Commonwealth of Australia

Copyright Act 1968

Notice for paragraph 135ZXA (a) of the Copyright Act 1968

WARNING

This material has been reproduced and communicated to you by or on behalf of the University of Western Sydney under Part VB of the Copyright Act 1968 (the Act).

The material in this communication may be subject to copyright under the Act. Any further reproduction or communication of this material by you may be the subject of copyright protection under the Act.

Do not remove this notice.
Castells (1991) argued that the new labour market emerging as a result of employment restructuring is the basis of a newly polarised socio-spatial structure. Socio-spatial polarisation refers to divergence over time in the life chances and socio-economic circumstances of low income and middle to high income populations. The growing intensity of the gap between people advantaged and disadvantaged by the restructuring process is expressed in inequality of income, disparities in the availability and quality of public services, employment status, growing poverty (particularly among women) and dependence and welfare service provision. The impact of these is spread unevenly across social groups, ethnic groups, genders and locations. The prosperity of smaller towns and rural areas has declined as economic growth has tended to concentrate in metropolitan areas (see Chapter 7, 'Post-industrial multifunctional metropolises'). Within cities, the impacts of economic change are differentiated due to urban structure, class, gender and ethnic segmentation in the workforce, and the way that the income effect of employment restructuring interacts with housing markets. Existing patterns of residential segregation are overlain by the uneven impacts of the costs and benefits of restructuring. The result is a spatially disparate pattern of income distribution and of access to collective social and economic resources such as healthcare and education, and in the quality of the living environment (Baum & Hassan 1993).

Social polarisation takes on a spatial dimension to become socio-spatial polarisation which is embedded in the larger context of global economic change.

Australasian cities have long established patterns of social contrast between urban neighbourhoods (Fitzgerald 1992). For instance, contrasts between Melbourne's high status eastern and bayside suburbs and the low status industrial suburbs of the west, outer south-east and outer north have a long history. However, Baum & Hassan (1993) and Forster (1991) on Adelaide, Stilwell (1989) and Badcock (1997) on Sydney, and Burbidge (1994) on Melbourne have all indicated an intensification of difference in income levels, living standards and unemployment in these major cities. Many Australian cities have relatively large areas with increasingly distinctive economic social and cultural profiles, leading Daly (1988: 160) to state that the 'contrasts between different areas of the cities have become starker ... Australian cities have begun to reflect the stark realities of ... economic changes ...'.

**Income polarisation**

Income is a critical factor underlying polarisation. In Australia, the top 25 per cent of families now receive about 5 times as much disposable income as the lowest 25 per cent (NATSEM 1994). Saunders et al. (1991) have shown that Australia and Aotearoa/New Zealand closely follow the United States in terms of inequality of family income distribution. But more significant than this is the growing divergence in the distribution of income. In Australia, between 1975 and 1990 the average full-time wage of the top 20 per cent of earners increased three-fold, while that of the lowest paid increased only two and a quarter times (Raskell 1992). The shift towards a 'service economy' has a great deal to do with social and economic polarisation, creating divergent income paths. One route has created a group of relatively highly skilled workers. The other has generated a larger group of workers marginalised from the chance of full-time, well-paid work.

It is worth noting here that the largest income gap between ethnic groups is found in Aotearoa/New Zealand between the Maori and Pakeha populations, and in Australia between indigenous and non-indigenous populations. Maori income distribution is quite different to that of the Pakeha population with 42.4 per cent of the Maori population in the lowest income category.
of below NZ$10,000 compared to 33.9 per cent of the Pakeha population (Murphy & Urlich-Cloher 1996). In 1996, Australian indigenous peoples’ incomes were only 63.5 per cent of the average non-indigenous income, a slight decline since 1986 (ABS 1997a).

**Putting the ‘spatial’ into socio-spatial polarisation**

The widening of income gaps does not happen in a vacuum. It takes effect in real places and it is expressed spatially. In other words, there is a geography to it. Socio-spatial polarisation results from the differential impact of restructuring in various parts of cities. Though overall employment in Australian cities has continued to grow, it has become more uneven and unreliable. A further divergence is between the prosperity of the major metropolitan areas and provincial towns, while social fortunes within cities are also diverging (Stilwell 1993a). Structural unemployment results, on the one hand, in inadequate accessible job opportunities appropriate to the skills profile of the workforce in particular locations. On the other hand, locations where employment is generated in expanding economic sectors often have an excess of jobs over workers, and draw in workers from the surrounding labour market. In Aotearoa/New Zealand for instance, most of the high-paying jobs in the corporate, financial and producer services have been concentrated in inner city areas of Auckland and Wellington, the country’s corporate and political capitals respectively. Meanwhile, unemployment has been concentrated in the working-class suburbs, such as Wellington’s Porirua and Wainuiomata (Le Heron & Pawson 1996).

Equally there is a duality in metropolitan Sydney between suburbs which have borne the brunt of the restructuring process (for example, Liverpool, Fairfield, Blacktown) and those linked to the CBD and the expanding service sector activities which are associated with the international economy and knowledge based activities (for example, Ryde, Woollahra, Mosman) (Daly & Stimson 1992).

Alongside existing patterns of social differentiation, employment restructuring creates a geographical pattern in which the high status suburbs increase their proportions of professional and managerial, highly educated populations. In these suburbs the existing economic base and workforce can adapt to the demands of economic restructuring (such as Ryde in Sydney, Nedlands in Perth). By contrast, low status suburbs have high proportions of people on low incomes, in blue-collar occupations, with fewer qualifications (for instance, Kwinana in Perth, Woodville in Adelaide). They often also have higher rates of unemployment and a greater proportion of migrants. In such places, the workforce, built on declining sectors, has felt the full impact of industry rationalisation, automation and the casualisation of employment opportunities. In Wellington for example, major state housing developments in eastern Porirua were built specifically to accommodate the manufacturing labour force required by local employers. When manufacturing employment declined in the 1980s, people in these communities found themselves distant from areas where employment was expanding without the skills required for those employment sectors (Le Heron & Pawson 1996).

