Urban change and conflict

Key questions addressed in this chapter

➤ Why are the main sources of conflict between differing neighbourhoods in cities?

➤ What are the main patterns of service allocation in cities?

➤ What are the main reasons for growing social inequality in Western cities?

13.1 Externality effects

Much of the stress that is central to behaviouralists' approaches to urban social geography derives from households' desire to maximize the net **externalities** of urban life. Externalities, sometimes called **spillover** or **third-party effects**, are unpriced by-products of the production or consumption of goods and services of all kinds. An externality effect exists if the activity of one person, group or institution impinges on the welfare of others. The classic example is the factory that pollutes local air and water supplies in the course of its operations, bringing negative externalities to nearby residents. In contrast, well-kept public parks produce positive externalities for most nearby residents.

The behaviour of private individuals also gives rise to externality effects. These can be divided into 'public behaviour' externalities and 'status' externalities. The former include people's behaviour in relation to public comportment (e.g. quiet, sobriety and tidiness), the upkeep of property and the upbringing of children. Status externalities relate to the 'reflected glory' (or otherwise) of living in a distinctive neighbourhood.

Externality effects therefore can take a variety of forms. They are, moreover, very complex in operation. Consider, for example, the behaviour of a household in adding an imitation stone façade to the exterior of their house, adding new coach lamps as finishing touches to their work. For one neighbour this activity may generate a positive externality in the form of improved environmental quality; but for another, with different tastes in design, it may produce an equally strong negative externality effect.

The costs of proximity and the price of accessibility

For the geographer, much of the significance of externality effects stems from the fact that their intensity is usually a function of relative location. A useful distinction can be made between the price of accessibility to desirable urban amenities and the costs of proximity to the unwanted aspects of urban life. Both, however, are a product of relative location, and it is clear that the spatial organization of social groups in relation to one another and to the urban infrastructure therefore determines the net intensity of the externality effects that they enjoy.

As a general rule, of course, those with the greatest wealth, the most power and the best knowledge will be best placed to reap the benefits of positive externalities and to fend off activities that generate negative externalities. The location of public facilities such as transport routes, hospitals and sports centres is often intended to ameliorate the regressive nature of locational advantage resulting from private competition, but the 'hidden mechanisms' of group conflict tend to ensure that the inhabitants of the richest and most powerful neighbourhoods enjoy a large net benefit as a result of decisions affecting the location of public goods and the organization of public services.

Competition and conflict over externalities

It is clear, then, that the pattern of externality fields can exert a powerful influence on people's welfare. Because of this, many commentators regard the social geography of the city as the outcome of competition and conflicts that are worked out in society as a whole between unequally endowed groups seeking to obtain more or less exclusive access to positive externalities and to deflect negative externality fields elsewhere. The form, location and focus of such conflict depends, ultimately, on long-term urban structure changes and broader class conflicts, a point that has also been emphasized by Johnston:

> Because changes to the urban fabric introduce new sources of positive and negative externalities, they are potential generators of local conflicts. In the face of such proposed changes, the main protestors are usually those with most to lose: property owners, who perceive possible falls in land values, and parents, who identify potential deterioration in an area's schools. In general, it is the more affluent property owners who have the most to lose, and who, because of their ability to purchase legal and technical advice and their greater knowledge of, and links to, the political systems within which such conflicts are adjudicated, are most likely to prevent changes likely to injure their interests. Such conflicts are usually played out locally, *but their existence is part of the dynamic of capitalist cities.* Alterations in land use are needed if investors are to achieve profits, and if the losers in the conflicts over changes are the less affluent, then the price paid for those changes is substantially carried by them. *Local conflicts are part of the general contest between classes within capitalist society.*
>
> (Johnston 1984, p. 232 emphases added)

We must also recognize that attitudes towards externality effects are also related to the cultural norms, religious institutions and family kinship networks displayed by different ethnic communities. For example, Takahashi (1998) found considerable stigmatization of people with AIDS among both Latino and Vietnamese communities in California. This in turn leads to hostility among such communities towards treatment facilities for AIDS victims. In part, fear of this phenomenon was bound up with hostility to the perceived 'invasion' of 'immoral' Western practices. In addition, a lack of sympathy towards homeless people can be related to a strong ethic of self-reliance in these communities. As Takahashi notes, it is important not to simply condemn neighbourhood opposition as selfish and reactionary, but to understand the underlying cultural norms that lead to such outcomes.

In the long run, one of the principal outcomes of the resolution of locational conflicts is the creation of a set of **de facto territories** on the basis of income and ethnicity as people respond by relocating to neighbourhoods where they can share their positive externalities with one another and are able to avoid, as much possible, those who impose negative externalities. The residents

of such territories also attempt to improve and preserve their quality of life through collective action: competing through formal and informal neighbourhood groups and local political institutions to attract the utility enhancing and keep out the utility detracting.

One of the most common community strategies in this context is that of *voicing* claims over a particular issue, whether by organizing petitions, lobbying politicians and bureaucrats, writing to newspapers, forming local resident groups, picketing or distributing handbills

Box 13.1

Key trends in urban social geography – The emergence of clusters of asylum seekers and refugees

One of the most important – but so far little researched – developments in Western cities in recent years has been the growth of residential districts with concentrations of refugees and asylum seekers (i.e. those seeking either permanent or temporary settlement in another country after fleeing from persecution in their native land). Most Western nations have a long history of accepting asylum seekers (e.g. the case of Jewish people fleeing Nazi persecution in the 1930s). However, in recent years the numbers seeking political asylum in the West have risen considerably in response to increasing political upheaval and the actions of various despotic regimes around the globe (e.g. Iraq, Afghanistan, Somalia and Algeria). In response, most Western nations have taken measures to restrict the numbers of asylum seekers. In the United Kingdom for example, immigration policy has incorporated increased controls on entry, restrictions on the civil rights of asylum seekers and reduced welfare payments. As in other Western nations, these measures (together with reduced conflicts around the globe) have been associated with a rapid decline in asylum applications. In the United Kingdom attempts have been made to disperse asylum seekers throughout the nation and this policy has sometimes led in the reception areas to social tensions and local protest groups. Anxieties have been intensified by newspaper references

to a 'flood' of asylum seekers threatening to 'swamp' neighbourhoods. One especially notorious case was the Sighthill area of Glasgow where the arrival of 3500 Kurdish asylum seekers resulted in racist attacks and the murder of a Turkish Kurd (Hubbard, 2005). However, subsequent investigations revealed this to be a mugging rather than a racist attack. Indeed, Sighthill residents were so upset by their portrayal in the media as racist bigots that they joined in a march with asylum seekers to petition the local council for better housing conditions. Attempts to foster better community relations in Sighthill revealed that many of the newcomers were qualified doctors, architects and electricians, and consequently in possession of valuable skills.

Hubbard (2005) argues that although opposition to asylum centres by local neighbourhood groups is often couched in terms of threats to national 'English' culture, these discourses often disguise a racist agenda based around imaginaries of 'whiteness' (see also Chapter 8). Opposition to designated centres for asylum seekers has been especially fierce in rural areas with little tradition of multiculturalism. However, there are also anecdotal reports from London that some ethnic minorities are moving outwards to suburban areas in response to growing numbers of asylum seekers in inner-city districts.

Key concepts associated with asylum seekers and refugees (see Glossary)

Clustering, community action, diaspora, ethnic group, exclusion, NIMBY, othering, purified communities, racism, 'turf' politics.

Further reading

Critical Social Policy (2002) Special Issue: Asylum and Welfare, Vol. 22, Issue 3, August

Day, K. and White, P. (2002) Choice or circumstance: the UK as the location of asylum applications by Bosnian and Somali refugees, *Geojournal* **65**, 15–26

Hubbard, P. (2005) Accommodating otherness: anti-asylum centre protest and the maintenance of white privilege, *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* **30**, 52–66

Robinson, V., Anderson, R. and Musterd, S. (eds) (2003) *Spreading the Burden? A review of policies to disperse asylum seekers* Policy Press, Bristol

Links with other chapters

Chapter 8: Segregation and congregation

Chapter 12: Box 12.4 The growth of transnational urbanism

and posters. This 'voice' option can sometimes extend to illegal activities, such as personal violence, damage to property, sit-ins and deliberate violations of antidiscrimination laws. Alternatively, some communities are able to use formal channels of participation as a profitable strategy when they find themselves in conflict with other communities or institutions.

Another option available to communities is that of resignation to the imposition of negative externalities (also termed the 'loyalty' option). This is especially common where communities feel that voicing strategies are regularly ignored or overruled and that participation is ineffective. Many people who disapprove of city plans, for example, simply resign themselves to the 'inevitable' because they feel unable, individually or collectively, to exert any real influence on policy makers. The final strategy is that of relocation (also termed the 'exit' option), which is a household rather than a community strategy, and which brings us back to the idea of a continually evolving geography of de facto territories.

13.2 Accessibility to services and amenities

In every city there are a large number and a great variety of services and amenities – parks, schools, restaurants, theatres, libraries, fire stations, shops, doctors' surgeries, hospitals, day-care centres, post offices, riverside walks and so on – that are point-specific services (i.e. tied to specific locations) and which therefore exhibit externalities with tapering effects (i.e. decreasing intensity with distance from a fixed point). To these we must add certain place-specific disamenities and the noxious activities associated with some services: refuse dumps and crematoria, for example; and we must recognize that what constitutes an amenity to some (a school, or a football stadium, for example) may represent a disamenity to others. From another perspective, it is clear that some externalities apply only to users while others apply to whole neighbourhoods. Finally, we must recognize that the *intensity* of the externality effects will also vary according to people's preferred distance from

particular services or amenities (Figure 13.1). We are thus faced with a very complex set of phenomena.

The externalities associated with physical proximity to services, amenities and disamenities not only prompt competition and conflict between households within different housing markets but also give rise to collective political strategies, including the formation of coalitions between different institutions and organizations and the propagation of distinctive de facto communities whose mutuality involves lifestyles that are dependent to some extent on accessibility to specific amenities.

These coalitions and communities represent the major protagonists in much of the conflict over the preservation and fortification of the relative quality of life in different urban settings. Thus community-based politics (also termed 'turf' politics) have become a major feature of contemporary cities. It should be noted, however, that overt conflicts associated with neighbourhood activism have become more frequent with the extension of owner-occupation and as larger-scale housing and construction projects have replaced smaller-scale activities as the dominant aspect of urban development. It follows that a good deal of neighbourhood activism is directly associated with construction and development activity around the urban fringe. Those with the greatest stakes in a particular local setting (i.e. owner-occupiers and parents of school-aged children) are most likely to become involved in neighbourhood activism, and the dominant types of conflicts tend to be associated with the public regulation of privately initiated patterns of urban development, with publicly initiated construction projects (e.g. new highways, street widenings and urban renewal projects), and with the quality of public services.

