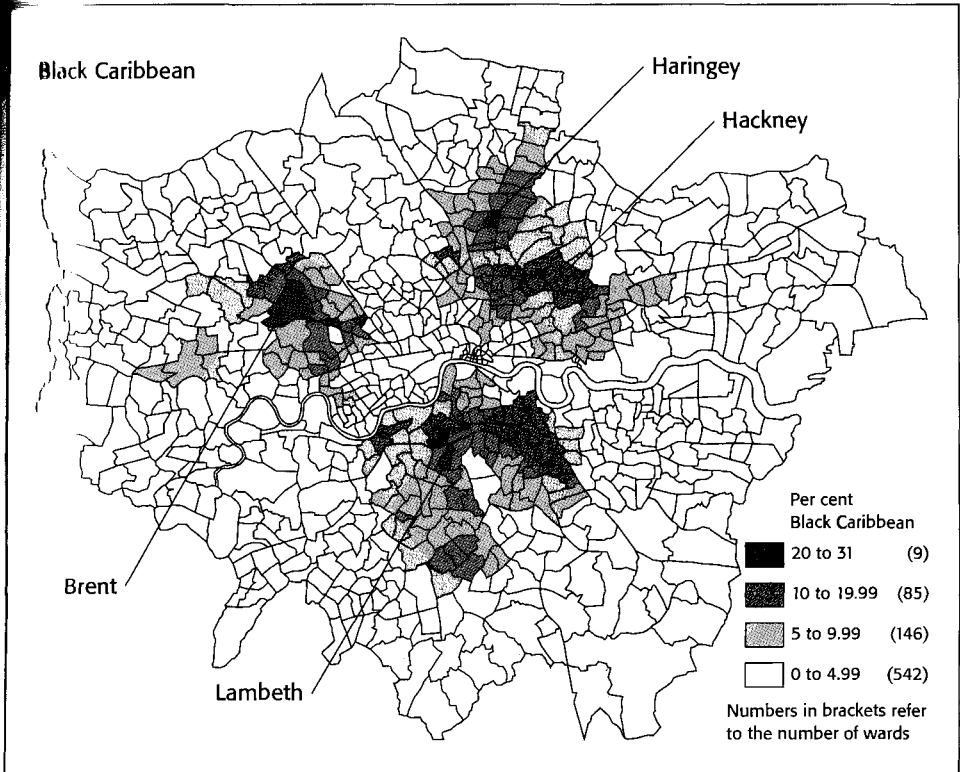to the number of wards

**Figure 7.2**   The percentage of the population in ethnic London by ward: Afro-Caribbean. Redrawn from Pile, Brook & Mooney *Unruly Cities?* (1999).



history of focusing on different worlds within the city. The Chicago School of Human Ecology (CSHE) (see Chapter 4) famously mapped and modelled what they regarded as the 'natural' and predictable spatial patterns of ethnic neighbourhoods, the ghetto, areas of 'vice' and the suburbs. This work was very influential, and in the 1960s and 1970s, when positivism was at its height, social geography was pre-occupied with using techniques such as social area analysis and factorial ecology to map the segregation of different housing areas within cities identified on the basis of class or ethnicity.

In the 1970s radical geographers sought to explain and challenge patterns of inequality and material poverty within cities, for example, by focusing on the role of the housing market and building societies in structuring urban space. Subsequently, postmodernism has led to a questioning of the focus purely on economics and a recognition of the intertwining of the material and the symbolic. While economic institutions are obviously fundamental in the (re)production of the material condition of everyday life, cultural representations of particular groups (e.g. race or underclass) in popular discourses are also tangled up with operation of labour, housing markets, etc. In the same way, 'contemporary political struggles around rights

and entitlements are often as not struggles that cohere around a politics of identity constituted through processes as much cultural as economic' (Fincher and Jacobs 1998: 3).

The following sections examine some of these debates in relation to ethnic segregation, the underclass, gentrification, and the location of sexual dissidents within the city.

## ■ 7.2.1 Ethnic segregation

In the 1960s and 1970s social geographers used a range of indices to measure and quantify ethnic segregation (e.g. Peach 1975, Peach *et al.* 1981). These descriptions of spatial patterns were accompanied by vague attempts to explain them which were framed in terms of 'constraint' or 'choice'. This work was heavily criticized by radical geographers and black political activists as 'narrow empiricism' and as 'socio-cultural apologism for racial segregation' (Bridge 1982: 83–4 cited in Jackson 1987). The assumptions about 'race' made within this work are at odds with contemporary understandings of identity and difference. 'Race' was regarded as an 'essential' or pre-given category (see Chapter 2). The concentration of particular ethnic minority groups within the city was understood as a problem, but one that would be solved by assimilation, which, it was assumed, would be the inevitable outcome of 'natural' processes of competition and growth (see Chapter 4). This work is now seen as outdated and problematic (Jackson 1987). Some writers still continue to claim that social differences are a product of genetic difference, however – an example being Richard Herrnstein and Charles Murray's (1994) book *The Bell Curve*, in which the authors made claims about the natural or immutable 'cognitive abilities' of different social groups, which purported to demonstrate white superiority. *The Bell Curve* provoked huge controversy in the USA and was widely criticized as racist (see Mitchell 2000).

In the late 1980s researchers began to argue that 'race' is a social construction rather than a 'natural' difference and that, as such, it has no explanatory value in itself. This work examined how people have been classified on the basis of genetic traits and physical differences, such as skin colour, and demonstrated that these social classifications are the product of specific historical circumstances – particularly European colonialism and slavery in the USA – rather than any innate distinctions (Miles 1982) (see Chapter 2 and Chapter 6).

This focus on the social construction of 'race' prompted geographers to think about segregation as a product not of 'natural' ecological processes but rather of white racism. Peter Jackson (1987: 12) defined racism as the 'attempt by a dominant group to exclude a sub-ordinate group from the material and symbolic rewards of status and power on the basis of physical, or cultural traits which are thought to be inherent characteristics of particular social groups'. Racism, he argues, is commonly dismissed as individual prejudice, when in fact it is reproduced, often unintentionally,

through the policies and practices of public and private institutions (in relation to housing, education, policing, employment, and so on), and through representations in the media and culture (this cultural racism includes stereotyping of black people as criminal or lazy, Pakistanis as docile or nimble-fingered, the Irish as stupid, etc) (Jackson 1987). This new-found focus on racism led geographers to understand racial segregation as a product of processes of inclusion and exclusion that were both material and symbolic.

In a study of patterns of residential segregation in the UK, Susan Smith (1987: 25) observed that the black population (whom she defined as 'people of South Asian and Afro-Caribbean appearance') were overwhelmingly concentrated in the poorest inner neighbourhoods of cities like London, Birmingham and Manchester. This pattern emerged during the postwar years, when, in response to a labour shortage, people from the Commonwealth countries were encouraged to migrate to the UK to fill these vacancies. This was also a time of a parallel housing shortage, which meant that black workers arriving in Britain were initially forced into poor-quality, inner-city, privately rented accommodation. The government of the time did nothing to address this. It was reluctant to build a concept of race into legislation to combat disadvantage and discrimination and assumed that dispersal would occur 'naturally' as a result of economic development. Instead, this initial pattern of segregation largely continues until today.

Smith (1987) argued that its persistence cannot be understood as chance, or just as a result of income differentials or economic marginality, but rather that it has been sustained through the racist assumptions and practices of individuals and government bodies in a process termed institutional racism. Her work showed that central government policies, including the sale of the public housing stock, housing legislation, the policies and practices of local authorities, the role of financial institutions in providing mortgages, and the actions of estate agents (realtors), have all sustained this pattern of racial segregation by restricting black households to inner-city areas. Smith (1987) concluded that:

> the fact is that irrespective of intentionality, the thrust of national housing policies has been towards racial segregation, the effects of most local institutions have been to protect the housing environment of privileged whites from the entry of blacks, and the outcome is that racial segregation is associated with black people's disadvantage.

Smith (1987) further located the government's laissez-faire approach to racial segregation within broader cultural and political discourses about 'race'. In a study of Hansard which records parliamentary debates she shows how, in the immediate postwar period, black people were constructed as inferior, childlike and backward. In the mid-late 1960s the political rhetoric became more blatantly racist and segregationist. Peter Griffiths fought for the parliamentary seat of Smethwick at the 1964 General Election under the slogan 'If you want a nigger for a neighbour vote Labour.' At this time black people were presented as a threat to white jobs and housing – a fear which culminated in Enoch Powell's infamous 'rivers of blood'

speech in which he presented an image of black outsiders swamping white cultur
and called for a policy of repatriation. (Not too dissimilar sentiments have also be
reproduced at the beginning of the twenty-first century in parliamentary debates abo
asylum seekers entering the UK.) In the 1980s, the emergence of New Right po
itics brought with it 'new racism', in which social divisions were explained as a pro
uct of cultural difference and individual choice rather than white superiority. Smit
(1987) suggests that this was merely a more euphemistic or sanitary way of articu
lating much the same sentiments as Powell.

A further example of the role of racism in producing ethnic segregation with
the city is Kay Anderson's (1991) research on Chinatown in Vancouver, Canad
in the period 1880–1980. In this classic study she demonstrated how the racist att
tudes of the white council and the determination of white populations to force th
Chinese out of particular neighbourhoods through violence led to the emergenc
in the nineteenth century of a segregated Chinatown, located in a marginal swamp
area of the city. This process of segregation was set against a backdrop of ideas abou
racial difference and the inferior nature of oriental people, which were articulate
through the media, scientific publications, and links with the Empire. White settler
regarded themselves as superior to Chinese settlers, viewing the Chinese as a threa
to their jobs, trade and land. Both law-making and law-enforcing institutions, a
well as mob violence, were used to reproduce white privilege and racial separation.
Indeed, efforts were even made to prevent Chinese immigration into Canada, as well
as to stop the dispersal of the Chinatown ghetto. Until the mid-1930s Chinatown
was negatively stereotyped as a source of diseases, opium dens and other evils.

However, although segregation is often the cause of despair, poverty and danger
there can also be a positive and empowering side to it. Ethnic minority group
can remake areas and transform their exclusive nature. In the twentieth century
white people have adopted a more romantic vision of the Orient and Vancouver's
Chinatown has been marketed as a tourist attraction. This commodifying of the neigh-
bourhood has created the basis for community empowerment and new forms of polit-
ical action. Notably, the economic clout of Chinatown as an important visitor attraction
has led the Vancouver authorities to consult 'community' leaders, enabling the Chinese
to be more vocal about their own interests. In this way, the meanings of divided
spaces can be recast (Anderson 1991).

In the 1990s the emphasis on the social construction of race and racism also opened
up the issue of whiteness (see, for example, Frankenberg 1993a, 1993b, Jackson 1998b,
Nayak 1999a, 1999b, Bonnett 2000). In particular, it exposed the way in which
white people view themselves as racially and culturally neutral, rather than recog-
nizing their racial and cultural privilege (see Box 7.1) or thinking about what it means
to be part of a dominant and normative racial and cultural group (Frankenberg 1993b).
In research among white women, Ruth Frankenberg (1993a) asked her informants
to recall childhood memories of when they first became aware of 'race'. Although
these women had grown up with differing levels of ties with black, Asian and Chicano
people, some in anti-racist environments and some in racist contexts, their narratives

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**Box 7.1: White Privilege**

White Privilege
Today I got permission to do it in graduate school
That which you have been lynched for,
That which you have been shot for,
That which you have been jailed for,
Sterilised for,
Raped for,
Told you were mad for –
By which I mean
Challenging racism –
Can you believe
The enormity
Of that?

Frankenberg 1993a

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shared a subtle racism. The form this took included 'educational and economic privileges, verbal assertions of white superiority, the maintenance of all-white neighbourhoods, the invisibility of black and Latina domestic workers, white people's fear of people of colour [even though black people have far more to fear from white people than the other way round] and the "colonial" notion that the cultures of peoples of colour were great only in the past' (Frankenberg 1993a: 77–88). On the basis of these observations, Frankenberg (1993a) classifies three dimensions of whiteness: *structural advantages* – in other words, the privileges white people receive in terms of higher wages, better access to health care, education and the legal system; *standpoint* – the place from which white people view self and society; and *cultural practices*, which are often not recognized by white people as being 'white' but rather are thought of as 'normal'.