Understanding patterns of service delivery and amenity location is not simply a matter of competition and conflict over which households win proximity to the most desirable services and amenities and which communities are able to 'capture' new services and amenities. The geography of many services and amenities is also a product of other factors: the 'fabric' effects of the urban environment, the internal organization and politics of particular professions and service-delivery agencies, and the functional linkages that exist between certain services and other activities, for example. This,
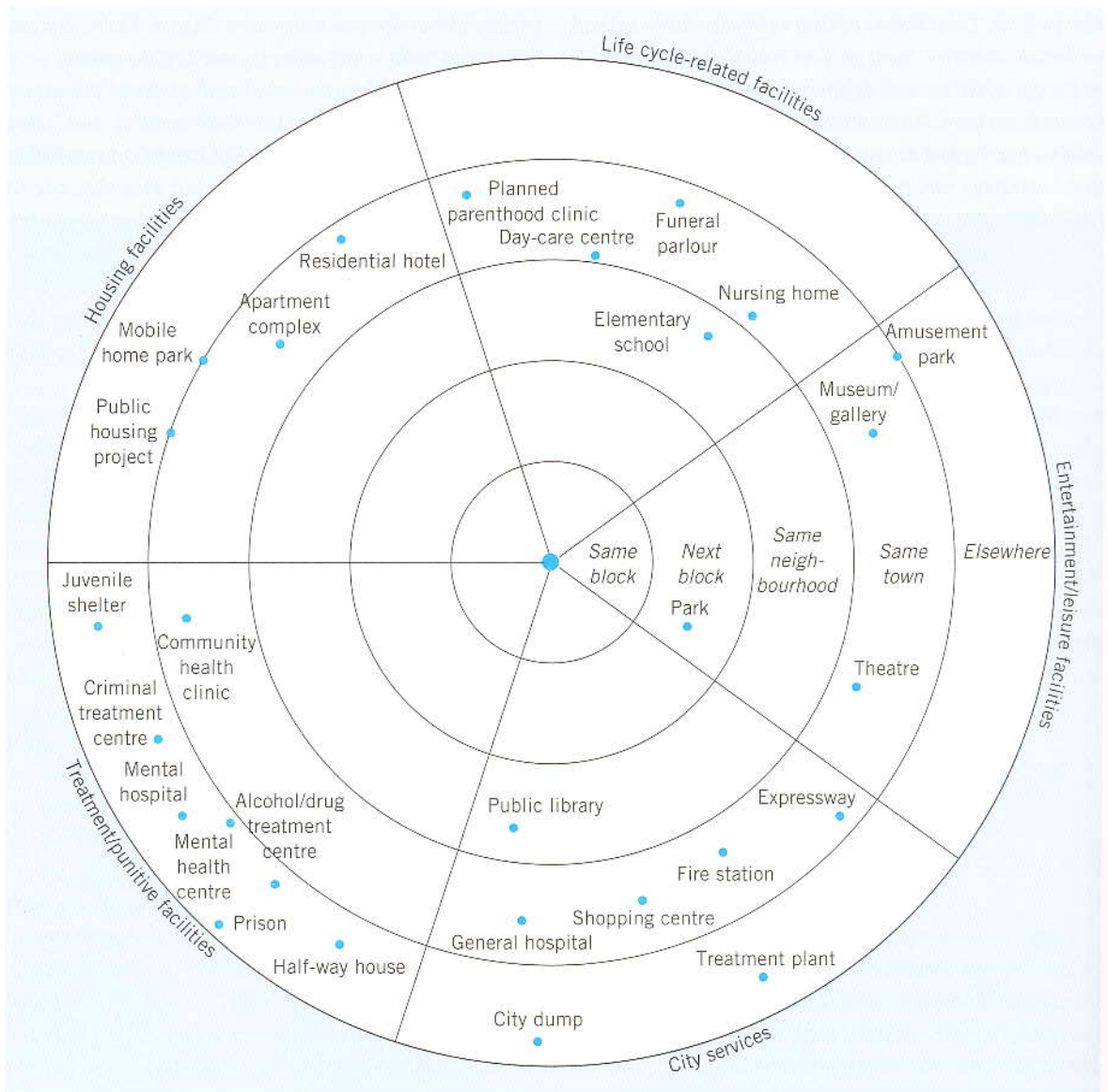
Figure 13.1 Preferred residential distance from different public facilities.
Source: Smith (1980).

of course, means that aggregate patterns of service and amenity provision rarely exhibit clear or unambiguous relationships with urban social ecology. Nevertheless, it is clear that the general tendency is for the most affluent, most powerful and most active communities to capture a disproportionate share of the positive externalities associated with urban services and amenities.

The aggregate effects of aggregate patterns

Given that much of what takes place within the urban arena involves the resolution of conflicts over spatial organization and the relative location of certain 'goods' and 'bads', the question remains as to the relationships

between, on the one hand, the outcome of these conflicts (segregated communities, de facto and *de jure*, with access to different 'packages' of services and externalities) and, on the other, the overall processes of urban differentiation and change.

At the beginning of this chapter, it was suggested that the richest and most powerful neighbourhoods will enjoy a cumulative net benefit as a result of the outcome of conflict and competition over the organization and location of services and amenities. The implication is that urban development is dominated by marginal adjustments in social ecology as new developments are made to fit the mould *of the status quo*. Yet several studies of the intra-urban distribution of services and amenities have in fact concluded that they display unpatterned inequality, attributing the lack of correspondence between community status and the spatial organization of services and amenities to a combination of idiosyncratic events and bureaucratic decision rules. It is important, however, to consider the implications of aggregate patterns of service and amenity location not just in relation to the way that they intensify or ameliorate socio-economic differentiation but also in relation to the broader sociospatial dialectic. What is at issue here is the way that the economic and class relationships inherent to capitalism are perpetuated in cities through ecological processes.

Amenities, disamenities and social reproduction

From a broad structuralist perspective we can see that the ecology of cities provides some of the conditions necessary for the reproduction of the necessary relationships between labour and capital and for the stabilization and legitimation of the associated social formation. Thus we find a white-collar labour force being reproduced in a white-collar neighbourhood, a blue-collar labour force being reproduced in a blue-collar neighbourhood, and so on.

An essential factor in this reproduction is the differential access to scarce resources, especially educational resources, between neighbourhoods, since it helps preserve class and neighbourhood differences in 'market capacity' (the ability to undertake certain functions within the economic order) from one generation to another.

At the same time, the locations of 'compensatory' services and amenities not only helps to reproduce and maintain a ready population of workers (at the expense of taxpayers rather than employers) but also helps to defuse the discontent that their position might otherwise foster.

The conceptual and empirical distinctions between the accumulation and legitimation functions of services are sometimes difficult to make, while the politics of service provision rarely relate in overt or explicit ways to functional notions of accumulation or legitimation. Because public service provision is contingent on a variety of sociopolitical factors involving different time frames and periodicities, it is useful to think in terms of services arrayed along a continuum with the accumulation function at one end and the legitimation function at the other (Figure 13.2):

> Services located on the accumulation end of the continuum can be thought of as important for the accumulation of capital and are provided primarily in keeping with the needs of capital; roads, water and sewer systems are typical accumulation services because they allow the initial development of land and preserve its subsequent exchange value . . . As such, their provision is greatly influenced by higher levels of government and by the needs of large, mobile capital. This influence . . . is a smoothing effect on the distribution of accumulation services.
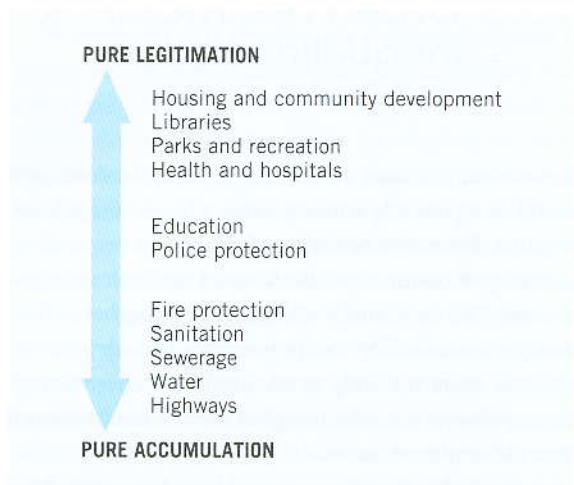
PURE LEGITIMATION

Housing and community development
Libraries
Parks and recreation
Health and hospitals

Education
Police protection

Fire protection
Sanitation
Sewerage
Water
Highways

PURE ACCUMULATION

Figure 13.2 A conceptual ranking of services.
Source: Staeheli (1989), p. 242.

. . . In contrast, legitimation services have a larger discretionary component. Parks and libraries, for instance, are generally provided for the benefit of the general, 'classless' public; their amenity value to capital is real, but indirect and possibly will accrue over a longer time span. Because such services are provided for the public, it is common for small groups and individuals to be involved in the decision-making process; the politics of consumption characterize this process. The variable cast of characters and concerns involved in the provision of legitimation services means that the demand for these services is likely to be uneven.

. . . Finally, some services blend accumulation and legitimation concerns, and are therefore situated in the middle of the continuum. These services are necessary for the accumulation of capital, and so certain aspects of their provision will be similar in most municipalities. However, services in the middle of the continuum, such as police protection and local schools, also have a large discretionary element that may lead to more variability.

(Staeheli, 1989, p. 243)

Patterns of service and amenity provision, then, are at once the product of the social formation and an element in its continuing survival.

13.3 Urban restructuring: inequality and conflict

As we saw in Chapter 1, cities throughout the developed world have recently entered a new phase – or, at least, begun a distinctive transitional phase – in response to changing economic, political, social and cultural conditions. The continual restlessness of urbanization has been accentuated by the imperatives of restructuring cities in order not only to accommodate these changing conditions but also to exploit new technologies and new sociocultural forces.

Among the chief features of this restructuring have been the decentralization of jobs, services and residences from traditional city centres to suburban settings and 'edge cities' within expanded metropolitan frameworks; the decline of traditional inner-city employment bases in manufacturing, docks, railways, distribution and warehousing; the recentralization of high-level business services in CBDs; the gentrification of selected inner-city neighbourhoods; the localization of residual populations of marginal and disadvantaged groups and of unskilled migrants and immigrants in other inner-city neighbourhoods; the emergence of a 'new politics' of fiscal conservatism; the emergence of a new politics of race; the emergence of 'new cultures' of material consumption and differentiated lifestyles; the feminization of poverty; and the intensification of economic and social polarization.

Meanwhile, the need to accommodate a new mix of industry and employment within the fabric of a pre-existing built environment has led to localized conflicts over development and land conversion processes. It is beyond the scope of this book to deal systematically with these issues, or to do justice in depth to any one of them. It must suffice, therefore, to illustrate just a few aspects of the sociospatial consequences of urban change and restructuring.

Decentralization and accessibility to services and amenities

The restructuring of metropolitan form in response to the ascendancy of the automobile has brought to an end the traditional notion that jobs, shops, schools, health services and community facilities will be within ready walking distance of homes. Even by 1960, over 90 per cent of the households in the most recently developed parts of metropolitan California had at least one car, and between 40 and 45 per cent had two or more. By 1970, comparable levels of car ownership had been achieved in most other metropolitan areas of the United States, while in Europe the spread of car ownership was at last beginning to accelerate rapidly. One result of this trend has been that employers, retailers and planners have tended to make their location decisions on the assumption of perfect personal mobility.

As discussed in Chapter 3, the prime example of this is the ascendancy of suburban shopping centres and shopping malls. Their magnetic power has rearranged
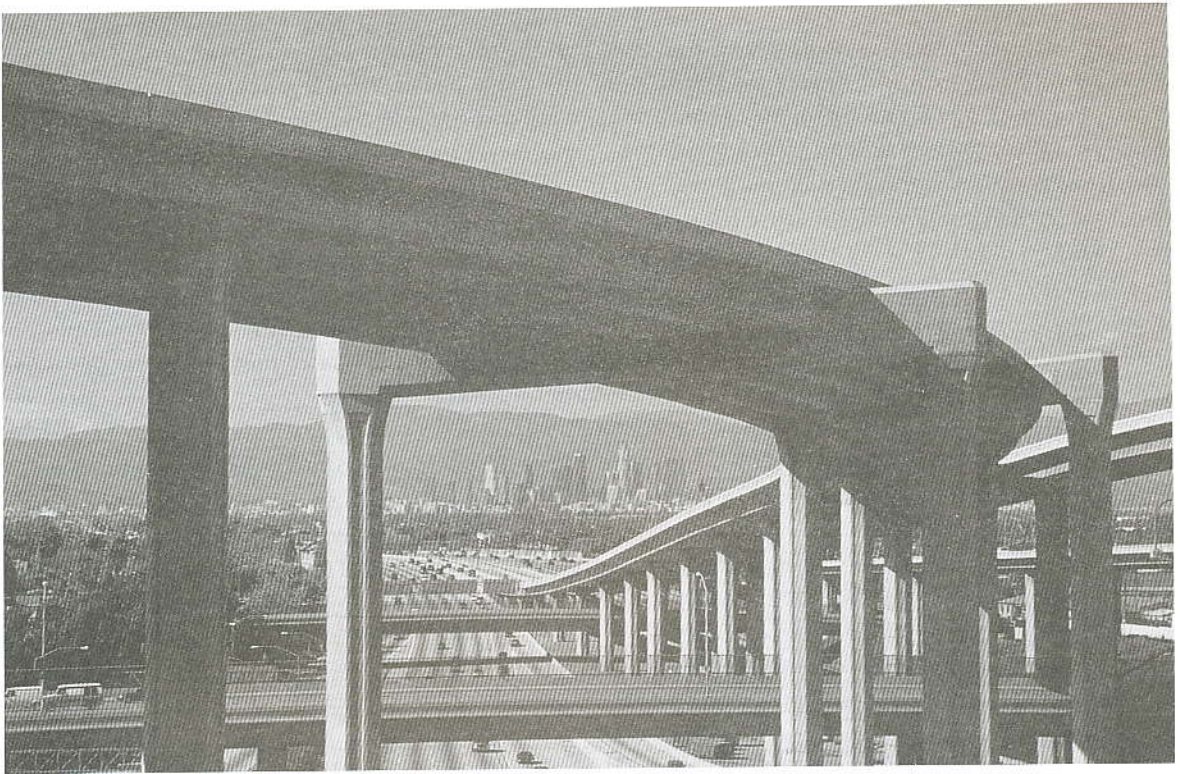
The ultimate expression of the car-dominated city: freeways in Los Angeles. Photo Credit: Geoffrey DeVerteuil.

not only the commercial geography of urban areas but also the whole social life of the suburbs. Malls have become the most popular gathering places for suburban teenagers, and adults use them to stroll and promenade, much as continental Europeans have used their city centres on Sundays and summer evenings. Americans now spend more time at shopping malls than anywhere outside their homes and workplaces.

Accessibility and social inequality

The benefits of increased personal mobility are enjoyed disproportionately by the middle class, the middle-aged and the male population, however. In the United States, for example, although the overall ratio of motor vehicles to households increased from 1.3 to 3.0 between 1960 and 2005, only the more affluent households actually had an increase in car ownership. Less affluent households, as a group, were worse off in 2005 than in 1960. Indeed surveys have shown that, despite the advent

of the 'automobile age,' around three out of ten urban residents lack direct personal access to a motor vehicle. Many of these individuals are old, poor or black, and a good many are inner-city residents.

Women are also significantly deficient in access to motor vehicles for, although their household unit may own a car, its use by other members of the household is likely to render it unavailable for much of the time. Furthermore, the urban form that the automobile has triggered – low-density development spread over a wide area – has made it very difficult to provide public transport systems that are able to meet the needs of carless suburban women, the elderly and the poor.

Women are particularly vulnerable to constraints on locational accessibility. Labour-market changes that have concentrated women in a limited range of occupations are compounded by the spatial concentration of female-dominated jobs and by the constraints of gender roles in contemporary society. Even affluent suburban housewives with access to a car are limited in their

opportunities because of the limited time available between their fixed 'duties' as homemakers: providing breakfast for the family and driving the children to school, preparing lunch, picking up the children from school, chauffeuring them to sporting or social engagements, and preparing dinner. In addition, homemakers may have to be at home to accept deliveries, supervise repair workers or care for a sick child. Women without cars, of course, suffer much greater restriction on their quality of life.

Some of the most severe accessibility problems arising from urban decentralization are experienced by suburban single parents who must inevitably have lifestyles that differ from those of two-parent families. They have much less flexibility in employment and in recreation, for example, having to dovetail their activities to the time schedules of their children. Parents with school-age children may find full-time employment impossible without after-school and holiday care facilities, while those with preschoolchildren are dependent on preschool facilities and day nurseries. In both cases the proximity of relatives and friends is often critical. Late opening of commercial and other enterprises is also vital if a single parent is to incorporate visits to shops, banks, libraries and offices in the weekly activity pattern.

The predicament of suburban women is not simply a consequence of urban decentralization. It is intimately related to a whole nexus of the trends outlined at the beginning of this book. The intersection of economic, demographic, social and cultural trends, for example, has allocated to women a pivotal role in the consumption-oriented suburban lifestyles that dominate the logic of contemporary urbanism. In short, women are trapped economically, socially and culturally, as well as ecologically. Meanwhile, the suburban environment has evolved in ways that reinforce inequality between the sexes, contributing, among other things, to emotional strain and the erosion of 'community'.

Redevelopment and renewal

One of the longest-running aspects of urban restructuring has been the physical redevelopment and renewal of worn-out and outmoded inner-city environments. In removing the most inefficient factories and the worst slums from city centres, urban renewal has undoubtedly

contributed not only to economic regeneration but also to the common good in terms of environmental quality and public health. But in rehousing the residents of clearance areas and replacing the built environment, planners have managed to preside over some spectacular debacles.

The principal charge against planners in this context is the dismantling of whole communities, scattering their members across the city in order to make room for luxury housing, office developments (including, in many instances, new accommodation for the urban bureaucracy), shopping areas, conference centres and libraries. A secondary charge – urban blight – stems from the discrepancy between the ambitions of planners and what can actually be achieved within a reasonable future. During the intervening period, neighbourhoods scheduled for renewal are allowed to slide inexorably down a social and economic spiral. No landlord will repair a condemned house if he can help it; tenants who can afford it will move out; shopkeepers will close and drift away; and the city council, waiting for comprehensive redevelopment, will meanwhile defer any 'unnecessary' expenditure on maintenance. Schools, public buildings, roads and open spaces become run down, matching the condition of the remaining population of the poor and the elderly.

This dereliction has been extensive in many cities. Combined with the actual demolition of condemned property, the result has been that large areas have been laid waste and thousands of families have been displaced. Moreover, the problem has been compounded since, as the worst parts of the cities' housing stock has been cleared, the bureaucratic offensive has gone on to condemn housing that was relatively sound, turning slum clearance from a beneficent if blunt instrument into a bureaucratic juggernaut.

Planning problems: the British experience

By removing the structure of social and emotional support provided by the neighbourhood, and by forcing people to rebuild their lives separately amid strangers elsewhere, slum clearance has often imposed a serious psychological cost upon its supposed beneficiaries. At the same time, relocatees typically face a

Box 13.2

Key debates in urban social geography – The role of automobility

A relatively new concept that is having an increasing impact within human geography and urban studies is that of 'automobility'. This is a very broad-ranging notion that refers to the way in which the automobile (and more importantly all the systems that support the car) have a dominating influence upon our lives in Western societies. John Urry, a leading exponent of auto-mobility studies, has identified six aspects within the concept:

1 The car as a *manufactured object* (i.e. it is produced by iconic twentieth-century firms).

2 The car as an *item of consumption* (i.e. it is a status symbol that can confer power and identity).

3 The car as *part of an industrial complex* linked to other industries (i.e. road and housing construction, automobile accessories).

4 The car as an *instrument of quasi-private mobility* (i.e. because of its dominance it subordinates all other modes of transport).

5 The car as *agent of culture* (i.e. it dominates many normal social discourses).

6 The car as an *agent of environmental and resource depletion* (i.e. it produces pollution together with noise and congestion).

This concept of automobility has links with 'large systems theory'. The large system that underpins the car involves many elements, ranging from massive oil corporations and all their diverse activities to huge manufactur-ing concerns, vast infrastructure in the form of roads and bridges, together with activities such as advertising, sales, sports and leisure. The car has clearly been of great importance in affecting the spatial structure of Western cities through its influence on suburbanization.

Some sceptics might see these ele-ments of automobility as 'obvious' and 'common sense' but the concept draws our attention to the fact that all this infrastructure, and the way it dominates our thinking, need not necessarily be the case. Our dependence upon the automobile reflects a wide range of political, economic and technological decisions made over the years.

Key concepts related to automobility (see Glossary)

Commodity fetishism, consumption, decentralization, edge cities, Fordism, positional good.

Further reading

Beckman, J. (2001) Automobility: a social problem and theoretical concept, *Environment and Planning D* 19, 593–607

Creswell, T. (2006) *On the Move: Mobility in the Western world* Routledge, London

Featherstone, M., Thrift, N. and Urry, J. (eds) (2005) *Automobilities* Sage, London

Katz, J. (1999) *How Emotions Work* University of Chicago Press, Chicago, IL (Chapter One, Pissed Off in L.A.)

Sheller, M. and Urry, J. (2000) The city and the car, *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 24, 737–57

Sheller, M. and Urry, J. (eds) (2006) *Mobile Technologies of the City* Routledge, London

Thrift, N. (2004) Driving in the city, *Theory, Culture and Society* 21, 41–59

Links with other chapters

Chapter 2: Fordism and the industrial city

---

steep increase in rents because of their forced move 'upmarket'. In Britain, most slum clearance families have been rehoused in the public sector, but this has also brought disadvantages that, for some households, outweigh the attractions of more modern accommoda-tion at subsidized rents.

Slum clearance families must face the vicissitudes of a housing bureaucracy whose scale and split respons-ibilities tend to make it insensitive to their needs. Since they are 'slum dwellers', the new accommodation that is offered to them is likely to be in low-status public housing estates. Even the offer of accommodation in new maisonettes or high-rise apartments may compare unfavourably with the tried-and-tested environment of old inner-city neighbourhoods. The open spaces, pedestrian pathways and community centres regarded as major advantages by planners may seem of minor importance to their users; while some such 'amenities' serve only as focal points of vandalism, souring the whole social atmosphere.