Frankenberg (1993a: 78) concludes that racism 'appears not only as an ideology or political orientation chosen or rejected at will; it is also a system and set of ideas embedded in social relations'. She argues that white people can never be outside racism as a social system and that we need to recognize how deeply embedded racism is in all white people's lives. To achieve this Frankenberg (1993a) suggests that white people need to re-examine their personal histories, change their consciousness, and participate in political projects to achieve structural change. At the same time, she also recognizes that whiteness is not a universal experience but rather is inflected by nationhood. In other words, while there may be similarities in terms of what it means to be white in the UK, USA or Australia, there are also differences, because whiteness is produced by particular historical social and political processes (see Chapter 9).

Likewise, white identities are also cross-cut by other differences such as gender, and sexuality (Frankenberg 1993b).

Whiteness is profoundly encoded in the US city–suburb distinction. The subu provide a refuge for the white middle classes from the dirt, crime, disorder and, ab all, the heterogeneity of the city. While the city is characterized by different wor the suburbs are synonymous with homogeneity, stability, peacefulness and wh ness. The defining qualities of the city are its intensity, proximity and encoun between strangers, whereas the defining qualities of the suburban landscape are prosperity, and a moral order based on restraint and non-confrontation, in wh encounters with difference engender fear and dread (see Chapter 6). Minnie Bru Pratt (1992: 325) describes how the whiteness of the suburbia in which she gr up, and where she lived with her husband until she came out as a lesbian and mov to an inner-city neighbourhood, moulded her understandings of self and society. S writes: 'I was shaped by my relation to those buildings and by the people in the buil ings, by ideas of who should be working in the board of education, of who shou be in the bank handling money, of who should have the guns and the keys to t jail, of who should be in the jail; and I was shaped by what I didn't see, or didn notice on those streets.'

However, Kay Anderson (1998a) cautions in an autocritique that social geo graphers need to be wary of always thinking in terms of racialized dichotomi such as black–white. She argues that focusing on only one fixed attribute such 'race' obscures the multiple faces of social power, and that privileging a singula identity as a political 'rallying point' can also produce other exclusions (see Chap ter 4). 'Without trying to discredit research that identifies the contribution tha race-based oppression makes to patterns of segregation and inequality', Anderso (1998a: 206) highlights the importance of recognizing a 'multiplicity and mobility of subject positionings, including race and class'. Returning to her work on China town, in Vancouver, she identifies the need to refine previous conceptualizations o Chinatowns as having a stably positioned racialized identity in a fixed and anta gonistic relationship with a coherent European oppressor. Rather, she argues that Chinatowns are complex sites of difference (see Chapter 2).

According to Anderson (1998a), the early Chinatown in Vancouver was charac terized by a 'socio-economic pyramid' headed by a group of men who were some of the wealthiest individuals in the city. These Chinese merchants benefited from the marginalized position of their racialized identity because, without the protection of white unions, and facing immigration tax debts, their fellow Chinatown residents were willing to work long hours for low pay. Indeed, many women worked unpaid for Chinese tailors. These class- and gender-based oppressions are still being repro duced in contemporary Chinatowns in North America. In this way, the Chinese are a complexly differentiated minority group rather than a coherent victim of white oppression.

The category 'Chinese' is also ethnically differentiated. Anderson (1998a) cites the example of Chinatown in New York where non-Cantonese-speaking workers

from mainland China are racially 'othered' as inferior foreigners within the Chinese 'community'. Many of these people are illegal immigrants who owe huge debts to the contractors who smuggled them into the country and, as such, they have to work in appalling conditions for a very low wage. Thus Anderson (1998a: 209) argues that 'the race typification of "Chinese" works to obscure other vectors of power that have the enclave as their protection. It follows that to write a more inclusive Chinatown story [or other stories of ethnic segregation] requires one to draw on the reciprocal determinations of (at least) class *and* race, economy *and* culture'.

## ■ 7.2.2 The underclass

The term 'underclass' is one in a long history of terms used in North America and Britain to describe those on the bottom rung of the social ladder whose experiences are characterized by persistent intergenerational poverty, dependency on welfare, unstable employment/unemployment, low skills, a limited access to education and the social services, and a high incidence of health problems (physical and mental) (Robinson and Gregson 1992). More controversially, within the USA the underclass is often read as synonymous with African American, and to some extent Hispanic populations, in the inner city. As such, it has become a codeword for 'race' which 'may serve both to promulgate racism and conceal the issue of racial discrimination' (Robinson and Gregson 1992: 41). Likewise, much attention has been drawn to the feminization of poverty, specifically the number of female-headed households and levels of teenage pregnancies in poor urban neighbourhoods (Kelly 1994).

In the USA the underclass is typically spatially concentrated in inner-city 'ghettos' (Cottingham 1982: 3), while in the UK it is elided with specific urban public housing estates (Campbell 1993). These marginal locations have come to symbolize the place of the underclass within the city. The existence of the underclass also represents a powerful critique of urban policies that promote gentrification (see section 7.2.3) and marginalize the urban poor.

At the same time as the underclass has been constructed in and through the space of 'the ghetto', so too these spaces have been constructed through the people who inhabit them. In the context of the UK, Bea Campbell (1993) argues that, because the underclass has been demonized, the city neighbourhoods where these people live have come to symbolize crime and drug abuse at both a local and national level. In the USA guns and gangs also play a part in these representations (see Chapter 6).

The term 'underclass' was first employed by Gunnar Myrdal (1962) to describe those excluded from the labour market as a result of wider structural change. It was adopted more widely in the 1980s when, in contrast to the way it had first been defined, the New Right employed it to highlight what it regarded as a 'dependency culture' and to evoke negative stereotypes of beggars and ghettos. This was a time when rising levels of poverty were increasing the social marginalization of those in US inner cities. Rather than consider that this might be an outcome of laissez-faire

Reaganomics, the Right argued that members of the underclass were victims of their own unwillingness to work, and of their own anti-social conduct, and that their negative attitudes and 'deviant' behaviour were being passed from one generation to another, producing a destructive underclass culture and cycle of intergenerational poverty (Robinson and Gregson 1992). Indeed, some US conservatives, most notably Charles Murray (1984), went so far as to claim that welfare actually promoted dependency and 'deviance' and should be cut further (Robinson and Gregson 1992).

While the Left shared the Right's diagnosis that members of the underclass were trapped in a vicious cycle of intergenerational poverty, it identified a very different cause of their disadvantage. In a book entitled *The Truly Disadvantaged*, Wilson (1987, 1989) argued that the emergence and growth of the underclass was an inevitable consequence firstly of structural economic changes which had created unemployment in the city, and secondly of the severe social policies pursued by the New Right, which had created spatial concentrations of poverty. In Wilson's view, these problems needed to be addressed through social programmes to promote economic growth (Robinson and Gregson 1992). Otherwise, trapped in poverty and with no stake in society, the underclass were being denied the full rights of citizenship (see Chapter 9).

The explanations for the plight of the underclass offered by both the Right and the Left represent highly simplistic accounts of a complex situation. While the Right overemphasizes the role of the individual and underplays structural changes, the Left overlooks the different processes through which individuals may become marginalized and their agency in developing adaptive survival strategies, of which a 'deviant culture' might be considered a part (Robinson and Gregson 1992). For people with little or no access to employment, crime represents one way to acquire the consumer goods so valued within society, which they are otherwise denied (Jordan and Jones 1988).

Despite the debates about the origin and definition of the underclass, Robinson and Gregson (1992) argue that the concept has played an important part in highlighting the fact that social polarization did increase in the USA and UK toward the end of the twentieth century and that, as a consequence, a group of people have become trapped and isolated both socially and spatially from the rest of society. However, they also warn against the danger of placing too much emphasis on the term 'underclass', which they point out actually homogenizes what is a diverse group of people who face different problems and have different responses to their situation.

For women, it may be childcare that keeps them trapped in poverty, whereas for black people it may be racism. Bea Campbell (1993) provides a powerful account of the responses of young British white working-class men to their situation (see also Nayak 1999b). She argues that, with no work, no income, no property and no car, the only way in which they can produce a masculine identity and earn both the self and social respect which previous generations of men achieved in the workplace, is through stealing, joy-riding, arson, and car theft (Box 7.2). Through such demonstrations of courage and power they are able to (re)produce hegemonic notions of working-class masculinity. In a similar study located in two US cities, Buffalo in New

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**Box 7.2: Boys will be boys**

'I'd leave the house about nine o'clock, when my mam thought I was going to school – I never told her I wasn't. I'd go down to the park at Scotswood Dene with my mates. We messed about... My mam found out when the school board woman came after about eight months. My mam said I had to go to school! Then she took me to school. I felt shown up. My mates were just laughing. I didn't go back.'

Then he became a burglar, and he had a habit. 'We were all bored. We wanted some glue and one of the lads mentioned burgling a house. It was near where we lived. We kicked the front door in and took the video. One of my mates sold it for £100, so we all got £33 each.' That lasted for about two days. 'We just kept burgling. I liked it – till we started getting caught. I liked the money.' Hanging around the pub connected the boys to a network of fences who would sell their stolen goods. The lads sat on the front steps of the pub and did business in the back... 'Me and my mates just had a good laugh, just pinching cars and having a laugh. I got out of my head really. We got glue from the paper shop. I liked the illusions, just seeing things, like trees moving in front of you when they weren't really there.'

When he and his mates began stealing cars he started driving them up the Armstrong Road...

Campbell 1993: 191–2

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York State and Jersey City in New Jersey, Fine *et al.* (1997) show how young white men displace their anger and frustration at their structural circumstances by blaming scapegoats such as women, black people and sexual dissidents for the loss of the relatively privileged status of working-class men.

## ■ 7.2.3 Gentrification

At the end of the twentieth and the beginning of the twenty-first centuries major European and North American cities have been at the centre of the world economy. They have thus benefited from the rapid growth of the service sector (e.g. law, banking, finance) and creative industries (e.g. music, advertising, media, fashion and design). This has produced the emergence of a highly educated, well-paid, creative group of middle-class professionals who want to live in the centre of the city. Such a location offers the advantage of proximity both to the workplace (important for a group who may work long and unsociable hours) and to a wide range of entertainment and leisure opportunities.

In the 1980s middle-class people (mainly single people and dual-income households) began to move into poor or working-class residential urban neighbourhoods,

a trend which has continued into the twenty-first century. This has led to the gentrification of these post-industrial areas (although gentrification has also occurred rural areas: see Chapter 8). Older houses have been 'done up' and multi-occupant dwellings converted into single-occupancy middle-class homes by individuals, wh industrial buildings and warehouses have also been transformed into luxury apar ments by property developers. Examples of this process include the SoHo area Manhattan, USA, described by Sharon Zukin (1988) in her book *Loft Living*; th Docklands area of London, UK, where gentrification has spread from the develop ment of warehouse properties on the river Thames into Clerkenwell (Hamnett 1999 and the Marais, around the Bastille, and parts of the Latin Quarter of Central Parl France (Noin and White 1997).

The process of gentrification brings about changes in both the social and phy ical make-up of city neighbourhoods (Smith 1987, Hamnett 1991). First, it leads t the economic reordering of property values, commercial opportunities for the con struction industry and an expansion of private owner occupation. Second, this pro cess results in the displacement of low-income residents by those of a higher socia status, until middle-class residents outnumber the original inhabitants of the neigh bourhood. Third, gentrification leads to the transformation of built environments Property conversions are often characterized by the use of postmodern architectura styles which draw on local themes while also borrowing inspiration from othe times and places. Caroline Mills (1988) cites the example of Fairview Slopes i Vancouver, Canada, where industrial materials and colour have been used to re flect the heritage of the area while also being fused with motifs drawn from th Mediterranean (reflecting Fairview's waterfront) and San Francisco (which plays o the notion that Fairview is the San Francisco of Canada), which have further bee combined with more classical forms of architecture derived from Boston, USA, an Georgian London. Fourth, changes in the social composition of neighbourhood and an increase in property prices are often followed by changes in the retail an service landscape (e.g. the opening of quality restaurants and clothes outlets) to mee the needs of gentrifiers, creating a shared middle-class culture and lifestyle around conspicuous consumption (Noin and White 1997) (see Plate 7.1a and b).