Moreover, because most new residential planning has been guided by the objective of fostering 'community' feelings, problems of a different nature can be precipitated by the lack of privacy on new estates. Apartments and maisonettes tend to be worst in this respect, since common stairways, lifts and desk access mean that interaction with uncongenial neighbours is unavoidable. On the other hand, the planned and regulated environment of New Towns and new estates has little of the richness of opportunity associated with older neighbourhoods. Finally, it is worth noting that not everyone from clearance areas ends up being relocated in sound accommodation, let alone satisfactory or desirable housing. This has principally been the case with ethnic minorities who, because of the combination of economic constraints and racial discrimination, have been forced to double up in other ghettos.

The chief *beneficiaries* of urban renewal are the dominant political and economic elites of the city. The former benefit from the existence of a much more lucrative tax base with which to finance public services, as well as the feelings of civic pride generated by redevelopment schemes and the symbolization of power that they represent. One particularly well-documented example of this is Newcastle upon Tyne, where a unique Victorian townscape, as well as the less appealing housing of the terraced streets off the Scotswood Road, was replaced by a city centre that earned the leader of the council the title of 'Man of the Year' from the *Architect's Journal* and led the city's politicians proudly to boast of the city as the 'Brasilia of the North'.

The dominant business elite, meanwhile, benefits in much more tangible ways. The redevelopment of British city centres has served to benefit monopoly capital by wiping out small retailers, thus giving the big stores and large supermarkets the market they require. But it is the speculative developers of property whose interests have been best served by urban renewal. Obtaining sites that have been cleared at public expense, they have been encouraged by planners to develop them for 'higher' uses – offices, hotels, conference centres and shopping precincts. Such developments have been highly lucrative, and it is therefore not surprising to find that, in many cities, developers have 'worked' the planning system in order to secure ever greater profits.

Service sector restructuring

In parallel with the restructuring and reorganization of industrial production that has transformed the economic base of cities everywhere, there have been some interdependent changes in the structure of national and local welfare systems that have resulted in significant changes to the geography of urban service provision. The combination of economic recession and the globalization of manufacturing and of financial and business services has led to a retreat from the public provision of welfare services, an increase in public–private co-operation, and an emphasis on accumulation-oriented services that enable cities to compete more effectively within an international urban system. There has been a great deal of substitution between different forms of service provision (i.e. domestic, voluntary, commercial, subsidized commercial, community based, city based, state based, etc.), which has in turn resulted not only in new patterns of service provision and relative accessibility but also, in some instances, in new sociospatial phenomena (see also Box 13.3).

Deinstitutionalization and residualization

Perhaps the best-known example of public sector restructuring upon urban form is the way that the **deinstitutionalization** of mental health services has contributed to urban homelessness. Deinstitutionalization involves the closure of large institutions that provide long-term care for needy groups – such as the mentally ill, those with learning difficulties, the elderly or severely disabled – and the development of a variety of community-based forms of care. The latter include smaller, purpose-built facilities or can involve care within private households by families or friends supplemented by teams of community-based professionals such as home nurses, doctors, social workers and probation officers.

Deinstitutionalization was introduced for humane and progressive reasons in an attempt to overcome the stigma and poor conditions associated with many large institutions. However, in an era of fiscal retrenchment, the policy has often been seen as a way of saving money. As a result, large institutions have been closed very rapidly without the development of sufficient community-based facilities. The policy was also based

Box 13.3

Key trends in urban social geography – The rise of social entrepreneurship

As we saw in Chapter 1, words do not simply describe the world – reflecting it like a mirror – they can actually create a view of the world through the various assumptions that they incorporate (both explicitly and implicitly). This is one of the reasons why politicians and policy makers frequently use new words when introducing a new policy initiative; the old words may be tainted with associations that are regarded as outmoded and anachronistic. Thus we find that a whole new set of words has been introduced to bolster welfare reform in the past few decades such as 'workfare', 'stakeholders' and 'compacts'. In addition, rather than be called 'clients' the recipients of services have sometimes been renamed customers or consumers.

One key new concept is that of *social enterprise*. There is no easy definition of this concept but essentially *social enterprises are commercial ventures that attempt to achieve social benefits for a defined community*. The latter may be a community within a geographically defined area – such as a local neighbourhood – or it may be a community of common interests such as the long-term unemployed, disabled or single parents. In some respects social enterprises are like traditional charities, except that they tend to operate with a greater commercial element. Social enterprises are therefore hybrid organizations that work on the boundaries of the true private sector (where the aim is to gain maximum profit) and the public sector (where there is direct control and funding by government). Collectively, social enterprises make up what is sometimes termed the *social economy* (or 'third sector'). There have long

been commercial ventures within the third sector but they have taken on increased importance in recent years in meeting mainstream welfare needs as governments have attempted to restrict the scale of welfare states.

Closely related to social enterprise is the concept of *social entrepreneurship*. This term takes the notion of entrepreneurship from the sphere of private enterprise and applies this to individuals who are innovators in the sphere of social policy. These individuals are seen as capable of bringing drive, innovation and creativity to a field in need of reform, providing new services together with increased efficiency. The key feature of the social entrepreneur therefore is the ability to bring together diverse 'partners' in the welfare field to 'invest' in innovative solutions. The concept of social entrepreneurship is a good example of how the discourses of business and the market have progressively infiltrated all aspects of contemporary social life.

There can be little doubt that some people have made tremendous innovations in the sphere of social policy. Examples are Andrew Mawson, who established the Bromley-by-Bow centre in London, and Greg Macleod, founder of the New Dawn organization in Sydney, Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, in Eastern Canada. The latter is a multifaceted non-profit organization that aims to improve the quality of life in a region that has experienced considerable economic hardship over the years. However, a reliance upon key individuals can raise a number of problems. First there is the issue of accountability; decisively acting individuals can easily ride roughshod over

other 'stakeholders' in the welfare system (e.g. co-workers, volunteer workers, welfare recipients, service funders). Second, it is not always clear that leading individuals are crucial to either the success or failure of particular organizations. Finally, particular individuals can become overloaded with unrealistic expectations about their capacity to change and reform welfare systems.

The importance of social enterprises should not be underestimated; indeed, some would argue that they will be the business phenomenon of the twenty-first century. A 2005 survey in the United Kingdom indicated that the social enterprise sector employed no less than half a million people directly, with about 200 000 working voluntarily. They made an £18 billion contribution to the economy – three times that of agriculture.

Key concepts associated with social entrepreneurship (see Glossary)

Governance, 'hollowing out', not-for-profit sector, postwelfare state.

Further reading

Amin, A., Cameron, A. and Hudson, R. (2002) *Placing the Social Economy* Routledge London

Department of Trade and Industry (2002) *Social Enterprise: A strategy for success* HMSO, London

Nicholls, A. (ed.) (2006) *Social Entrepreneurship: New models of sustainable social change* Oxford University Press, Oxford

Nyssens, M. (ed.) (2006) *Social Enterprise* Routledge, London

on the assumption that there was a large reserve of volunteers (usually women) who were prepared to care for those released from large institutions – an assumption that was often mistaken. Those without family support have often ended up in rented accommodation and, since this tends to be located in inner-city areas, these display the greatest concentrations of ex-psychiatric patients.

The most extreme consequences of deinstitutionalization are to be found in California. The rapid closure of psychiatric hospitals in the state led to the creation of **service-dependent ghettos** (also termed the 'asylum-without-walls'). Former in-patients have become restricted to poorer-quality neighbourhoods as zoning legislation has kept community-based facilities outside more affluent areas. For-profit community-based services have been developed but some of these are now relatively large with over a hundred occupants and are beginning to reproduce some of the institutional features of the older mental hospitals. Fiscal retrenchment has served to exacerbate the problems of mentally ill persons by restricting funds for community-based forms of care. In addition, the gentrification and urban renewal of some inner city areas have led to curbs on these community-based facilities. The consequence has been increased homelessness, with people sleeping on the streets in 'cardboard cities'. Sometimes the wheel has turned full circle with mentally ill or ex-psychiatric patients ending up in hospital or prison – a process of **reinstitutionalization**.

Deinstitutionalization is an example of one of the most common responses of governments to fiscal pressures – to reduce various types of welfare services. In some cases, such as public sector housing in the United Kingdom, cuts have meant that this is no longer available as a common facility for urban populations but has been restricted to the very poorest in society – a policy known as **residualization**. However, in the case of many other welfare services it is the very poorest in society who have been most severely affected by restrictions in spending. The reason for this is that marginalized groups often lack political power and are therefore easier targets for expenditure reductions than services such as pensions, which affect a wider proportion of the population. One group that has experienced cuts in spending in both the United Kingdom and the United States in recent years has been single-parent mothers. Indeed, it seems clear that women in general have been disproportionately affected by reductions in welfare spending. The reasons for this are twofold: first, women are the main recipients and users of many welfare services; and second, women constitute the bulk of the workers in services that have been cut.

Privatization

Privatization is another important form of public sector restructuring. This involves a complex set of processes, as revealed by Table 13.1. The most obvious form of privatization is **asset sales**, when public sector assets are sold to the private sector. For example, one of the most important manifestations of asset sales in the United Kingdom has been the sale of local authority housing, as discussed in Chapter 6. Privatization can also take the form of **contracting-out** – awarding tasks that were previously undertaken by the public sector to private sector organizations. Often these contracts are awarded on the basis of secret bidding known as **competitive tendering**. In this case the funding is still by the public sector on non-market criteria but the provision is by the private sector. A final form of privatization is where the organization is still operated by the public sector but has to operate on commercial or market-based criteria – a process known as **commercialization**.

Table 13.1 Forms of privatization

Method of funding	Type of ownership	
	Private ownership	Public ownership
Market funding	Sale of assets	Commercialization/ Corporatization
State funding	Contracting-out	Public provision

Source: Stubbs and Barnett (1992).

Contracting-out and commercialization are examples of processes designed to make public sector services geared more to yardsticks of cost efficiency and flexibility than need or equity. Just as private sector services have restructured in response to changing economic circumstances, changing technologies and new managerial strategies, so have public sector services (Table 13.2). A very wide spectrum of change has been imprinted on to the geography of public service provision, including partial self-provisioning, **intensification**, capitalization, **rationalization, subcontracting**, substituting expensive employees with cheaper ones, **centralization, materialization, domestication** and spatial relocation. The patterns of winners and losers from this public sector restructuring are complex, but there is growing evidence that overall it is the most powerless, marginalized and poor groups that have suffered most from public sector restructuring.

Workfare

Another important aspect of public sector restructuring in recent years is what has become known as **workfare**. The policy was originally regarded as one of making unemployed people work in order to receive their benefits (i.e. work + welfare = workfare) – the so-called 'hard' or 'first generation' form of workfare (also known as 'earnfare'). However, the term workfare is now commonly used in a more general sense to indicate the so-called 'soft' or 'second generation' workfare – that income support for welfare recipients is conditional upon them participating in a range of activities designed to increase their employability. These options can include: subsidized work schemes, education, training programmes, supervised job search initiatives or community work. Workfare is also used in an even more general sense to indicate new policies designed to regulate the behaviour of welfare claimants. This includes the following types of measures (Peck, 1998):

➤ withdrawing benefits or enforcing mandatory community service upon those who do not find work or training within a specified time period;

➤ reducing benefits and allowances;

➤ intensified anti-fraud measures;

➤ denying benefits to children born to mothers who are already receiving aid;

➤ withdrawing benefits from children who have unexplained absences from school ('learnfare');

➤ denying benefits to teenage parents living independently who are not in receipt of or registered for a high-school diploma;

➤ offering employers tax breaks and subsidies to recruit welfare recipients.

Although workfare is very much a US innovation, it has spread in various forms throughout the Western world. Welfare has become less of an entitlement and more of a reciprocal obligation. Many claims are made for workfare: that it increases the skills of the workforce; that it discourages dependency; that it reduces unemployment; that it encourages employers to create new jobs; that it reduces welfare costs; and that it is fairer in that it ensures rights are matched by obligations. Inevitably, many of these aspirations have not been fulfilled. Workfare is based on two major, and highly flawed, assumptions. First, it is assumed that many do not want to work or at least have behavioural norms that are not conducive to employment. Hence it is assumed they may have become defeated or are insufficiently organized to conduct an effective job search. In other words it is a 'supply-side' explanation (i.e. focusing upon the characteristics of the workforce, rather than a 'demand-side' explanation based on the characteristics of the job market). This leads to the second assumption – that there are sufficient jobs available. In fact, as might be expected, the areas with the highest levels of unemployment have the lowest numbers of job opportunities.

Social polarization

Social polarization and the spatial segregation of the poor is of course a well-worn theme in urban social geography. It is clear, however, that economic restructuring and social polarization, in tandem with social and demographic changes, have heightened economic inequality along class and racial cleavages. The 'new poor', in other words, represent a distinctive component of the new urban geography that has been produced by restructuring. Most striking among the polarized landscapes of contemporary cities are 'impacted ghettos', spatially isolated concentrations of the very poor,

Table 13.2 Forms of service sector restructuring

Private sector	Public sector
1 *Partial self-provisioning*	
Self-service in retailing	Child-care in the home
Replacement of services with goods	Care of elderly in the home
Videos, microwave ovens, etc.	Personal forms of transport
	Household crime-prevention strategies, neighbourhood watch, use of anti-theft devices, vigilante patrols
2 *Intensification: increases in labour productivity via managerial or organizational changes with little or no investment or major loss of capacity*	
Pressure for increased turnover per employee in retailing	The drive for efficiency in the health service
	Competitive tendering over direct labour operations, housing maintenance, refuse collection
	Increased numbers of graduates per academic in universities
3 *Investment and technical change: capital investment into new forms of production often with considerable job loss*	
The development of the electronic office in private managerial and producer services	Computerization of health and welfare service records
	Electronic diagnostic equipment in health-care
	Distance learning systems through tele-communications video and computers
	Larger refuse disposal vehicles, more efficient compressed loaders
4 *Rationalization: closure of capacity with little or no new investment or new technology*	
Closure of cinemas	Closure or reduction of public transport systems
Closure of schools, hospitals, day-care centres for under fives, etc.	
5 *Subcontracting of parts of the services sector to specialized companies, especially of producer services*	
Growth of private managerial producer services	Privatization or contracting-out of cleaning, laundry and catering within the health service
	Contracting-out of refuse disposal, housing maintenance, public transport by local government
6 *Replacement of existing labour input by part-time, female or non-white labour*	
Growth of part-time female labour in retailing	Domination of women in teaching profession?
	Increased use of part-time teachers
7 *Enhancement of quality through increased labour input, better skills, increased training*	
In some parts of private consumer services	Retraining of public-sector personnel
	Community policing?
8 *Materialization of the service function so that the service takes the form of a material product that can be bought, sold and transported*	
Entertainment via videos and televisions rather than 'live' cinema or sport	Pharmaceuticals rather than counselling and therapy?
9 *Spatial relocation*	
Movement of offices from London into areas with cheaper rents	Relocation from larger psychiatric hospitals into decentralized community-based hostels
	Relocation of offices from London to realize site values and to reduce rents and labour costs
10 *Domestication: the partial relocation of the provision of the functions within forms of household or family labour*	
Closure of laundries	Care of the very young and elderly in private houses after reductions in voluntary and public service
11 *Centralization: the spatial centralization of services in larger units and the closure or reduction of the number of smaller units*	
Concentration of retailing into larger units	Concentration of primary and secondary hospital care into larger units, that is, the growth of large general hospitals
Closure of corner shops	and group general practices

Source: Pinch (1989), p. 910.

usually (though not always) racial minorities that have been drained of community leaders and positive role models and that are dominated numerically by young unmarried mothers and their children. Less visible, but more decisively excluded, are the 'landscapes of despair' inhabited by the homeless: micro-spaces that range from vest-pocket parks and anonymous alleyways to squalid shelters and hostels (Dear and Wolch, 1991).

These phenomena raise a wide variety of conceptual, theoretical and practical issues. Though it is beyond our scope to pursue them all, one issue that should be raised here is that of attributing causality to the deprivation inherent in social polarization. Table 13.3 outlines six main explanations of deprivation, ranging from the concept of a 'culture of poverty' – which sees urban deprivation as a pathological condition – to the concept of an 'underclass' of households that have become detached from the formal labour market.

The idea of a **culture of poverty** is seen as being both an adaptation and a reaction of the poor to their marginal position in society, representing an effort to cope with the feelings of helplessness and despair that develop from the realization of the improbability of achieving success within a capitalist system. In short, it results in a vicious cycle of lack of opportunity and lack of aspiration. There is, however, considerable room for debate as to whether culture is more of an effect than a cause of poverty and, indeed, whether the values, aspirations and cultural attributes of the poor in Western cities really are significantly different from those of the rest of society.

The idea of **transmitted deprivation** is really concerned with explaining why, despite long periods of full employment and the introduction of improved welfare services, problems of deprivation persist. According to this model, the answer lies in the cyclical process of transmission of social maladjustment from one generation to another. Thus, while it is acknowledged that low wages, poor housing and lack of opportunity are important factors, the emphasis is on the inadequacies of the home background and the upbringing of children.

The idea of institutional malfunctioning shares some common ground with the managerialist school of thought, since the behaviour of bureaucrats is given a central role in explaining the persistence of deprivation. Here, however, it is not so much the 'gatekeeping' role of bureaucrats that is emphasized as the administrative structure within which they work. Thus, it is argued, the formulation of public policy in separate departments concerned with housing, education, welfare, planning and so on is inevitably ineffective in dealing with the interlocking problems of deprivation. Moreover, such

Table 13.3 Differing explanations of urban deprivation

Theoretical model	Explanations	Location of the problem
1 Culture of poverty	Problems arising from the internal pathology of deviant groups	Internal dynamics of deviant behaviour
2 Transmitted deprivation (cycle of deprivation)	Problems arising from individual psychological handicaps and inadequacies transmitted from one generation to the next	Relationships between individuals, families and groups
3 Institutional malfunctioning	Problems arising from failures of planning, management or administration	Relationship between the 'disadvantaged' and the bureaucracy
4 Maldistribution of resources and opportunities	Problems arising from an inequitable distribution of resources	Relationship between the underprivileged and the formal political machine
5 Structural class conflict	Problems arising from the divisions necessary to maintain an economic system based on private profit	Relationship between the working class and the political and economic structure
6 Underclass	Minority groups isolated from formal labour market and from mainstream society	Spatial mismatch of jobs and labour; feminization of poverty; suburbanization of role models

organizational structures are vulnerable to interdepartmental rivalries and power struggles that can only reduce their overall effectiveness.

The idea of a maldistribution of opportunities and resources can be accommodated within pluralist political theory, with deprivation being seen as the result of failures of participation and representation of certain interests in the political process.

The idea of structural inequality sets problems of deprivation as inevitable results of the underlying economic order and of structural changes in labour markets, etc. that are attached to the overall restructuring of the economy and of the built environment.

The idea of an underclass borrows from several of these perspectives, emphasizing the effects of economic restructuring and sociospatial change in isolating racial minorities not only from the economic mainstream but also from the social values and behavioural patterns of the rest of society. The existence of large numbers from minority groups with only weak connections to the formal labour force is attributed largely to the spatial mismatch between people and jobs that has intensified as many of the low-skill jobs traditionally found in inner-city areas have been relocated, to be replaced mainly by jobs requiring higher skills. The development of a distinctive context of values and attitudes is attributed largely to the feminization of poverty resulting from an increase in teenage unwed mothers (itself a product of a combination of economic and social trends), combined with the suburbanization of more affluent, better-skilled households. It has proven difficult, however, to establish the nature of the linkages between labour markets, poverty, migration, household structure, race, gender, attitudes and behaviour; while the term 'underclass' itself has been criticized because of the way it has been used as a pejorative label for the 'undeserving' poor by some commentators.

All this leaves us some way short of a clear and comprehensive explanatory framework for deprivation and social polarization. What is clear, however, is that the degree of sociospatial polarization in contemporary cities has brought a disturbing dimension of urban social geography to a new prominence. Riots, civil disorder, social unrest and social disorganization are by no means new to cities, but they appear to have developed to unprecedented levels.

Take, for example, the inner-city neighbourhoods of the Bronx, where relict and dilapidated neighbourhoods have come to represent 'burnt-out' settings where social disintegration has fostered extremely high levels of poverty, substance abuse (Figure 13.3a), violent deaths, low birthweight infants, and deaths from HIV (Figure 13.3b) (Wallace and Fullilove, 1991). The combination of such aetiologies with continuing discrimination and a newly racialized politics (see Omni and Winant, 1993) has begun to precipitate rebellion, as manifested by rioting (Figure 13.4). Thus we enter a new round of the sociospatial dialectic, with events such as the Los Angeles riot of April 1992, which accounted for 52 deaths and between $785 million and $1 billion in property damage (Oliver *et al.*, 1993), leading to a widespread 'hardening' of the built environment, with 'fortress' and 'bunker' architecture, the loss of public urban spaces, the 'militarization' of social control, intensified surveillance, gated streets, private security forces and intensified sociospatial segregation (Davis, 1992).

The informal urban economy

One response to social polarization has been the non-recording of economic activity – creating an 'informal' economy (also known as a 'hidden' economy). Sometimes no official record is made because the activity is illegal, such as bribery, prostitution or drug dealing, while in other cases the activity may be perfectly legal but no record is made in order to evade paying taxes or else to avoid the withdrawal of state benefits. These unrecorded exchanges often occur between people who are strangers but also between neighbours, friends and relatives who know each other. A further complication is that sometimes these exchanges may involve goods or services rather than money.