Neil Smith (1979b, 1982) has explained gentrification as a movement, not o people back to the city, but of capital back to the city, arguing that the move ment of people has only happened because particular investment opportunities hav emerged. In what is known as the 'rent gap' thesis, Smith observed that the dilapid ated state of many buildings in inner-city neighbourhoods has created a situation where there is a gap between the purchase price of properties and the potential valu (because of their central location) at which they can be sold on or rented out onc they have been converted or 'done up'. As more buildings in these neighbourhood are renovated to realize their underutilized potential, so the area becomes an even more desirable place for the middle classes to live, the values of properties soar, an the original inhabitants are displaced because they can no longer afford the rents.

**Plate 7.1a and b**   Gentrification in Berlin has been met with resistance (© Paul White)

Gentrification represents a strategy of **capital accumulation** (or sound finan
investment). Smith (1979b: 540) argues that this profit motive is there even
is not acknowledged by gentrifiers because 'few would consider rehabilitation
buildings] if a financial loss were to be expected'. This profit motive not only app
to the gentrifiers themselves but also is shared by a whole range of professional age
involved in the process of gentrification, including builders, surveyors, landlords, m
gage lenders, estate agents, government agencies, architects and tenants and e
commodity advertisers.

Other writers, however, have criticized the rent gap thesis, arguing that inve
ment opportunities in run-down property are not the only explanation for g
trification. Damaris Rose (1984: 62), for example, writes: 'the terms "gentrificatio
and "gentrifiers", as commonly used in the literature, are chaotic conceptions wh
obscure the fact that a multiplicity of processes, rather than a single process, p
duces changes in the occupation of inner-city neighbourhoods'.

Other motivations for gentrification include changes in the occupational str
tures of production (Hamnett 1991). Beauregard (1986), for example, claims t
a new social class has emerged, the professional middle class, and that gentrificatl
is therefore the material and cultural manifestation of this social group in the lan
scape. Rose (1984, 1989) queries this, however, pointing out that many gentrifi
are on moderate or low incomes and so are only marginal members of the profe
sional class.

In contrast to explanations for gentrification which focus on production, som
writers have focused on lifestyle choice (Ley 1980, Mills 1988). The consumptic
of housing, like the consumption of other sorts of goods, can play an important r
in individuals' identity-formation. Buying a house in a particular neighbourhood c
be a strategy to buy into a particular lifestyle and identity because the gentrificatl
of an area often leads to the development of an associated landscape of consum
tion that includes restaurants, shops, delicatessens, marinas, jogging paths, marke
and so on (Mills 1988). Demographic changes such as the 'baby boom', and
emergence of new household patterns in the face of the decline of the tradition
nuclear family (see Chapter 3), are also credited with creating a preference for c
living and a demand for alternative forms of housing which are not available in t
family-oriented suburbs. In this way, gentrification is not just attributable to the actio
of corporations investing in major building and construction projects but is al
the product of the more piecemeal actions of individuals buying into particul
lifestyles (Hamnett 1984).

Rose (1989) suggests that gentrification is better understood as originating in chan
in women's position within the labour market. Her explanation emphasizes gend
and sexuality as opposed to the focus of Smith or Beauregard on class. Rose poin
out that a high proportion of gentrifiers are educated women working in high-incor
professional occupations and living in dual-earner households. For these women, ge
trified neighbourhoods represent a solution to the problems of combining paid a
unpaid work. A city-centre location reduces the time-space constraints of their du

role, while gentrified neighbourhoods usually offer more support services (late-night delicatessens, laundry and cleaning services, and so on) than the suburbs, and so represent a way of reducing women's reproductive labour. Accessibility to social networks and 'community' facilities can be just as important in people's choice of neighbourhood as the actual housing unit or apartment. Indeed, Liz Bondi (1991) argues that the construction of gender identities and relations is a key aspect of gentrification, in which she sees gender as a process rather than a category.

## ■ 7.2.4 Sexual dissidents within the city

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries gay men (who included gay-identified queers, effeminate men known as 'fairies', and men who had sex with men but identified as heterosexual) established a public world in New York, USA, which included gay neighbourhood areas in Greenwich Village, Times Square and Harlem, where beauty contests, drag balls, dances and other social events took place in cafés, restaurants, bathhouses and speakeasies (Chauncey 1995).

More usually, however, the emergence of visible gay neighbourhoods within the heterosexual city is dated from 1967, when a police raid on a gay male bar provoked what became known as the Stonewall riots. This led to the politicization of lesbians and gay men and the emergence of their more visible presence within major North American and European cities.

The Castro district in San Francisco, USA, is perhaps the most famous lesbian and gay neighbourhood (see Figure 7.3). Since the 1950s San Francisco has had a reputation as a city which has a tolerant attitude towards non-heterosexual life-styles. The Second World War and the period immediately afterwards are credited with playing an important role in the emergence of this subculture. It was in the port of San Francisco that servicemen both departed for and returned from overseas duties and it was also here that dishonourable discharges were carried out. Many of those leaving or being dismissed from the services remained in the city. San Francisco developed a reputation for tolerance and for supporting bohemian ways of life. This, combined with California's liberal state laws on homosexuality, led to it emerging as a lesbian- and gay-friendly city. In turn, this reputation attracted queer migrants fleeing from prejudice and discrimination in more conservative towns, cities and rural areas (see also Chapter 8).

Initially, a handful of bars and clubs acted as spaces for social networks to develop in the city. However, these were subject to police raids and often proved to be tran-sient and unstable environments. In the 1970s the Castro district began to emerge as a gay neighbourhood. The rise of this neighbourhood is often associated with Harvey Milk, a dynamic political activist, who opened a camera shop in the Castro in 1972. Milk was influential in developing neighbourhood campaigns and harnessing a gay political vote, before being assassinated (his story was made into the film *The Life and Times of Harvey Milk*).

**Figure 7.3**    The Castro District, San Francisco, USA. Redrawn from Castalls (1983).
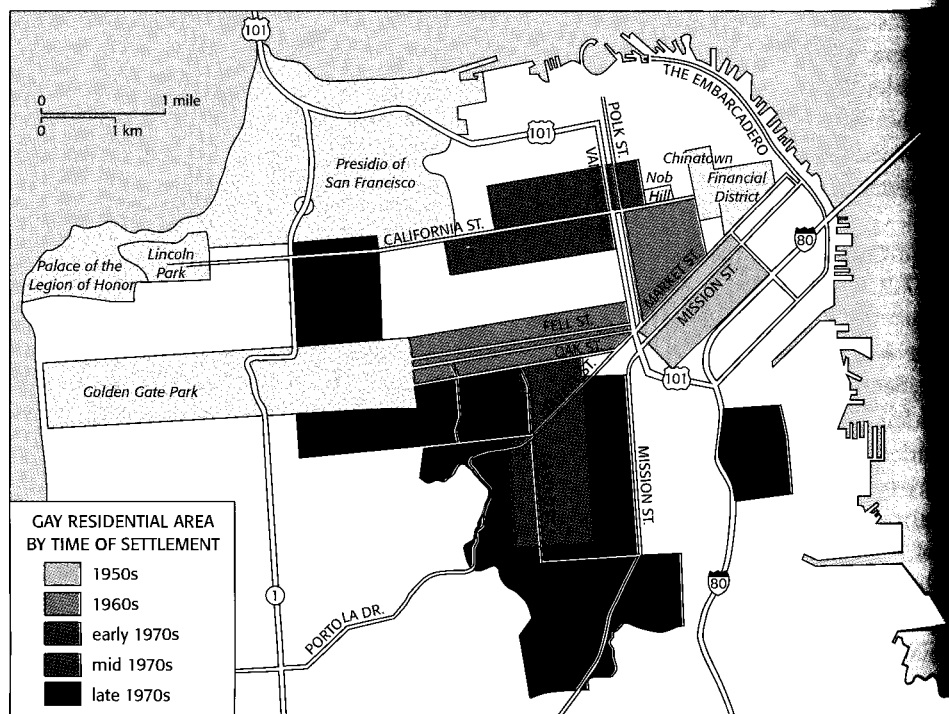


The Castro district developed a reputation as an area of relatively cheap housing which had the potential for renovation, and as a neighbourhood where it was possible to live a gay lifestyle. As more gay men moved into the neighbourhood, bars, clubs, bookstores and other commercial services opened to cater for their needs (Castells 1983, Lauria and Knopp 1985). As a result, gay gentrifiers (mainly men) gradually displaced the long-term poor, minority residents, as well as squeezing out low-income lesbians and gay men (Castells 1983, D'Emilio 1992). This also caused a knock-on effect into the neighbouring Latino Mission district on one side of the Castro and an African American neighbourhood in the Hayes Valley on the other side (Castells 1983). This process of gentrification has caused some debate amongst geographers about the complicity of one oppressed group – gay men (although there is now more of a lesbian presence in the Castro than in the 1970s) – in the perpetuation, through strategies of capital accumulation, of social injustices against other minority groups (see Jackson 1989, Knopp 1992). As Larry Knopp (1998: 159) observes: 'The forging of identities through the economic and political colonisation of territorial spaces (and the related creation of gay-identified places) is much facilitated by class, racial and gender privilege.'

Pink economies based on consumption have also created gay enclaves in many other North American, European and Australasian cities, including, for example, the Marigny neighbourhood in New Orleans, USA (Knopp 1998); the gay village along Canal Street in Manchester, UK (Quilley 1995); Soho/Old Compton Street in London, UK (Binnie 1995); Oxford Street and the surrounding inner-city neighbourhoods of Darlinghurst, Surrey Hills and Paddington in Sydney, Australia (Knopp 1998); and in Amsterdam, Netherlands (Binnie 1995).

Like gay men, lesbians also create their own spaces within cities, although these environments are often less visible to heterosexuals (e.g. Adler and Brenner 1992, Rothenberg 1995, Valentine 1995). Sy Adler and Joanna Brenner (1992) suggest that this is because, like heterosexual women, lesbians have less access to capital than men, and because a fear of male violence deters their willingness to have an obvious presence in the landscape. The influence of feminism has also meant that lesbian 'communities' have tended to be more radical, politicized, and less materially oriented, than those of gay men, which has stymied the development of businesses and bars run for, and by, women.

Rothenberg's study of the Park Slope area of Brooklyn in New York, USA (1995) shows how women tend to create residential rather than commercial spaces. Indeed, the institutional bases of lesbian communities are often made up of non-commercial venues such as support groups, self-defence classes, alternative cafés and co-operative bookstores which are promoted by word of mouth or flyers and are reliant on the energy and enthusiasm of volunteers rather than paid staff. Many of these spaces are shared with other non-commercial users, only being appropriated and transformed into lesbian spaces on specific days at specific times. In this sense, these institutional bases represent a series of spatially concentrated venues that are reasonably fixed in location and regular but not permanent (Valentine 1995). Despite their ephemeral nature, however, these spaces are important locations where lesbian communities are imagined and contested (see Chapter 4).

The visibility of gay men, and, to a lesser extent, lesbians, within major cities reflects the growing confidence of sexual dissidents to assert a claim to sexual citizenship (see also Chapter 9). Indeed, in the late 1990s activists set out not just to establish gay neighbourhood ghettos but to queer the hegemonically straight streets of the whole city. From spectacular celebrations of dissident sexualities in the form of lesbian, gay and bisexual parades and Mardi Gras (Johnson 1997) through to transgressive and disruptive events such as holding 'weddings' and kiss-ins in everyday public spaces, queer activists have both radically appropriated 'public' space and exposed its normative coding as heterosexual (Bell et al. 1994, Bell and Valentine 1995a, 1995b, Valentine 1996a) (see also Chapter 6).