Because the activity is by definition covert, very little is known about the informal economy compared with other aspects of city life. For example, the hidden economy is often synonymous with those on the economic margins of society, yet there is a great deal of 'white-collar' informal activity that receives much less attention.

There is a common assumption that the hidden economy is on the increase in developed Western cities but this is difficult to prove conclusively (some staggering estimates put the total economy built around
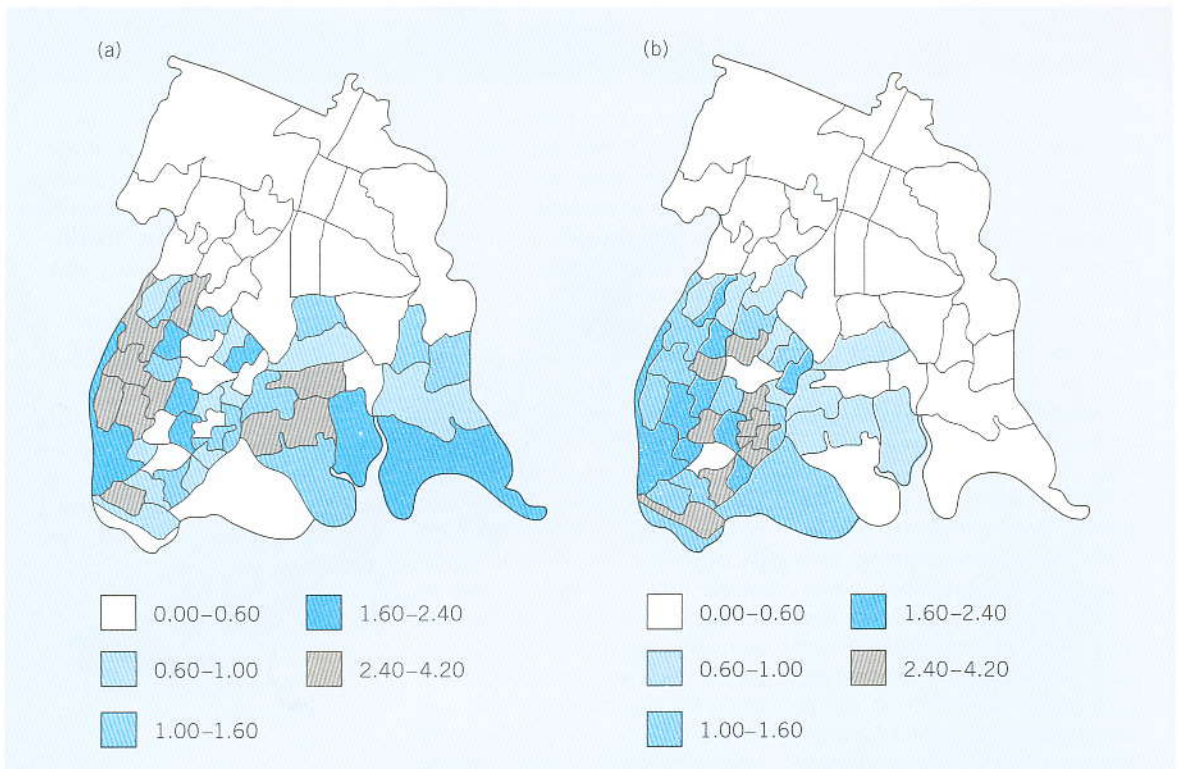
Figure 13.3 The Bronx, New York: (a) annual number of drug-related deaths, by quintiles; (b) HIV deaths per 100 000 population, cumulative to 1988.
Source: After Wallace and Fullilove (1991), pp. 1707, 1708.

Box 13.4

Key trends in urban social geography – The French riots of 2005

From time to time various types of civil disorder such as looting, riots, wanton destruction and random violence erupt in major Western cities. Classic examples are the Paris riots of May 1968, the unrest in UK cities in the early 1980s, the widespread looting, violence and disorder in Los Angeles in April 1992, the riots in the English cities of Bradford, Oldham and Burnley in 2001 and the Greek riots of late 2008.

These riots have common features. First, there is a long-standing sense of grievance held by a sub-section of the community, usually the result of chronic disadvantage coupled with a perception of institutional discrimination. Second, there is some 'trigger event', usually the repression of the minority by the police (e.g. the televising in 1992 of the video recording of black suspect Rodney King being badly beaten by officers of the Los Angeles Police – a force long thought to be racist in its operations). Next, there is some form of repression as civil authorities gain control of the city with police or military force. This is often followed by a period of soul searching in the media and by politicians as they wring their hands over what could cause such mayhem. Next, civil authorities promise an official enquiry into the causes of the rioting with the promise to implement reforms. In some cases these reforms may change the practices of institutions that provoked the riots but typically the long-term sources of inequality and disadvantage remain unaltered. The areas inhabited by the rioters are often devastated by the looting and while in some cases urban reforms and regeneration take place, in other examples the rioting is the trigger for long-term neighbourhood abandonment and decline.

continued

The French riots of October and November 2005 are an interesting manifestation of these processes. The underlying grievance was (and still is) the social condition of the *banlieues*, the deprived suburban estates of French cities typically inhabited by Muslim immigrants of North African origin and their descendants (but also more recent immigrants from the Caribbean and south-east Asia). Such areas have all the major indices of urban deprivation: high unemployment (especially among youths), low incomes, poor educational achievements, overcrowded housing, drug dealing and high crime rates. In addition they are often isolated, with poor public transport systems and limited social infrastructure. Fiscal measures to cut social expenditure as part of France's membership of the European Monetary Union also reduced social spending on the suburbs.

In 2005 tensions were rising in the *banlieues* as national riot police and military police gendarmes made numerous sweeps checking the identity of youths for illegal immigrants. The trigger event was the accidental electrocution of two Muslim youths as they fled from the police in the Paris suburb of Clichy-sous-Bois. There followed two weeks of rioting in the *banlieues* in which an estimated 9–10 000 cars were torched, over 300 buildings and schools were burnt and some 4700 people were arrested. Emergency powers including bans on public meetings and curfews were introduced in 30 French cities. The French interior minister at the time was Nicolas Sarkozy, who famously described the rioters as 'scum' (*racaille*). Some commentators predicted further rioting if Sarkozy became president but after his election this did not happen. In fact, Sarkozy pledged a new 'Marshall Plan' for the *banlieues* (mimicking the vast aid sent by the United States to reconstruct Europe after the Second World War) and he appointed a Muslim woman, Fadela Mara, to be in charge of city policy to liaise with representatives of the *bidonvilles* to ascertain their grievances. There are plans to lure businesses into the suburbs with tax incentives and to encourage vocational training for school drop-outs. At the time of writing (late 2008) tensions between French Muslim youths and the police remain high. Efforts have been made to clean up the *banlieues* but we await major new policy initiatives (currently held up by financial constraints).

France's tradition of secular republicanism aims to treat everyone as equal French citizens and refuses to acknowledge the interests of particular ethnic minorities in a multicultural society. Hence there are few Muslim representatives in French institutions and the wearing of special religious headgear is forbidden in French schools. This contrasts with UK social policy that recognizes minority interests through the encouragement of faith schools. However, both Britain and France manifest Islamophobia in the wider society as well as alienation among some of their Muslim youths.

Key concepts related to the French riots of 2005 (see Glossary)

Banlieue, *bidonvilles*, carceral city, eligibility rules, exclusion, fortress cities, ghetto, inverse-care law, multiple deprivation, race-preference hypothesis, segregation, underclass hypothesis.

Further reading

Bagguley, P. and Hussain, Y. (2008) *Riotous Citizens: Ethnic conflict in multicultural Britain* Ashgate, Aldershot

Murray, G. (2006) France: the riots and the Republic, *Race and Class* **47**, 26–45

Oliver, M.L., Johnson, J.H. and Farrell, W.C. Jr (1993) Anatomy of a rebellion: a political-economic analysis, in R. Gooding-Williams (ed.) *Reading Rodney King: Reading urban uprising* Routledge, New York

Wacquant, L. (2008) *Urban Outcasts* Polity Press, Cambridge

Links with other chapters

Chapter 8: Segregation and congregation

drug dealing as worth $300 billion at 2000 prices – approximately equivalent to the size of the petroleum economy). Another common assumption (which one might also call a prejudice) is that the hidden economy has increased because of the growth of long-term male unemployment in Western cities. Thus it is claimed that unemployed people are 'getting by' through being active in the informal economy.

Although this is obviously a difficult topic to research, once again, we find no clear social science evidence for this 'common-sense' assumption. In fact, to the contrary, it appears that it is the formally employed who are most likely to engage in informal economic activity. The reason for this becomes 'obvious' with a little thought; to initiate and maintain economic activity, even of the unrecorded type, takes resources such as
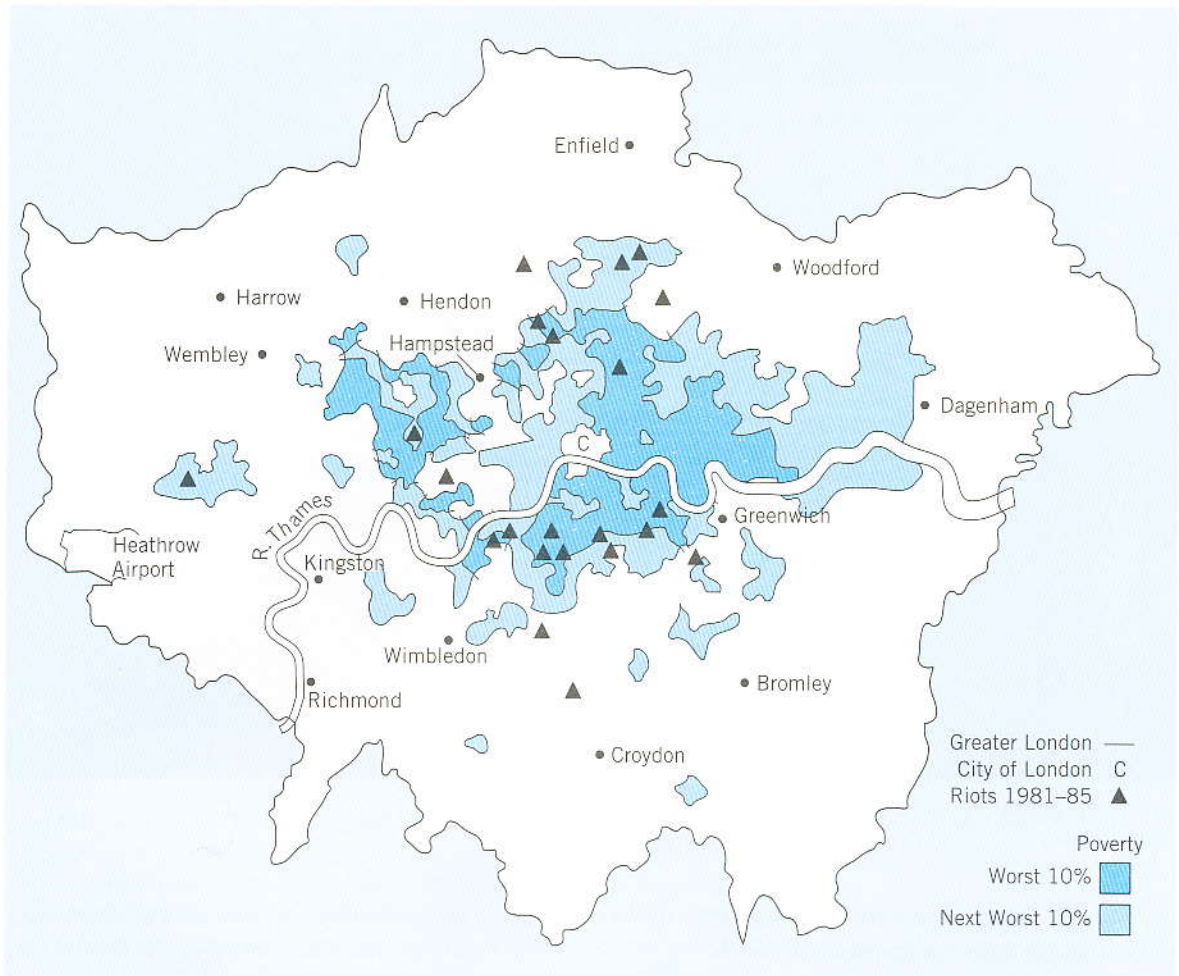
Figure 13.4 Poverty and urban riots, Greater London.
Source: After Diamond (1991), p. 218.

money, knowledge, equipment and personal contacts. These are things the employed tend to have in abundance but which the unemployed often lack.