However, there are negative sides to this visibility too. Wayne Myslik (1996) suggests that the spatial concentration of lesbian and gay men in particular districts of the city makes it easier for heterosexuals to both control and target them. He notes, for example, that gay men are more likely to be victimized in gay-identified neighbourhoods or cruising areas than on the heterosexual street – an argument further

supported by the bombing in 1999 of a lesbian and gay pub, the *Admiral Duncan* in Soho, London as part of a wider series of hate crimes aimed at a number of different minority groups.

The **commodification** of gay lifestyles as chic cosmopolitanism and the courting of pink pounds, dollars and euros by the heterosexual market are also causing new problems of what Larry Knopp (1998) terms 'managing success'. Lesbian and gay neighbourhoods such as the Castro and Manchester's gay village are increasingly attracting heterosexual visitors. Likewise, spectacles celebrating lesbian and gay sexuality such as the Sydney Mardi Gras (which is broadcast on state television and advertised in prime tourist spots around the Opera House and Circular Quay) are now being marketed for non-gay-identified consumption. Such examples have provoked some anxiety amongst lesbians and gay men that spaces that were previously considered to be the 'property' of sexual dissidents – effectively, collective 'private spaces' as opposed to the heteronormativity of public space – are being invaded and colonized by heterosexuals. This process is feared to be undermining the gay identity of these spaces, so eroding what lesbians and gay men have often taken for granted as safe environments (Whittle 1994).

These examples demonstrate that sexual and spatial identities are mutually constituted. Sexual identities depend to some extent on particular spaces for their production (for example, an individual's sexual identity may be read as lesbian or gay from the space they occupy, or a person may only feel able to 'come out' and identify as gay in a lesbian or gay space). Spatial visibility has thus played a key part in the development of sexual dissidents' rights. In turn, space is also produced through the performance of identities. For example, the performance of lesbian and gay identities can queer environments that are taken for granted as heterosexual, while likewise the performance of heterosexual identities within spaces assumed to be gay can challenge these productions of space too.

So far, this section has focused on lesbian and gay sexuality within the city. Yet, heterosexuality – in terms of sex workers and their clients – has also traditionally been identified with particular city neighbourhoods. Phil Hubbard (1999) points out that the dominant image of prostitution in the West is of women walking the streets, although they actually constitute a minority of those employed in sex work. Both women and men work in saunas, massage parlours, sex clubs, brothels, bars or even from their own homes. Within the sex industry different forms of employment are graded in a hierarchy with street work at the bottom, high-class escort agencies at the top and window work (where prostitutes sit in public view) and stripping/dancing somewhere in between.

Street prostitutes are frequently subject to violence at the hands of their 'punters' and pimps and receive little protection or support from the police, who have a history of regarding them as 'deserving of violence'. Although they regard themselves as skilled at spotting 'dodgy' clients, they only have a split second to make these judgements, and finding 'private' spaces (such as deserted car parks, alleyways and waste ground) to have sex can put prostitutes into situations where they are vulnerable to attack (Hubbard 1999). Off-street sex workers are safer in that they work

in familiar and contained environments to which entry is often controlled by a recep-
tionist, bouncer or CCTV but there are other disadvantages too. They are highly
constrained and often have to work long shifts with none of the rights or benefits
enjoyed by employees in other sorts of occupation, and they are open to financial
exploitation as well as violence from those who run the bars, clubs or brothels in
which they work.

Street work has traditionally been associated with particular city neighbourhoods
that are stigmatized as immoral. For example, the Chicago School of Human
Ecology identified certain inner-city areas as 'vice districts', contrasting the sexual
morality of these neighbourhoods with the stable and settled residential suburbs (see
Chapter 4). The CSHE's work is problematic in terms of contemporary understandings
of sexuality and space because it represented space as a passive container or back-
drop for sexual relations, rather than recognizing the active role space plays in their
constitution (see above). It also represented prostitutes as inherently deviant, rather
than showing any understandings of the lifestyles and practices of sex workers
(Hubbard 1999).

Subsequent geographies of sex work have moved away from taking such a
moralistic stance. Ashworth et al. (1988) contrast erotic entertainment areas in city
centres which cater for international tourists such as Zeedijk in Amsterdam, Soho
in London and La Pigalle in Paris with street work, which they suggest is usually
located outside the centre city in marginalized neighbourhoods that are part-
residential and part-commercial. While they suggest that these red-light districts
are a product of local demand and supply, other studies show that clients are often
drawn from a wide area and that sex workers themselves also prefer to work away
from where they live (Hart 1995, 1998).

In contrast to Ashworth et al.'s (1988) account, which understands the emer-
gence of red-light districts in terms of market forces, Symanski (1981: 35) explains
their location in terms of moral orders (see Chapter 6), arguing that they are located
'where public opinion, financial interests and those who enforce the laws have pushed
prostitution or allowed it to remain'. Understandings of the geographies of prosti-
tution in terms of sexuality, morality, power and the city have been developed
by Hubbard (1999). He claims that 'prostitutes are both socially and spatially
marginalised by the State and the law in such a way as to maintain and legitimise
the moral values of heterosexuality, generally (but not exclusively) maintained in
the interests of white, middle class, male subjects' and further demonstrates 'the way
that the separation, sequestration and enclosure of prostitutes in specific sites pro-
duces and reproduces the distinctions between moral heterosexual subjects and those
who embody an immoral and illicit sexuality' (Hubbard 1999: 30). Yet at the same
time, Hubbard (1999) draws on Foucauldian notions of power (see Chapter 5), in
which power is understood not only as an oppressive force, but also, through the
creation of resistances, as an enabling force, to look at how the spatial production
of immoral sexuality is contested. For example, prostitutes' rights groups are fight-
ing for greater protection and support – in other words, for sexual citizenship (see
Chapter 9).

■ **Summary**

- Cities are characterized by density, intensity and proximity.

- Despite their heterogeneity, it is also possible to differentiate relatively homogeneous areas within cities.

- In the 1960s and 1970s social geographers mapped the segregation of different housing areas within cities identified on the basis of class or ethnicity.

- In the 1980s researchers began to conceptualize 'race' as a social construction and to understand patterns of segregation in terms of institutional racism.

- This opened up the issue of whiteness – particularly the way in which white people view themselves as racially and culturally neutral, rather than recognizing their racial and cultural privilege.

- Contemporary work focuses on unpacking racialized dichotomies such as black–white and recognizing the complex differentiation of racial identities.

- The term 'underclass' is used to describe those who experience intergenerational poverty, welfare dependency and unemployment.

- The underclass is constructed in and through the space of 'the ghetto', while these spaces are constructed through the people which inhabit them.

- Since the 1980s middle-class people have been moving into working-class neighbourhoods, resulting in the gentrification of these post-industrial areas.

- The process of gentrification brings about changes in both the social and physical make-up of city neighbourhoods.

- There are a range of different theoretical explanations for gentrification.

- Gay men are often in the vanguard of gentrification. Lesbians also create their own spaces within cities, although these are often less visible to heterosexuals.

- Geographies of prostitution can be understood in terms of morality and power within the city.

## 7.3 The flâneur

The everyday act of wandering the city streets has a long history and has been the object of theoretical exploration. In the nineteenth century the rise of capitalism produced new spaces of consumption such as boulevards, cafés, and arcades in the city. These spaces became home to the flâneur, who, indifferent to the pace of modern life, enjoyed strolling anonymously around the streets in the role of an urban onlooker, voyeuristically taking in the spectacle of city life but not participating in it. Mike Featherstone (1998: 913) explains: 'On the one hand, the flâneur is the idler or waster; on the other hand, he is the observer or detective, the suspicious person who is always looking, noting and classifying . . . The flâneur seeks an immersion in the sensations of the city, he seeks to "bathe in the crowd", to become lost in feelings, to succumb to the pull of random desires and the pleasures of scopophilia.' In this way, the flâneur swings between positions of immersion and detachment, while exhibiting the reflexivity of an artist, writer, or journalist.

Historically, the flâneur is associated with the writings of the poet Charles Baudelaire and was inevitably assumed to be a man. Respectable middle-class women of the nineteenth century were assumed to be at home in the suburbs and not to have the freedom to stroll around the city, although lesbians, the elderly, widows and prostitutes did have more opportunities to be on the streets.

However, Elizabeth Wilson (1992), in her book *The Sphinx in the City* suggests that a female flâneur or a flâneuse was not an impossibility. She argues that nineteenth-century women did have more freedom in the city than their counterparts who lived in villages and towns. Women were often visible in public and liminal public/private spaces like department stores, tearooms, hotels and museums and did therefore have some awareness of the excitement and possibilities of the city. Certainly, they became more visible in it towards the end of the nineteenth century, although they were still constrained by the male gaze and a fear of harassment. In this sense, women were torn between a desire for, and a dread of, city life (Walkovitz 1992). Wilson (1991) argues that, towards the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, urban living was important to the development of feminism because it offered women some escape from patriarchal control by providing them with more anonymity, new opportunities to associate with women from wider backgrounds, and the chance to develop their sexualities. In contrast, to many accounts of the flâneur which credit him with a voyeuristic mastery, Wilson (1991) presents him as a more insecure, ambiguous and marginal character. To her he is a passive, feminine figure rather than a symbol of active masculine power.

Other writers, such as Sally Munt (1995) and David Bell and Jon Binnie (1999), have highlighted queer appropriations of street life and spectatorship. Appropriating the street, walking, looking and being looked at, the chance both to 'disappear in a crowd but also to catch glances, to look and be looked at, the chance for a brief encounter' (Bell and Binnie 1998: 131) are all important for sexual dissidents. Drawing on lesbian literature from the 1950s onwards, Munt considers the role of

the lesbian flâneur as a sexual adventurer. She writes, 'Swaggering down the street in her butch drag casting her roving eye left and right, the lesbian flâneur signifies a mobilised female sexuality *in control*, not out of control' (Munt 1995: 121). Similarly Bell and Binnie (1998) focus on the novel *The Dancer from the Dance* by Edmund White, which pre-dates the AIDS epidemic, as an example of the eroticization of the city and its streets by gay men. In this novel the city streets are represented as spaces for the realization of desire and as utopian and democratic spaces. They then go on to consider how the city was also appropriated within queer skinhead culture of the 1990s by reflecting on a series of skinhead novels by Stewart Home. In these books streets are still eroticized, but here it is a brutal eroticism where the streets are the sites of violence and revolution.

In the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries the construction and transformation of cultural sites and refurbishment of city centres has created new places in which to shop, and to visit, new sensations and experiences and hence new spaces in which people can stroll (see section 7.4). The contemporary focus on individualization is also creating a new wave of urban flâneurs who are concerned with fashion and the presentation of the self. Indeed, some writers have argued that the contemporary recreational shopper is a flâneur (Falk and Campbell 1997, Featherstone 1998). Shopping malls do not just sell goods to be bought and taken away, they also offer free experiences of sociality and display to be consumed on the spot in the form of aesthetic and highly designed environments containing fountains, mirrors, plants, food halls and entertainments (see section 7.4). Shopping is no longer just about purchasing goods, it is also about the act of strolling, mingling in a crowd, and enjoying the opportunity to consume the sensations and experiences of the surroundings. In other words, the contemporary shopper in the mall is caught in the same tension between immersion and detachment as the nineteenth-century flâneur wandering down the boulevards (Falk and Campbell 1997, Featherstone 1998).

However, in celebrating the contemporary flâneur/flâneuse it is important to remember that mobility and the act of seeing, which are so fundamental to the voyeuristic stroller, are not shared by all citizens. People with physical or visual impairments can be denied the freedoms to wander the streets in ways taken for granted by able-bodied citizens because of the disabling nature of many city environments (Hahn 1986, Butler and Bowlby 1997, Gleeson 1998, Parr and Butler 1999; see also Chapter 2).

### ■ Summary

- The everyday act of wandering the city streets has a long history and has been the subject of theoretical exploration.
- The flâneur – an urban onlooker who enjoys taking in the spectacle of the city but not participating in it – is associated with the writings of the poet Charles Baudelaire.

- The flâneur is often assumed to be a man but some writers have highlighted the flâneuse and queer appropriations of street life and spectatorship.

## ■ 7.4 Landscapes of consumption

In the 1970s and early 1980s North American and European cities that had been developed around industrial production were undermined by economic restructuring and the associated process of de-industrialization. Large areas of city centres became derelict and urban populations experienced long-term structural unemployment, the outcome of which was that many major cities lost their sense of both purpose and identity. Lovatt and O'Connor (1995: 127) comment, 'Ugly grim cities they may have been, but formerly they produced, they made for the world. Now they were just ugly and grim.' In the USA de-industrialized cities were pathologized as dangerous; in the UK there was concern that they were becoming monofunctional places dominated by shops and offices. Poor provision of public transport at night, licensing law constraints, home-centredness, suburbanization and the dominance of the car at the expense of pedestrians were all cited as factors that were eroding an urban way of life (Bianchini 1995).

Despite this decline in major cities, their Central Business Districts still represented to organizations important fixed capital in terms of building and land. They were not about to write this off. In the late 1980s and 1990s a process of revalorizing city centres began, which involved both a re-emphasis on the importance of centrality and an attempt to mobilize culture to lure capital back into the city (Harvey 1989). Cities contain art and cultural heritage (e.g. museums, galleries, buildings) as well as being sites of cultural production, housing creative industries associated with fashion, television, music, food, the arts, tourism, leisure and publishing. Culture was identified as an alternative source of wealth both because it was realized that the cultural capital of particular cities could be converted into economic capital and because cultural industries themselves generate wealth.

A new significance was attached to reorganizing city centres around consumption rather than production, in which the emphasis was on consumer goods and leisure time activities that incorporate high levels of design, style and fashionable cultural imagery (Featherstone 1991). Gentrification and press coverage of bohemian or exotic sub-cultures helped to glamorize the city and to create an image of urban living as an aesthetic or artistic lifestyle (Zukin 1988, 1998).

Whereas in the 1970s cities competed to represent themselves as most in need, in order to win subsidies and government support, now the emphasis is on re-imaging cities in a positive light to sell them in a competitive global marketplace (see section 7.5). Cultural differentiation and vibrancy are playing a key part in this process of re-imaging (Lovatt and O'Connor 1995). As Montgomery (1995a: 143) explains:

**Plate 7.2**    The 24-hour city (© Becky Kennison)



'Culture is the means by which cities express identity, character, uniqueness, and make positive statements about themselves, who they are, what they do and where they are going.'

City officials who in the 1960s and 1970s would have criticized ethnic or lesbian and gay lifestyles now celebrate these neighbourhoods as examples of the cities' diversity and vitality (see section 7.5). Quilley (1995: 47) claims that Manchester's gay village 'has led the way in re-appropriating the street for pedestrians and flâneurs; for a mode of urban experience that is central to European notions of urbanity in which positive ambience in public space is the result of social (face to face) vibrancy and participation. This is best achieved and experienced through the act of strolling. Gay gentrification in the neighbouring Granby Village development has contributed to this project in the vicinity of Canal Street.'

Promoting a vibrant culture has also meant recognizing the potential of the night-time economy. Without the daytime constraints of work and social obligations, night is the time when most people have the freedom to do what they want (Bianchini 1995). It is a time of play, socialization and encounter. By encouraging daytime businesses to stay open late or even all through the night, Bianchini (1995) observes, cities have the opportunity to effectively double their economy (see Plate 7.2). As well as traditional night-time spaces such as bars, clubs and restaurants, other places such as shops, gyms, galleries and so on are now also opening longer and

later, and non-commercial activities like street theatre or social clubs and evening societies are also flourishing.

In European cities what is known as *Animation Culturel* (the word 'animation' is used to mean 'giving life back') emerged in the 1970s as one component in attempts to revitalize cities. This involved the organization of street festivals, street theatre and events such as concerts and art exhibitions in public places both at lunchtime and during the evenings. Between 1977 and 1985 Rome City Council held a programme of summer cultural events known as *Estate romana*. Four different centres of activity, connected by cheap, late-night bus services, were promoted: City of Film (located in a disused slaughterhouse), City of Sports and Dance (held in an archaeological park), City of Television (in the park of a municipally owned villa) and City of Theatre (in a street of redundant warehouses) (Bianchini 1995). Another example of *Animation Culturel* is found in Barcelona which holds a large-scale cultural event in the form of a five-day major fiesta known as *La Mercè*. Here arts, music, and other forms of performance, including a parade of giant papier mâché figures, a competition of castellers (groups of people building human castles), a parade of stilt walkers, correfoc (groups of young people dressed as devils and carrying papier mâché beasts who march through streets letting off fireworks), and night-time firework displays take place in open spaces throughout the city (Schuster 1995).

Montgomery (1995b: 104) argues that the theory behind such events is that 'by having people on the streets, in the cafés and moving through the public realm, urban vitality is stimulated'. The intention is to generate flows of people engaged in different layers of activities (working, shopping, strolling, socializing, playing) and to reopen the city as a meeting place so that people's friendships and leisure time will be conducted in bars, restaurants and galleries rather than at home. In turn, it is argued, drawing a diverse range of people onto the streets makes everybody feel safer because they believe they can rely on the 'natural surveillance' of other 'eyes on the street' to protect them from 'public' dangers, rather than relying on CCTV and private security forces (Jacobs 1961). For example, Robert Wassermann, the Assistant to the Police Commissioner, of Boston, USA, claims that: 'We believe that arts activities can generally help reduce street crime. Both in those areas of Boston which have regular street cultural activities and in our theatre districts, there tends to be less crime during those times of the day as the cultural events are ongoing' (cited in Montgomery 1995b: 106).

Temple Bar in Dublin, Eire, provides a good example of the use of culture to revitalize a city in a process dubbed by Montgomery (1995a: 165) 'urban stewardship'. This district, which was built and developed in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, is known as the cultural quarter of the city and covers a 218-acre area between O'Connell Bridge to the east, Dame Street to the south and the river Liffey to the north. In the 1970s, despite its central location, Temple Bar had become something of a backwater and its future was uncertain because the State Bus Company (CIE) had declared its intention to develop it as a transportation hub and had begun to buy up property ready for demolition. As a result, property and rental values in the

neighbourhood fell. In turn, businesses and activities that could only afford low rents and were willing to accept short tenancy agreements began to move into the area. These included artists' studios, galleries, recording studios, restaurants, second-hand clothes shops, book shops and record stores (Montgomery 1995a).

These cultural industries and businesses began to flourish and so the area developed a reputation for its vitality, being dubbed 'Dublin's Left Bank'. As a consequence, the local traders and community groups then began to organize themselves. A group of individual business people and cultural entrepreneurs formed the Temple Bar 91 group to bid for European Union grants to fund a Temple Bar urban renewal scheme. The intention behind this was to create and sustain the cultural industries; to prevent the loss of Irish talent overseas; to stimulate the night-time as well as the daytime economy; to use place marketing to build on Temple Bar's identity and raise its profile in Eire and beyond; to conserve and renew the architectural identity of the neighbourhood; and to reclaim and redevelop derelict properties. In particular, the intention was to buy the CIE's (the state bus company) property holdings to prevent their sale to another commercial developer. The Temple Bar Development Council (TBDC) was also set up; this produced a manifesto for the creation of a Cultural Enterprise Centre in the Temple Bar neighbourhood. The TBDC's aims were to conserve and improve the environment, to develop recreation and tourism, and to create employment through public and private enterprise (Montgomery 1995a).

The bid to the European Union was eventually successful and the Irish government acted to establish a state-owned trading company called Temple Bar Properties to purchase CIE's and the Dublin Corporation's property portfolios (through compulsory purchase if necessary) and to oversee the development of the area. Tax incentives have been introduced to encourage private property owners to renew and improve buildings and a range of measures have been used to develop major cultural centres to promote the strategic growth of particular cultural activities. These centres include the Irish Film Centre, Temple Bar Photography Gallery, the Temple Bar Gallery and Artist Studio, Children's Arts Centre, and so on (Montgomery 1995a).

The revitalization of cities around culture and consumption has not been without its critics. Property developers and multi-national corporations are accused of creating standardized consumption and entertainment spaces (such as mega malls and multiplex cinemas) within cities, while consumption practices predicated on middle-class lifestyles – particularly gentrification – are blamed for displacing other social groups who cannot afford them. Some critics argue that, through these processes, the uniqueness and cultural diversity of urban identities are being eroded as fast as cities are trying to package and sell themselves around claims of cultural distinctiveness (Zukin 1998).

The desire of city officials and developers to attract the middle classes and middle-aged people with high disposable incomes back into the city has prompted measures designed to make the streets feel safer and so to reverse the downward spiral of abandonment identified in Chapter 6. Part of this has involved efforts to

'clean up' city streets by removing so-called undesirable groups such as the homeless and teenagers. Increasingly, commercial districts, though technically 'public' spaces, are run and policed by private associations or corporations which set the rules about who is allowed in and how they are allowed to behave (see Chapter 6). For example, the New York City Central and Prospect Parks are partly financed and run by private organizations including individual and corporate patrons rather than by the New York City Parks Department (Zukin 1998). Such processes are criticized as undemocratic and exclusionary. The outcome of them is to undermine rather than foster diversity, vibrancy and social justice within the city.

Despite these criticisms of the private sector management of public space, Sharon Zukin (1998) is still upbeat about the ability of different cultural and ethnic groups to forge their own 'urban' lifestyles within their own neighbourhoods. Here, she argues, the interaction and juxtaposition of many different lifestyles and traditions continues to create a 'hybrid' urban culture which resists domination by corporations or the middle class. Zukin writes (1998: 836): 'Newspaper stands owned by members of one immigrant group sell newspapers written in other languages. Store owners stock distinctive ethnic goods that will appeal to several different ethnic groups, and some goods, such as clothing and cosmetics are re-exported to the same or even different countries of origin . . . Here, "transnational" consumers interact and develop their own urban lifestyles.' It is this diversity which Zukin (1998: 837) claims continues to be 'the city's most important product'.

The following subsections focus on three examples of different spaces of culture and consumption within the city: the mall, the restaurant and the club.

## ■ 7.4.1 The mall

Large shopping malls in, and on the outskirts of, urban areas (such as West Edmonton Mall, Canada, Brent Cross, London, UK, and Faneuil Hall Marketplace in Boston, USA) have developed as a result of a range of forces, including postwar consumer affluence, technological change, growth in car ownership, and the increase in numbers of women in paid employment. Shopping is now the second most important cultural activity in North America after watching TV (Goss 1992). Goods not only sustain our everyday material living standards, they also define our individual and collective identities.

Downtown malls are often designed to reflect a 'modernist nostalgia for authentic community, perceived to exist only in past and distant places' (Goss 1993: 22). An example is Faneuil Hall Marketplace in Boston, where the restored waterfront area combines idealized historical urban community and a street market. The shops are decorated with antique signs and props and street entertainers in costume are on hand (Goss 1992). These malls provide not only shops but also entertainment, food and drink, dance/concerts and, in some cases, funfairs and fashion shows. Jon Goss (1993) points out that the ability of shopping centres to cater to all tastes is

actually the result of their organizational intelligence and spatial strategies of control. He writes: 'A sophisticated apparatus researches consumers' personal profiles, their insecurities and desires, and produces a space that comfortably satisfies both individual and mass consumers and manipulates the behaviour of both to not-so different degrees' (Goss 1993: 40–1).

Most large-scale malls are designed to circulate shoppers in order to maximize the number of goods they will see, though, according to Frank Mort (1989), this also contributes to making them 'new' sexual cruising grounds for some men and women. Seating is provided at 'pause points' so that shoppers can review progress, rearrange their bags and regroup, but these are never too comfortable because they might distract shoppers from consuming or attract undesirable groups (e.g. the elderly, the young, the homeless). There are usually no clocks or windows and the temperature and lighting are carefully controlled to mask the passing of time. Cleaning, security staff and CCTV maintain the cleanliness and order of the space, while water and music are used to calm tensions and promote sales (Goss 1992). As such, malls 'are artificial environments, which, unlike the main street, have no prior reason for existence and no historic rootedness in place' (Goss 1992: 166).