A related issue is that of the domestic economy, work that is undertaken within households. Pahl (1984) argued that in order to understand social polarization it is important to take account of informal work in and around the household, such as cleaning, decorating and home improvements (termed 'self-provisioning'), as well as paid work in the formal economy. Pahl claimed that in the United Kingdom the majority of households have been able to mitigate a deteriorating position in the formal labour market through informal work and self-provisioning. In addition, households

with relatively modest incomes may not be so badly off compared with, say, high-earning, two-career, professional households because the former do not have to purchase services such as child care, house maintenance, car servicing, gardening and so on.

Pahl provided convincing case study evidence for his theories but it has proved difficult to extend these ideas more widely throughout the United Kingdom as a whole because of the extreme demands his thesis makes upon empirical data (see also Pinch, 1993). In addition, it has been argued that the increasing residualization, commercialization and privatization of public services has also encouraged domestic self-provisioning, as families are forced to become more self-reliant and

The sustainable city? The city as a focus for sociability, knowledge exchange and creativity: the South Bank, London. Photo Credit: Paul Knox.

provide services for themselves (Pinch, 1989). Again, this is a theory that requires further research.

Urban social sustainability

A final key issue underpinning urban social geography is sustainability.

As we saw in Chapter 2, ever since the creation of large cities with the advent of industrial capitalism, there have been grave concerns about the environmental consequences of urbanization. However, in the early twenty-first century these fears have taken on added dimensions. The problems are most acute in the developing world with its very rapid rates of urbanization and, often, intense poverty. However, the majority of the earth's resources are being consumed by urbanites of the developed world – the focus of this book – where there are also many problems of waste, pollution, noise and traffic congestion. In response, we have witnessed the development of numerous ecological movements

and green political parties. Writers such as Ulrich Beck (1992) have also had a key influence; he argued that we have entered the age of the 'risk society' in which technologies such as nuclear power and genetic engineering pose far greater risks than in the past.

Within this broad social climate it is possible to distinguish two main perspectives on environmental issues. First there is the dominant conceptualization, the **technocentric approach** (sometimes also called the **ecological modernization** approach). This approach is based on the assumption that environmental problems should be tackled without upsetting the broad capitalist economic framework that currently guides world development. This approach therefore stresses the capacity of existing institutions to adapt to environmental issues and the capacity of modern science and technology to meet these challenges. It argues that economic growth is the key to better welfare for citizens and this should be driven primarily by market forces, regulated in the interests of the environment.

Box 13.5

Key debates in urban social geography – What is the future for suburbia?

Academics and urban-biased intellectuals have long poured scorn on sprawling low-density residential suburbs of the type that grew rapidly in Western economies after the Second Word War and showed renewed growth throughout the boom period between 1995 and 2007. Ever since Herbert Gans' (1967) pioneering study of the Levitt estate at Willingboro (commonly termed Levittown), 15 miles east of Philadelphia, suburbs have been portrayed as typically white, dull, affluent, socially homogeneous, exclusionary, politically conservative, individualistic, competitive and engaging in unnecessarily ostentatious consumption. Currently, the effect of the credit crunch in bursting the bubble of rapidly rising house prices, coupled with the rapidly increasing cost of mobility following the hike in energy prices, has raised anew questions about the future viability of suburban life. Furthermore, in the wake of the 'new economy' in which the creative industries are of growing importance, revivified city centres with their mixing of diverse cultural groups are increasingly seen as the key to innovation and economic prosperity.

Closer inspection of reality inevitably shows that things are more complex than these popular stereotypes suggest. To begin with, as ever more people migrate to the suburbs they are beginning to become more diverse in character. In the United States, for example, the proportions of Asians, Hispanics and blacks in suburbs are increasing at faster rates than for whites (Willingboro is today two-thirds black). In the United Kingdom well-established second- and third-generation members of ethnic minorities are moving to suburban areas – often in response to the influx of asylum seekers and other migrants in their traditional inner-city heartlands. In the United States there are also signs that singe-sex couples are increasing in numbers in suburban regions. The idea that perceived declines in community and civility can be attributed exclusively to suburban living is also questionable. Furthermore, the idea that creative people are socially dysfunctional, isolated individuals living downtown is one of many 'creativity myths'. While some creative industries such as fashion clothing are reliant on particular creative communities that are concentrated in cities, innovation in other industries such as high technology and biotech are the product of socially balanced, often family oriented, individuals living in suburban regions (Sawyer, 2006). Furthermore, suburban living still continues to be popular as demonstrated by the many empty downtown apartments. Statistics also show that, until the recent economic downturn, suburbs were frequently centres of economic growth.

Nevertheless, there can be little doubt that the growth of enormous suburban regions – sometimes termed metroburbia – has been part of a cocktail of elements that have led to many current social and economic difficulties. Suburban lifestyles combined with the availability of cheap credit have certainly encouraged the boom in energy-intensive high-consumption lifestyles that underpin many current economic woes. In the United States housing foreclosures and residential abandonment could make many suburbs new slum areas. Indeed there are many signs of rising crime rates in suburban areas.

There are already signs of change in the United States in response to rising oil prices. Sales of sports utility vehicles (SUVs) are down, the average distances driven in automobiles are in decline, cycling is on the increase, as is car pooling, while investment in, and travel on mass transit systems is on the increase. It has been suggested that new settlements will tend to cluster in future at higher densities around mass transit hubs. However, the scale of change needed is enormous; it has been estimated that currently about 99 per cent of trips taken by US citizens are in cars or other non-mass transit vehicles.

Key concepts related to suburbia (see Glossary)

Automobility, boomburb, commodity fetishism, community lost, decentralization, edge cities, *embourgeisement* thesis, exclusionary zoning, galactic metropolis, purified communities, techoburbs, 'turf' politics.

Further reading

Bruegmann, R. (2006) *Sprawl; A compact history* University of Chicago Press, Chicago, IL

Gans, H. (1967) *The Levittowners: Ways of life and politics in a new suburban community* Vintage, New York.

Knox, P. (2008) *Metroburbia, USA*. Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, NJ

Sawyer, R.K. (2006) *Explaining Creativity: The science of human innovation* Oxford University Press, Oxford

Links with other chapters

Chapter 9: Box 9.2 The growth of the New Urbanism movement

Chapter 13: Box 13.2 The role of automobility

In opposition to the technocentric approach are various types of **ecocentric approach** united by a belief that ecological problems can be addressed only by changing the capitalist system and its inexorable dependency on economic growth and consumption. In addition, ecocentrists tend to see existing state institutions as working in the interests of big business and therefore of being incapable of reining in such forces. The solution is often seen in smaller decentralized, self-reliant political units within which there can be greater participatory democracy. However, some argue that over-arching forms of governance are needed to coordinate local actions to meet environmental needs. David Harvey argues from a radical perspective that:

> the environmental justice movement has to radicalize the ecological modernization discourse itself. And that requires confronting the underlying processes (and their associated power structure, social relations, institutional configurations, discourses and belief systems) that generate environmental and social injustices. Here, I revert to another key moment in the argument advanced in *Social Justice and the City* (pp. 136–137): it is vital, when encountering a serious problem, not merely to try and solve the problem in itself but to confront and transform the processes that gave rise to the problem in the first place. Then, as now, the fundamental problem is that of unrelenting capital accumulation and the extraordinary asymmetries of money and political power that are embedded in that process.
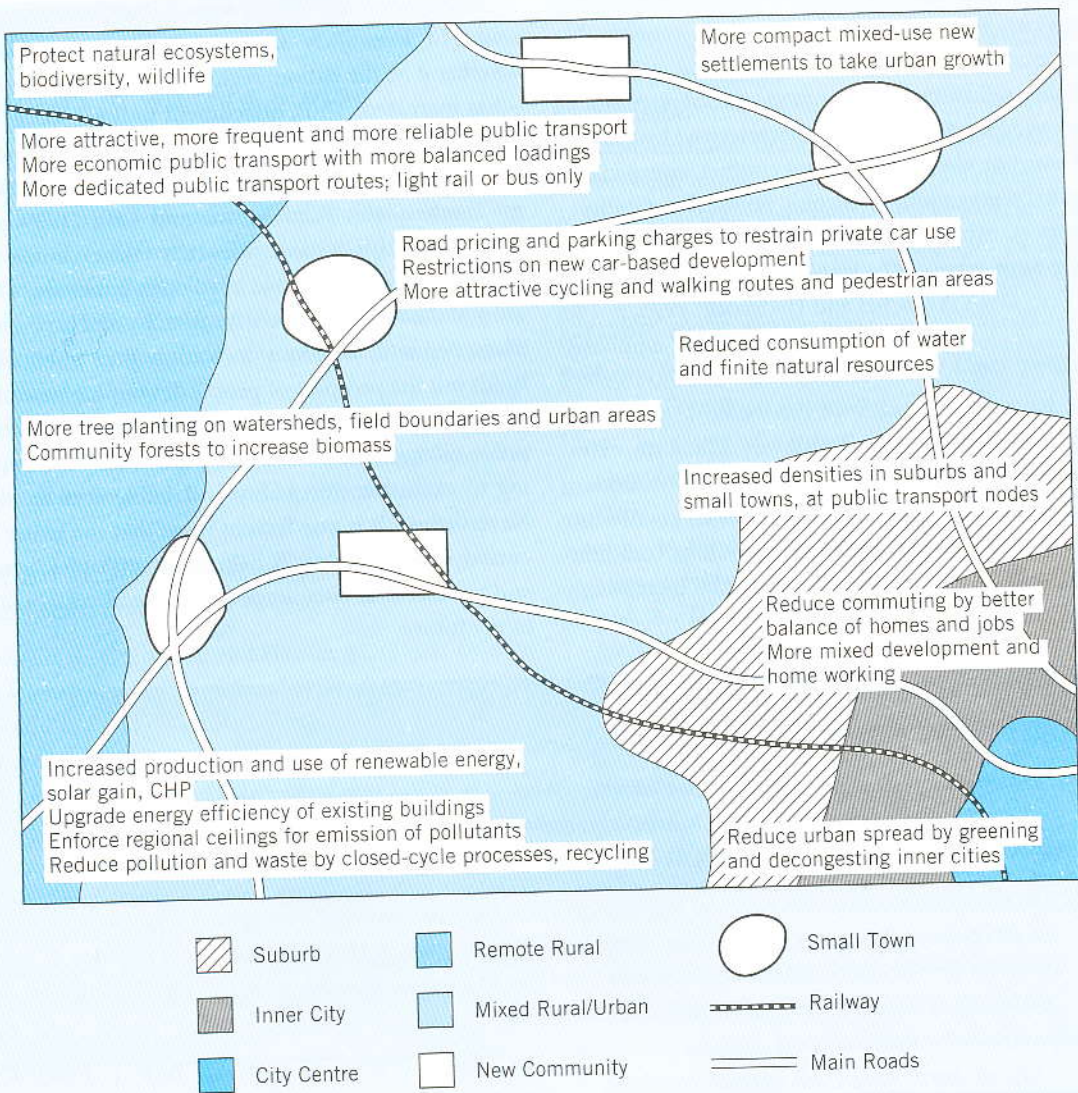
(Harvey, 1996, p. 97)