Yet, this very artificiality – what Goss (1992) dubs the 'magic of the mall' – means that many consumers regard them as idealized spaces. Here, they are free from the inconvenience of the weather, pollution and traffic, and able to avoid any confrontation with social difference, fear of crime and the general sense of disorder and incivility which is associated with 'the street' (see Chapter 6). In this sense, Jackson (1998) argues, malls represent in effect the 'domestication' of the street. However, he claims, 'whereas the idealised form of the public street is a relatively open and democratic space, the shopping centre offers only a parody of participation: where "credit card citizenship" allows the consumer to purchase an identity, engaging vicariously in their chosen lifestyle' without any of the inconveniences or responsibilities of a truly 'public' space (Jackson 1997: 178). Indeed, although malls are a magnet for young people, offering them not only the chance to window shop but to escape the dangers of the streets (Vanderbeck 1999), as a group with low spending power they often find themselves excluded from these spaces and virtually disenfranchised from city life (Bianchini 1990). This is not to suggest, however, that shoppers and browsers are entirely passive in the face of the dictates of shopping centre managers and security staff; control is also tactically appropriated by consumers.

■   ### 7.4.2 The restaurant

Eating places are increasingly important to the urban landscape. There has been a renaissance in dining out in contemporary Western cities. The diversity of different ethnic restaurants available gives diners the chance to get a taste of other places. For example, London's listings magazine *Time Out* recently implored its readers: 'Give your tongue a holiday and treat yourself to the best meals in the world –

without setting foot outside our fair capital' (Cook and Crang 1996: 131). On the surface, these places offer a way of stimulating a new level of cultural interest in different cultures and places and support for anti-racism. Yet, May (1996) argues that consumption of such foods is often dependent on and helps to reproduce racist imaginative geographies. bell hooks (1992) also warns that, through the process of consuming 'other' places, we often try to contain and represent them within our own frameworks. She writes that this 'commodification of difference promotes paradigms of consumption wherein whatever difference the Other inhabits is eradicated, via exchange, by a consumer cannibalism that not only displaces the Other but denies the significance of that other's history through a process of decontextualisation' (hooks 1992: 31).

Restaurants, however, are not just important for their food but also for the social interactions which take place within them. '[T]he restaurant exists as a feature of the entertainment industry, and is as much concerned with the marketing of emotional moods and desires as with the selling of food. Eating in the public domain has become a mode of demonstrating one's standing and one's distinction by associating oneself with the ready-made ambience of the restaurant itself' (Beardsworth and Keil 1990: 142–3). The behaviour of diners in formal restaurants is very mannered and structured (Finkelstein 1989). These are performative environments where there are often elaborate place ballets in which not only diners are on display but also staff (Crang 1994) (see also Chapter 5). Sharon Zukin (1995) observes, for example, how artists and resting actors are often hired to work in top restaurants on the basis of their performative personalities. She writes: 'Waiters are less important than chefs in creating restaurant food. They are no less significant, however, in creating the experience of dining out. For many people, oblivious of restaurant workers' social background, waiters are actors in the daily drama of urban culture' (Zukin 1995: 154).

While those who know how to behave in such social environments may feel socially comfortable and even take pleasure from demonstrating a shared social knowledge, those who are less familiar with the social etiquettes of particular restaurants can feel 'out of place' in these socially regulated environments, although eating above one's social station can also provide a rare taste (in both the culinary and social senses of the word) of how the 'other half lives' (Valentine 1999e).

Restaurants are the site of all the daily dramas of urban life – everything from births, marriages, adulterous affairs, divorce and death are recorded at city restaurant tables. They represent a halfway house between the communal environment of a 'public' space such as a bar or club and the intimacy of home. As such, they are a 'safe' yet fairly 'private' and 'romantic' environment for women to meet men on first dates. Meals, like other forms of consumption, also provide currency for everyday conversations and even a way for people to talk about their relationships. Through the performative act of sharing a meal, individuals can articulate their identities and competence in public culture, develop contingent knowledges about each other and even assess their compatibility. The twin restaurant characteristics of 'privacy'

and 'romance' also mean that they can be important sites for playing out adulterous affairs (Cline 1990). Sally Cline (1990) cites the example of Robin, a secretary, who described how, when she started an affair, food assumed great significance in her life because she and her lover would use restaurants as their meeting place.

The business lunch has long been recognized as an essential part of corporate entertainment. During the early 1980s, not only the 'power lunch', but also the 'power breakfast', was imported from the USA into the UK. A recent British survey of advertising executives found that, on average, they attend or host one lunch per week (Athenaeum, 1996). The restaurant provides a neutral space in which to meet competitors, support services (e.g. lawyers and accountants) and producers or suppliers, all of whom are often concentrated within offices in the centres of cities (Bergman 1979). The importance of these face-to-face meetings was emphasized by Michael Korda, editor-in-chief of publishers Simon and Schuster, when he claimed that '*the most powerful place in town [for my industry] is the Grill Room of the Four Seasons* [a restaurant in New York]' (*New York Times* 1976, quoted in Bergman 1979: 236). The business lunch is a place not only for negotiating, dealing and hiring and firing, but also for binding people together and creating business networks.

## ■ 7.4.3 The club

The UK nightclub industry is estimated to be worth approximately £2 billion per year and attracts over a million people per week (Hyder 1995). It therefore offers many regenerative possibilities for decaying inner-city areas. Notably, clubs bring young people into the city and onto the streets, while at the same time also being staffed by other young people, often students, who can be paid low wages and be expected to work long, unsocial shifts.

Most spaces of the city are designed for travelling through rather than socializing in, or are designed in such a way as to minimize unplanned or undesired encounters with strangers (Malbon 1998). Ben Malbon (1998) suggests that in the presence of other people whom we do not know we often project a sense of indifference to them: a disassociation (Malbon 1998). In contrast, he argues that clubs are actually spaces where people enjoy being near to others: they are spaces of identification. A desire for a sense of togetherness with other people is a crucial part of the experience of clubbing. The club can generate affinity between the place and the people in it in the same way that sporting venues and festivals do. Malbon (1999) observes that the ritual of queuing at the door and the knowledges and competencies in terms of bodily practices (the look, etc) which are necessary to gain entry all foster a sense of group identity, albeit one that is fleeting and transitory.

The dance floor of the club itself offers a sensuous mind and body experience. Music in particular plays a powerful role in creating this emotionally charged atmosphere. The sense of conviviality, empathy and unity produced by sharing a space is often boosted by the use of drugs such as Ecstasy. The mixture of dark and light

spaces within the club means that, although it is often crowded, it is easy for club-bers to lose sight of others. In this way, the intense but fleeting nature of social contact within this space offers a respite from normal rules of interaction and ordering outside of the club (Malbon 1999).

Malbon (1998: 271) defines clubbing as a performance 'where the lights (or darkness), the sounds, the possible use of drugs, the practices (and rituals) of dancing and the proximity of the "audience" all add to its intensity'. In the club, he argues, it is possible for young people to lose themselves, to forget the outside world and all its pressures. The space of the club offers a dislocation from the ties of everyday life and the opportunity for clubbers 'to inscribe their own creativities upon a shared space, to create a space of their own making of which they are also the consumers' (Malbon 1998: 280).

### ■ Summary

- In the face of de-industrialization cities have sought to revive their decaying centres by mobilizing culture to lure capital back into the city.

- Cultural differentiation and the vibrancy of consumption spaces such as malls, restaurants and clubs play a key part in this process of re-imaging.

- Critics argue that such processes are creating standardized consumption spaces within cities, displacing other social groups, and are undemocratic and exclusionary.

## ■ 7.5 Selling the city

'The practice of selling places entails the various ways in which public and private agencies – local authorities and local entrepreneurs, often working collaboratively strive to "sell" the image of a particular geographically defined "place", usually a town or city, so as to make it attractive to economic enterprise [especially footloose high-tech industries], tourists and even to inhabitants of the place' (Philo and Kearns 1993: 3). Cities are competing against each other in the scramble to get a share of capital investment (at a time when new technologies have produced an unprecedented mobility of capital) and so each needs to carve out a place for itself in the global economy (see Plate 7.3). Its ability to do so is dependent upon it being able to offer something 'different' or 'more' than its counterparts. In this way places are becoming commodities to be packaged, advertised, marketed and consumed, just like any other goods (Philo and Kearns 1993).

But, as the opening quote suggested, this (re)imaging of cities is not just an economic process but also a social one, which aims to rebuild civic pride and achieve

**Plate 7.3**    Manchester: at the heart of the global economy?
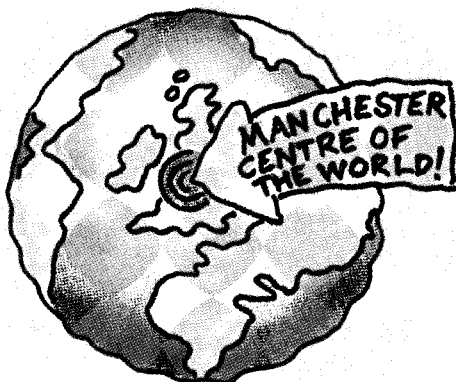


social consensus for changes. As such, it is a 'subtle form of socialisation designe
to convince local people, many of whom will be disadvantaged and potentially di
affected, that they are important cogs in a successful community and that all sor
of "good things" are really done on their behalf' (Philo and Kearns 1993: 3). Dav
Harvey (1989) has dubbed the use of events and celebrations to sell cities, not on
on a national or global scale but also to local people, as the phenomenon of 'bre
and circuses', in the sense that local people are encouraged to enjoy a taste of fu
for the day and to forget the problems of their everyday lives.

The selling of cities often involves promoting traditions, lifestyles, and the ar
which are supposed to be local or 'authentic', even though in practice these repre
entations often use cultural motifs that are only loosely associated with the plac
or they play upon or manipulate pride in local history to mobilize particular moment
or anniversaries. These images of past industrial prosperity or heroic imagery arou
particular events are often put together to create marketable pastiches of culture a
history which are both decontextualized and superficial.

All cities play upon their uniqueness and cosmopolitanism. In marketi
Manchester, UK, its City Council has attempted to portray it as culturally diver
using the gay village along with other cultural quarters, such as Chinatown, as pro
of the city's cosmopolitan and progressive credentials (Quilley 1995). The gay vi
lage in particular has been central to the re-imaging of Manchester and its attem
to represent itself as a post-industrial, service-based economy with an internation
reputation for its clubs, nightlife and European-style street ambience. Maps of t
village are produced by the City Council tourist office, which identify its boun
aries, entertainments and institutions.

However, despite the emphasis on uniqueness, Philo and Kearns (1993) po
out the somewhat ironic universal vocabulary of central, bigger, better and mo
beautiful which appears in the imaging of most cities. They write, 'the practice
selling places may even generate sameness and blandness despite its appearance

bringing geographical difference into the fold of contemporary economic and political discourse' (Philo and Kearns 1993: 21).

Not surprisingly, conflicts over cultural representations often arise when local people consider place marketeers' representations to be unfaithful or unwanted, when they intentionally or unintentionally obscure 'other' groups or their histories, or when they go against the experiences and understandings of local people, who may contrast the ideals of the place marketeers with the reality of what is actually offered to locals in terms of employment and social opportunities (Philo and Kearns 1993).

Glasgow, Scotland, provides a good example of the marketing of a city which has caused local disquiet. Glasgow was once a famous industrial city built on the river Clyde and known as the 'second city of empire'. Following de-industrialization and decline in the 1970s, the city authorities have attempted to create a new economic identity for the city. These economic regeneration initiatives were started in the early 1980s by Glasgow District Council. Since the 1990s the Glasgow Development Agency has attempted to reposition the city by promoting its success at winning investment in face of globalization. The language of its marketing emphasizes positive change, with slogans such as 'Glasgow's Miles Better', the 'Cinderella City', 'Phoenix from the Ashes', and so on (McInroy and Boyle 1996). McInroy and Boyle (1996) also provide an example of a newspaper article in the local *Evening Times* entitled 'Fat City: Glasgow is billions better as investment money rolls in'. This provided a map of the 'New Glasgow' in which buildings were marked as evidence of Glasgow's rejuvenation. The Glasgow District Council was so pleased with this representation that it had hundreds of copies printed off to give to other journalists, visitors and tourists.

At the same time 'the local state has also been active in manufacturing other cultural identities for the city' (McInroy and Boyle 1996: 74). In particular, Glasgow has been marketed as a city that is committed to the arts. Since the early 1980s an annual arts festival, the Mayfest, has been launched, and the Burrell Collection, a new Royal Concert Hall and the Gallery of Modern Art have all been opened. In 1990 Glasgow was European City of Culture and in 1999 it was named British City of Architecture. Mass participation spectacles such as the Glasgow Garden Festival have also been used to distract the local people from the economic and social problems of the city.

However, rather than legitimating local economic development strategies, civic boosterism in Glasgow actually antagonized local people and was met with opposition. In 1990 the Workers' City was launched by a group of 40 left-wing activists to contest the way the City Council was handling the European City of Culture initiative (McInroy and Boyle 1996). They opposed the way the leader of the Council was, in their opinion, forcing through place promotion, regardless of the views of other councillors, civil servants and the public. They were also very unhappy about the sanitized and self-important image of the city that was being marketed. Although this group did not share a universal vision of Glasgow, they were united in their criticism that the marketeers were ignoring the city's heritage, which was strongly

bound up with working-class industrial struggles and a history of municipal social
ism. They regarded the efforts to promote the city as friendly to global capital rather
than to market its socialist history and identity as, in effect, selling the soul of the
city. The activists organized protests, petitions, meetings and marches, and put their
case through letter-writing campaigns to the press, and contributions to various TV
and radio programmes (McInroy and Boyle 1996). Although they recognized the
difficulties of competition in a global world, the Workers' City activists argued that
Glasgow needed to work through its own identity and that the process of cultural
transition needed to happen at a slower pace so that the city could find a new image
with which it could be comfortable.

### ■ Summary

- In the competition to attract inward investment cities are becoming
  commodities to be packaged, advertised, marketed and consumed.

- Promotional campaigns aim to create new economic and cultural
  identities for cities and to distract local people from local economic and
  social problems.

- Conflicts over cultural representations often arise when local people
  consider the place marketeers' representations to be unfaithful or
  unwanted.

### ■ 7.6 Nature in the city

Western thought has always positioned the rural and urban in opposition to each
other (see also Chapter 8). All green and open spaces are assumed to be in the coun-
tryside, whereas the city is imagined as an overcrowded, polluted, concrete jungle,
the very antithesis of nature and sustainability. The contrast between the two spaces
has prompted urban-to-rural migration and the flight of people to the green sub-
urbs. While a lot of attention has been paid to the way the city is penetrating the
country in the form of urban sprawl, there is little consideration of the opposite pro-
cess: how nature pervades the city.

Yet the urban/rural dichotomy is another example of the dangers of binary think-
ing (see also discussions of man/woman in Chapter 2 and public/private in Chap-
ter 3 and Chapter 6). There is no clear separation between country and city. Green
spaces are embedded in the city rather than separate from it, a variety of species of
plants and animals inhabit or move within and through urban environments. Indeed,
the urban and the rural are part of the same ecosystems so that the city can affect
nature, for example through air or water pollution (Hinchliffe 1999).

## 7.6.1 Open spaces

What Jacqueline Burgess (1998: 115) describes as 'soft urban landscapes' – parks, gardens, waterways, commonland, woodland – make up important in-between spaces within the city. It is estimated that around 11 per cent of London is actually open space (McLaren 1992).

Public space has always been an integral feature of cities. In Victorian Britain, concern about industrial urbanism and the risks to health and morals of separating working people from nature and fresh air led to the development of urban parks such as Marylebourne Park (now known as Regents Park), Victoria Park, Kennington Park and Battersea Park, which were based on landscaped English country estates. Campaigns were also established to save common lands, like Hampstead Heath and Wimbledon Common, which were threatened by urban expansion (Bunce 1994).

A similar nineteenth-century movement to develop open spaces took place in North American cities. Central Park in New York, which is based on large meadows and areas of woodland, took ten years to develop. Other examples comprise Golden Gate Park in San Francisco, Prospect Park in Brooklyn, Fairmount Park in Philadelphia, and Franklin Park in Boston. In European cities, efforts to develop high quality open spaces include Bijlmermeer in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, a predominantly high-rise estate which is located in a naturalistic woodland and wetland setting (McLaren 1992).

Urban parks are highly valued landscapes. They represent sources of pleasure, leisure, an escape from the concrete of the streets, and everyday sensuous encounters with 'nature': a chance to touch, see, smell and hear the 'natural' world (Harrison *et al.* 1987, Burgess *et al.* 1988). Contrary to stereotypical assumptions that urban residents are cut off from these landscapes and have to seek them out through special trips to distant parks or rural landscapes, Burgess *et al.*'s (1988) study emphasized the everyday nature of city residents' contact with the living world as part of their routine journeys and activities in familiar environments round the home or on the way to work.

Open spaces such as parks and gardens are appreciated not only for their so-called 'natural' qualities but also as spaces for social encounters. The elderly like to sit in parks and watch the world go by, and parents value them as non-materialistic environments where their children can enjoy controlled adventure and exploration while they meet up with and talk to other adults. Extended families and 'communities' also use urban open spaces as gathering points for games and picnics. In this way, these environments can become imbued with personal meanings and memories of 'community' life or childhood (Burgess *et al.* 1988).

Despite the fact of the importance of open spaces to urban residents, they have been subject to development pressures and have suffered neglect and disinvestment. In the UK a national initiative to revive these environments, involving the Countryside Commission, local authorities and the private sector, has set out to

## Box 7.3: The pleasures of nature in the city

*Richard*: 'When I'm depressed I like to sit, not walk. And there is one little bench on top of the hill at Shrewsbury Park [in Eltham, London] that looks right out over the Thames Valley...and you can sit there and just look at the horizon and feel quite happy. And then I can walk into the wood down below and watch the squirrels which relaxes me. A little bit of wildlife around as well. It's marvellous.'

*Viv*: 'I could lie about for hours if I didn't have kids, if I had nobody to be responsible for...In Hall Place, they've got them sort of sprucy trees. They smell like the trees in Corfu. And you laid down, sort of in between them. I've done it with Lynn [daughter] lots of times. You very rarely get people come that close. It's lovely. I can lay there for ages...Close your eyes and you can smell the trees and that. If the sun's shining, you can imagine you're somewhere else.'

*Michael*: 'My strongest memory in moving this summer was waking up one morning and the whole area was covered in multi-coloured poppies!...Coming from an inner urban area to suddenly find this beautiful, spectacular background. That was quite a feeling.'

Burgess *et al.* 1998, 460–1

create 12 'community' forests on the edge of major cities (Burgess 1998). Attempts to restore open spaces are not always concerned with aesthetics and pleasure; they can also be used as potential means for regenerating urban 'community' (see Chapter 4). In 1976 the Bronx Frontier Development Corporation was established in the derelict areas of South Bronx in New York, USA. This grass-roots group initiated the development of over 50 community gardens, some of which have had commercial success in selling herbs to restaurants (Bunce 1994).

However, not all urban open spaces are appreciated; some are regarded as monotonous or sterile environments where there is nothing to do, or as dirty places where there are problems of litter, waste-dumping and dog faeces. There is also what Burgess *et al.* (1988: 464) have termed the 'dark side' of open space (see Box 7.3). Parks and common land are settings where people feel afraid of crime, despite the fact that, statistically, relatively few attacks take place in these environments. Perceptions of danger are often associated with enclosed or remote environments (see also Chapter 6). These features are an intrinsic part of many woodland areas. Participants in Burgess *et al.*'s (1988) study described their fears that woods offer the opportunity for attackers to hide, that vegetation might inhibit potential escape routes, and that, because it is difficult to see very far ahead, these can be isolating environments (Burgess 1998). Indeed, in folk stories and fairy tales woods themselves often symbolize danger.

All the women's groups which took part in Burgess *et al.*'s (1988) project expressed a fear of being attacked by a man or men, whom they described as 'maniacs, weirdos and nutters', and recounted experiences of flashing that often went unreported to the police. Participants also expressed concerns about children's safety, racially motivated attacks and anti-social behaviour such as glue sniffing and vandalism (Burgess *et al.* 1988). These fears are compounded by two contemporary processes. First, there has been a decline in the management and social control of public parks and open spaces, largely because of public spending cuts which have resulted in the loss of park keepers and wardens from these environments. Second, increased surveillance and exclusionary practices on the streets and in semi-public spaces such as shopping malls have pushed so-called 'undesirable' groups (such as the homeless and teenagers) into parks and open spaces, which represent the only places where they are free to hang out (see Chapter 6).

## ■ 7.6.2 Animals

City animals are usually imagined to be pets (such as cats and dogs), while the countryside is seen as the realm of livestock animals (pigs, cows, sheep, etc) and the wilderness is the space of wild animals (such as bears and wolves) (Philo and Wilbert 2000). Yet, in practice, this neat classification does not hold up. Zoos represent an example of humans domesticating and containing wild animals within the city. Many zoos have their origins in imperialism when a representative range of wild species was brought back from the colonies to be classified and displayed (Anderson 1995, 1997, 1998b, 2000). Today, however, zoos are reinventing themselves under the guise of animal conservation.

A whole range of animals also come into the city of their own accord and forge their own living space within it (Philo and Wilbert 2000). Some of these keep their distance from humans by occupying marginal locations such as sewers or waste ground – indeed, we may even be unaware that they are there. Of those animals who make regular appearances in the city, some (such as hedgehogs and urban foxes or badgers) are valued by humans and are therefore fed or encouraged, whereas others (such as pigeons and rats) are coded as pests and vermin.

These animals threaten to disturb human spatial orderings and are often conceptualized in terms of metaphors of contagion and pollution (Philo and Wilbert 2000). The nature–culture boundary is maintained and policed by environmental health officers and animal welfare organizations who often carry out extermination programmes. For example, in London, pigeons, although a tourist attraction in Trafalgar Square, are also regarded as a visual eyesore; their excrement is blamed for damaging buildings, and they are assumed to carry diseases which are a threat to human health and so secret culls often take place at night.

Griffiths *et al.* (2000: 61) explain that: 'Those animals which transgress the boundary between civilisation and nature, or between public and private, which do

not stay in their allotted space, are commonly sources of abjection [see Chapter 2], engendering feelings of discomfort or even nausea which we try to distance from the self, the group and associated spaces (but which we can never banish from the psyche). This is clearly the case with cockroaches and rats which invade public and domestic space, emerging from where they "belong", out of sight on a stratum below civilised life, and eliding with other cultures in racist discourse to symbolise racialised "others" '.

They go onto examine human–animal relations in the city by studying the place of feral cats in Hull, UK. Their research explores the extent to which these animals are accepted as having a legitimate place in the city by focusing on the ways that some humans try to engage with them and feed them, while others are antagonistic towards them, claiming that they need to be redomesticated and returned to households. Griffiths *et al.* (2000) conclude that, just as the heterogeneity of human life within the city creates conflicts about who belongs where and who is 'in place' or 'out of place' (see Chapter 6), so the same is true of humans' engagement with the 'natural' world. Wild nature is desired but at the same time feared because it signals a loss of human control over the environment. In particular, some animals are understood to disturb the urban order and to threaten humans' precarious control over nature within the city, hence our desire to domesticate or exterminate them (Griffiths *et al.* 2000).