The issues of cities and sustainability are inextricably linked. The consumption-intensive, car-dependent, decentralized, suburban city forms that became dominant in Western cities in the second half of the twentieth century, although apparently popular with many, are clearly wasteful of resources (see also Box 13.2). The search is therefore on to find more sustainable urban forms, although, given the huge existing investment in suburbanization, there can be no immediate turnaround in city design (even if a majority desired such a shift). Sustainability is about the interdependence of the economy, the environment, and social well-being. It is a normative view that combines environmental

sustainability with notions of economic growth and social justice. The oft-quoted definition of sustainable development from the Brundtland Report (World Commission, 1987), which examined the issues at the international scale, is that sustainable development is 'development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'. In fact this is a relatively small part of the Report's concept of sustainability, which extends to reviving economic growth; meeting essential needs for jobs, food, energy, water and sanitation; ensuring a balance between population and resources; conserving and enhancing the resource base; reorienting technology and managing risk; merging the environment and economics in decision making; and reorienting international economic relations.

When it comes to *urban* sustainability, people are generally clear about the symptoms of unsustainable development: structural economic decline, environmental degradation, out-migration, segregation, exclusion, antisocial behaviour, and loss of distinctiveness and sense of place. Specifying just what is – or may be – sustainable is, however, problematic. For many, the salience of environmental issues means that the very idea of sustainability implies a deep anti-urban sentiment. Such bias notwithstanding, it is clear that, in urban settings, the socio-economic dimensions of sustainability are critical. They include the need to maintain local sociocultural attributes – neighbourliness and conviviality, for example – in the face of global influences and interdependencies. They also include aspects of social development that relate to the incidence of poverty and inequality, and accessibility to health care and education. Finally, they include aspects of social, cultural and political sensibilities that relate to a community's willingness and capacity to manage change in order to be more sustainable in a biophysical environmental as well as economic sense.

The complexities and ambiguities involved in the interdependencies among economy, the environment and social well-being within urban settings mean that the subject can be overwhelming, and for local planners and policymakers this can lead to a kind of despairing inertia. Finding a balance between the three *E*s is not easy in practice because of various conflicts associated with relationships between them. In particular, providing

Protect natural ecosystems, biodiversity, wildlife

More compact mixed-use new settlements to take urban growth

More attractive, more frequent and more reliable public transport
More economic public transport with more balanced loadings
More dedicated public transport routes; light rail or bus only

Road pricing and parking charges to restrain private car use
Restrictions on new car-based development
More attractive cycling and walking routes and pedestrian areas

Reduced consumption of water and finite natural resources

More tree planting on watersheds, field boundaries and urban areas
Community forests to increase biomass

Increased densities in suburbs and small towns, at public transport nodes

Reduce commuting by better balance of homes and jobs
More mixed development and home working

Increased production and use of renewable energy, solar gain, CHP
Upgrade energy efficiency of existing buildings
Enforce regional ceilings for emission of pollutants
Reduce pollution and waste by closed-cycle processes, recycling

Reduce urban spread by greening and decongesting inner cities

▨ Suburb	Remote Rural	◯ Small Town
▨ Inner City	Mixed Rural/Urban	┅┅ Railway
City Centre	New Community	═══ Main Roads

Figure 13.5 Some of the changes that will need to be made to ensure the future sustainability of city regions.

Source: After Blowers (1999), Fig. 6.12, p. 282.

economic opportunities for a wide range of people can often be in conflict with environmental protection. Nevertheless, growing calls for local solutions to seemingly intractable global problems mean that small town sustainability is increasingly seen as important, with more and more communities becoming aware of the 'triple bottom line' of the three E's. Sustainability is not just about resources in isolation, it is intimately connected with social and economic issues. Nevertheless, it is possible to isolate a separate notion of urban social sustainability that involves notions of equity, community and urbanity. Yiftachel and Hedgcock define such a notion as follows:

Urban social sustainability is defined here as the continuing ability of a city to function as a long-term viable setting for human interaction, communication and cultural development. It is not necessarily related

to the environmental and economic sustainability of a city, although the links often exist between the three areas. A socially sustainable city is marked by vitality, solidarity and a common sense of place among its residents. Such a city is characterized by a lack of overt or violent intergroup conflict, conspicuous spatial segregation, or chronic political instability. In short, urban social sustainability is about the *long-term survival* of a viable urban social unit.

(Yiftachel and Hedgcock, 1993, p. 140, authors' emphasis)

As we have seen throughout this book, a number of forces – including the globalization of capitalism, extraordinarily rapid technological change and postmodern consumer culture – have brought about an era of acute economic instability and social insecurity. Jobs, communities, families and identities all seem to be increasingly under threat.

Richard Sennett (1994) argued that this widespread sense of instability means attachment to *place* – whether it be the nation, region, city or neighbourhood – has increased. Thus, attachment to these spaces provides something that is perceived to be more stable than the insecurities associated with employment and the marketplace. Featherstone and Lash (1999, p. 2) note that in this context cities may take on a new role, for 'they offer the potential of an open public space built around the values of diversity, urbanity and experience'. Thus, Sennett's notion of a cosmopolitan public space holds out the prospect of people developing new forms of sociability based on tolerance. As we have seen in previous chapters, there are currently many forces leading to exclusion, inequality and *in*tolerance in cities. Nevertheless, it is our fervent hope that the issues discussed in this book will help foster attitudes, actions and policies that encourage urban social sustainability in the future.

Chapter summary

13.1 The various costs and benefits associated with access to services greatly affect the quality of life of urban residents. The struggle over access to scarce resources leads to coalitions of interest, often based around neighbourhoods. The aggregate effect of service allocations is one of 'unpatterned inequality'.

13.2 Decentralization, urban renewal and the restructuring of the public sector have greatly affected access to services in urban areas. Social polarization is an endemic feature of many Western cities and is a complex phenomenon that has consequently given rise to a variety of explanations. A key challenge for the future is how to achieve urban social sustainability.

Key concepts and terms

asset sales	ecocentric approach	residualization
'asylum-without-walls'	ecological modernization	service-dependent ghetto
centralization	'exit' option	spillovers
commercialization	externalities	subcontracting
competitive tendering	intensification	sustainability
contracting-out	'loyalty' option	technocentric approach
culture of poverty	materialization	third-party effects
de facto territories	privatization	transmitted deprivation
deinstitutionalization	rationalization	'voice' option
domestication	reinstitutionalization	workfare

Suggested reading

Changes in welfare states

Burrows, R. and Loader, B. (eds) (1994) *Towards a Post-Fordist Welfare State?* Routledge, London

Peck, J. (2001) *Workfare States* Guilford Press, New York

Pierson, C. and Castles, F. (eds) (2000) *The Welfare State Reader* Polity Press, Cambridge

Pinch, S. (1997) *Worlds of Welfare: Understanding the changing geographies of social welfare provision* Routledge, London

Environment and Planning A, (2003) vol. 35, No. 5, Special issue on geographies of care and welfare edited by L.A. Staeheli and M. Brown

Urban restructuring, inequality and conflict

Fainstein, S., Gordon, I. and Harloe, M. (1992) *Divided Cities: New York and London in the contemporary world* Blackwell, Oxford

Gough, J., Eisenchitz, A. and Sales, R. (2006) *Spaces of Social Exclusion* Routledge, London

Law, R. and Wolch, J. (1993) Social reproduction in the city: restructuring in time and space, in P. Knox (ed.) *The Restless Urban Landscape* Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, NJ

Mollenkopf, J. (1988) *Power, Culture, and Place* Russell Sage Foundation, New York (see especially Chapters 7–12)

Mollenkopf, J. and Castells, M. (1991) *Dual City: Restructuring New York* Russell Sage Foundation, New York

Pacione, M. (ed.) (1997) *Britain's Cities: Geographies of division in urban Britain* Routledge, London

Deinstitutionalization

Dear, M. and Wolch, J. (1987) *Landscapes of Despair* Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ

Deprivation

Byrne, D. (1999) *Social Exclusion* Open University Press, Buckingham

Madanipour, A., Cars, G. and Allen, J. (eds) (1998) *Social Exclusion in European Cities: Processes, experiences and responses* Jessica Kingsley, London

Mohan, J. (2000) Geographies of welfare and social exclusion, *Progress in Human Geography* 24, 291–300

Urban sustainability

Breheny, M. (ed.) (1992) *Sustainable Development and Urban Form* Pion, London

Davis, M. (1998) *Ecology of Fear: Los Angeles and the imagination of disaster* Metropolitan Books, New York

Kenny, M. and Meadowcroft, J. (1999) *Planning Sustainability* Spon, London

Layard, A., Davoudi, S. and Batty, S. (2001) *Planning for a Sustainable Future* Spon, London

Wheeler, S.M. (2004) *Planning for Sustainability* Routledge, London

Wheeler, S.M. and Beatley, T. (eds) (2004) *The Sustainable Urban Development Reader* Routledge, London

Wolch, J. (2007) Green urban worlds, *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 97, 373–84

Urban planning and manifestos for progressive democratic cities

Amin, A., Massey, D. and Thrift, N. (2001) *Cities for the Many Not the Few* Policy Press, Bristol

Eucher, C.C. and McGovern, S.J. (2003) *Urban Policy Reconsidered: Dialogues on the problems and prospects of American cities* Routledge, London

Lees, L. (ed.) (2004) *The Emancipatory City: Paradoxes and possibilities* Sage, London

UK Urban Task Force (1999) *Towards an Urban Renaissance* Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions, London