## ■ 7.6.3 Urban environmental politics

Conservation is traditionally considered a country issue. However, since the late 1980s the conservation movement and a network of wildlife organizations (such as the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, and Friends of the Earth) have begun to pay attention to the conservation of urban nature in the UK. An inventory of natural habitats and wildlife species in London by the Greater London Council identified over 2000 sites for wildlife and conservation projects; these included locations such as railway embankments and derelict or abandoned areas (Bunce 1994). The County Trusts for Nature Conservation have also acquired urban sites for nature and wildlife reserves (Harrison *et al.* 1987).

Carolyn Harrison and Jacquelin Burgess's (1994) study of plans to develop Rainham Marshes in London provides a good example of some of the issues encountered by urban conservation movements. Rainham Marshes was classified as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) because of its distinctive fauna and flora. This designation should have protected it from any major development. However, in 1989 a consortium of developers sought permission to build a £2.4 billion theme park-style entertainment centre and film studio on the marshes, which offered to bring jobs and tourism to the area. Conservationists were opposed to this plan but local residents were more ambivalent because the mud flats and marshes were poorly managed, often being used for fly tipping and by motorbikers.

**Plate 7.4**   Cyclists reclaim the city streets, Bastille, France (© Paul White)



In reworking their proposal, the developers then highlighted the pollution and degradation of the marshes and proposed instead a nature and leisure park with a managed wetland in what they argued would be a sustainable development. In this way they played upon the local residents' preference for a very particular kind of 'nature' in which they re-imagined 'nature' and represented themselves as environmental stewards. In 1990 Havering Borough Council granted planning permission for the development.

It is not only specific nature sites which are at risk in the city. Urban environmental campaigns have also sought to raise awareness about the poor quality of the air in cities where nitrogen dioxide, carbon monoxide and ozone guidelines are frequently exceeded. Large cities also have distinctive local climatic effects. The combination of cities absorbing incoming radiation and the output of waste heat and energy creates urban heat islands and temperature inversions trap and concentrate pollution in the city (McLaren 1992). Energy conservation measures to improve the efficiency of ageing housing stocks with double glazing and insulation, and urban green spaces which can help to absorb pollution and lower temperatures are both regarded as potentially important ways of protecting the environment. Urban environmental activists also have taken over the streets of major cities, such as Paris, on bikes and rollerblades (see Plate 7.4) to promote traffic calming schemes, and the need for restrictions on vehicles in order to cut emissions, and to advocate more green forms of transport.

Cities generate large amounts of waste. Urban open spaces and rivers suffer fro pollution by waste, metals, pesticides, litter (90 tons a day collected off the stre of London) and illegal dumping. There are also large tracts of derelict land in me cities that were once the site of waste disposal facilities, power stations, chem works or gasworks and are now too contaminated to be used for other purpo Although some cities are mounting recycling and urban redevelopment schemes proportions of household waste that are recycled remain low. In London, UK, figure is only 2–3 per cent; this compares unfavourably with Portland, Oregon, whe the figure is 22 per cent, while in the Netherlands cities recycle up to 50 per cent their aluminium, paper and glass waste (McLaren 1992).

In the face of such environmental problems, urban environmental campaign are promoting a programme to create sustainable cities that includes a focus on ener efficiency, traffic calming, effective decontamination and the use of derelict land, wa recycling and the development of more accessible higher-quality open spaces an wildlife resources (McClaren 1992, Elkin, McClaren and Hillman 1991).

## ■ Summary

- Western thought has positioned the country and city in opposition to each other, yet open spaces are embedded in the city rather than separate from it, and a variety of species, plants and animals inhabit urban environments.

- Urban open spaces such as parks and gardens are appreciated for their 'natural' qualities and as spaces for social encounters.

- Animals occupy an ambiguous place in the city: while humans engage with some, others are perceived to disturb human spatial orderings.

- Conservation is traditionally considered a country issue but urban environmental campaigns focus on the need to promote sustainable cities.

## ■ 7.7 Virtual cities

The earliest example of a virtual urban space was Habitat, a graphical computer environment initiated in the 1980s, which allowed people both to see representa tions of themselves and to interact. Its creators, Moringstar and Farmer, described it as a system that could support a population of thousands of users in a single shared cyberspace. It presented its users with 'a real time animated view into an on-line simulated world in which the users could communicate, play games, go on adven tures, fall in love, get married, get divorced, wage wars, protest against them and experiment with self government (1991: 273, cited in Ostwald 1997: 139).

The Habitat world was broken up into different regions. The people were depicted as silhouettes of jagged black lines infilled with colour, termed Avatars. They had torsos, heads, arms and legs and could, by moving a joystick, be made to turn and walk in four directions as well as pick up and use objects. The Avatars could move between regions, encounter others (up to 20 000 computers could simultaneously access Habitat), and even talk to each other, by typing words which would appear in a balloon above their heads. Through these interactions communities developed as Avatars bought land, held meetings and developed newspapers and traditions. 'Habitat became a model urban community with hundreds and eventually thousands of people participating' (Ostwald 1997: 140). But it was not a utopia which lasted long. Crime began to occur and, with murders taking place and gangs roaming the streets, Habitat elected a sheriff, guns were banned and this virtual urban space eventually stabilized. However, by this time the Internet was emerging and Habitat was eventually shut down. Although Habitat was the first virtual urban space, subsequently hundreds of similar attempts to parody community and city life have been set up in on-line spaces. One such example is Geocities, a commercial site which describes itself as a 'community' and invites members to become residents of this space by establishing their own web pages within particular Geocity neighbourhoods (see Bassett and Wilbert 1999).

As well as offering new opportunities for creating virtual worlds, the Internet has also been credited with creating the electronic flâneur who browses on-line space. In contrast to the slow strolling of the flâneur described in Section 7.3, who saunters around the streets of the city, the electronic flâneur strolling around on-line worlds is not restricted by the limitations of the human body (see also Chapter 2) but can jump from one on-line space to another. Indeed, the term 'surfing' suggests a sense of mobility, of riding a wave and changing scene (Featherstone 1998).

While contemporary technology has until now been largely text-based, Mike Featherstone (1998) suggests that the development of 3-D programmes means that we can now move through datasets constructed to simulate buildings and streets. Electronic flâneurs can therefore not just browse the Net but also immerse themselves in parallel worlds. Indeed, eventually they will be able to enjoy full sensory involvement and interactions with digital entities being operated by other computer users. This notion of a parallel universe is central to William Gibson's (1986) vision of cyberspace as a data city in his novel *Neuromancer* (Grafton, London).

Featherstone (1998: 922) describes these simulated environments thus: 'In effect, there can be a high degree of replication of bodily presence in environments and interactions with others. One could, for example, stroll through a simulation of a Parisian arcade of the 1830s, and take in the sensation given off at street level.' He also goes on to point out that, like the Net-surfer, the electronic flâneur strolling the virtual streets of a simulated city is not confined to the streets in which they are walking, but can jump from one virtual space to another. He explains: 'While one can have a simulation of the "thickness" of everyday embodied existence one need not bump one's head when one walks into a wall, one need not grow tired at the

prospect of a long walk home when one is lost in a strange quarter of the city, on
can first jump out of the situation, or zoom out of the local, so that the simulate
city appears below like a three dimensional map. Hence it is possible to experien
the emotional excitement (free from the physical threats found in dangerous citie
and aesthetic sensations of the street-level stroller, but also that of the detached ci
planner' (Featherstone 1998: 922–3).

### ■ Summary

- Technology enables us to move through datasets constructed to simulate
  buildings, streets and cities.

- Eventually we will be able to enjoy full sensory involvement and
  interactions with digital entities operated by other PC users in simulated
  worlds.

- The electronic flâneur strolling in on-line city worlds is not restricted by
  the limitations of a body but can jump from one on-line space to another

### ■ Further Reading

- The city is the subject of a number of specialist books, notably Fincher, R.
  and Jacobs, J.M. (eds) (1998) *Cities of Difference*, Guilford Press, London;
  Westwood, S. and Williams, J. (eds) (1997) *Imagining Cities: Scripts, Signs an*
  *Memory*, Routledge, London, and the Understanding Cities series published by
  the Open University Press: Allen, J., Massey, D. and Pryke, M. (eds) (1999)
  *Unsettling Cities*; Massey, D., Allen, J. and Pile, S. (eds) (1999) *City Worlds*,
  and Pile, S., Brook, C. and Mooney, G. (eds) (1999) *Unruly Cities?* Useful
  journals in which to look for articles on the city include *Urban Studies*, *Urban*
  *Geography*, the *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*,
  and *Planning Practice and Research*.

- Good examples of articles about different aspects of urban differentiation
  include the following. **Ethnic segregation:** Jackson, P. (ed.) (1987) *Race and*
  *Racism: Essays in Social Geography*, Allen & Unwin, London; Anderson, K.
  (1991) *Vancouver's Chinatown: Racial Discourse in Canada, 1875–1980*,
  McGill-Queen's University Press, Montreal; Bonnett, A. (2000) *White*
  *Identities: Historical and International Perspectives*, Longman, Harlow. The
  **underclass:** Gregson, N. and Robinson, F. (1992) 'The "underclass": a class
  apart?' *Critical Social Policy*, 38–51. **Gentrification:** see the work of Neil Smit
  in *Antipode*, 1979, 11, 139–55, *Journal of the American Planners' Association*
  1979, 45, 538–48 and *Economic Geography* 1982, 58, 139–55. **Sexual**

dissidents: Knopp, L. (1998) 'Sexuality and urban space: gay male identity politics in the United States, the United Kingdom and Australia', in Fincher, R. and Jacobs, J. (eds) *Cities of Difference*, Guilford Press, London, and Hubbard, P. (1999) *Sex and the City: Geographies of Prostitution in the Urban West*, Ashgate, Aldershot. In terms of fiction Tom Wolfe's (1987) *Bonfire of the Vanities*, Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, New York, and Jonathan Raban's (1990) *Hunting Mr Heartbreak*, Collin and Harvill, London, both capture the different worlds of the rich and poor who occupy the same city of New York, USA, while Armistead Maupin's (1980) *Tales of the City*, Corgi, London, is a wonderful description of sexual adventures in the city.

● The journal *Planning Practice and Research*, 1995, vol. 10 contains an excellent collection of papers on the city as a landscape of consumption. A good summary of work on the commodification and marketing of cities is Kearns, G. and Philo, C. (eds) (1993) *Selling Places: The City as Cultural, Capital, Past and Present*, Pergamon, Oxford.

● Burgess and Harrison have produced a number of important papers on nature in the city. See, for example: Burgess, J., Harrison, C.M. and Limb, M. (1988) 'People, parks and the urban green: a study of popular meanings and values for open spaces in the city', *Urban Studies*, 25, 455–73; and Harrison, C., Limb, M. and Burgess, J. (1987) 'Nature in the city: popular values for a living world', *Journal of Environmental Management*, 25, 347–62. The best starting point for work on animals is Philo, C. and Wilbert, C. (2000) *Animal Spaces, Beastly Places*, Routledge, London.

## ■ Exercises

1. Take on the role of the flâneur and go for a stroll around the streets of your city, taking in but not participating in the spectacle of city life. In the style of a journalist write an account of your observations and the sensations you experienced.

2. Collect four pieces of different sorts of promotional material (such as a tourist guide, an advertisement for a local company, a promotional image produced by the local development corporation, etc) about the city you live in. Write an interpretative account of the way your city is being represented in these materials. Identify themes highlighted in different ways by the organizations that have produced the materials you have looked at. What in the images is being promoted or given prominence? What is being hidden or suppressed?

3. Choose a consumption space (e.g. a shopping mall or a restaurant or a club). Carry out participation observation in this space at different times. Think about how this space is being produced, how it is being used and the social relations taking place within it.

### ■ Essay Titles

1. Using examples, outline and evaluate the contribution that race-based oppression makes to patterns of segregation and inequality in contemporary cities.
2. Critically evaluate the different explanations for gentrification.
3. To what extent do you agree that the revitalization of cities around consumption is eroding their uniqueness and cultural diversity?
4. Nature is both feared and revered. Critically assess this statement as an explanation for human attitudes to wildlife in the city.