So what then, in terms of income, is the outcome of geographically different impacts of employment restructuring? In a study of the ‘economic distance’ between Australians from different parts of cities, Gregory & Hunter (1995) made a ranked list of all urban collectors districts (the smallest geographical area in which statistical information is collected) according to socio-economic status. A range of comparisons was then drawn between the top 5 per cent of socio-economic areas in their ranked list and the bottom 5 per cent for the period 1976 to 1991. They found that the mean household income ratio between the lowest and the highest 5 per cent of areas was 60.4 per cent in 1976 but only 37.9 per cent by 1991. Households incomes in the top 5 per cent of areas increased by 23 per cent ($A12,555) but had dropped by 23 per cent ($A7,589) in the lowest 5 per cent. The income gap between the top and
bottom 5 per cent of collectors districts had almost doubled, widening by 92 per cent ($A20 144). There was a 'relative' widening of the gap in income between wealthy and the low income suburbs.

Access to employment especially is a critical factor in shaping uneven impacts of restructuring. Stilwell (1993b) showed that in 1992 upper status areas in Sydney had unemployment rates ranging from 4 to 7 per cent, whereas lower status areas had rates ranging from 8 to 17 per cent. Thus while the recession of the early 1990s affected all areas, it hit hardest in lower status areas. Research in Adelaide indicated that the Local Government Areas (LGAs) with the lowest average household incomes (and the highest proportion employed in manufacturing) had experienced the greatest increase in unemployment. Participation in the labour force declined in these areas as hidden unemployment took hold (people classing themselves as not seeking work due to the difficulties of finding work). These were the industrial outer suburbs of Adelaide’s north, south and west. Meanwhile, LGAs with an already large proportion of population employed in the service sector suffered smaller declines in employment and had high levels of their workforce employed in professional and managerial occupations. Such suburbs had below average levels of unemployment. These were mainly established, high status suburbs in the city’s east and south-east (Baum & Hassan 1993; Forster 1999). Thus the territorial segregation of different income groups becomes more entrenched as suburbs that are affluent weather the fortunes of economic restructuring with their well-being intact, while working-class suburbs have suffered. Developers and urban planners are implicated in the translation of this segregation into a marked physical form. Development company proposals to build gated communities (see Chapter 9, ‘Changing city form’) and multi-storey apartment buildings are increasingly accepted by urban planners and politicians as a viable urban and suburban housing style. Segregation can take on a physical form because of their costs and security installations.

The social impacts of income polarisation

A constellation of problematic social and economic conditions tends to accompany the effect of restructuring in the worst affected suburbs. Housing tends to be cheaper in urban localities with limited access to shops, schools and community amenities. This is precisely where low income households will tend to move. Low waged workers can then become socially isolated in locations where jobs are scarce, where they are distant from job opportunities, have poor public transport and service provision and must endure long and expensive commutes to distant work locations.

The effect of the spatial segregation of low income households to peripheral suburbs is to intensify polarisation. Forster (1991) identified Elizabeth, a suburb 20 kilometres north of Adelaide, as one such area characterised by low cost housing, a high proportion of public housing, job shortages, poor services and low rates of car ownership. This combination results in the social marginalisation of its low income residents in a peripheral suburb with poor mobility and few job opportunities. The 1991 unemployment rate in Elizabeth was 24 per cent. Such suburbs are often portrayed in the media and in public discourses as uniform destitute wastelands, and their residents as uncultured, uneducated and potential criminals (see Box 9.6). Peel's (1995) research with residents of Elizabeth, like Powell's (1993) in western Sydney illustrates the richness and diversity that exists in Elizabeth and the value that residents place in their neighbourhood. Nevertheless, there are clear demarcations between centrally located, accessible and well-resourced suburbs and outer, less accessible and less well-resourced areas. There is evidence that 'entrenched socio-spatial inequality is becoming more pronounced, and locally entrenched (Gregory & Hunter 1995).
Othering western Sydney

Peripheral suburbs exposed to high levels of unemployment, escalating youth unemployment and declining participation in the labour force are frequently socially marginalised as a result of the ways in which they are discussed in the media, advertising, and government policies. The language used, the images of the places and people created, the representations made and the comparisons that are drawn particularly by

Table 9.4 Representations of Western Sydney as 'other'

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General</th>
<th>Physical Environment</th>
<th>People</th>
<th>Body</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Western Sydney</td>
<td>lack</td>
<td>homogeneous</td>
<td>ignorant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>outer</td>
<td>ugly</td>
<td>poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>bad</td>
<td>frontier</td>
<td>tasteless</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>them</td>
<td>flat</td>
<td>uncultured</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>hot</td>
<td>criminal/violent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>dry/dusty/treeless</td>
<td>passive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>sprawling</td>
<td>indolent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>new</td>
<td>neglectful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>violent</td>
<td>ugly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>despairing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>aimless</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>working-class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sydney</td>
<td>excess</td>
<td>heterogeneous</td>
<td>intellectual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>inner</td>
<td>beautiful</td>
<td>wealthy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>good</td>
<td>centre</td>
<td>trendy/fashionable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>us</td>
<td>hilly</td>
<td>cultured</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>temperate</td>
<td>law abiding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>coastal/leafy</td>
<td>active</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>compact</td>
<td>idynamic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>old/mature</td>
<td>concerned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>tranquil</td>
<td>beautiful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>hopeful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>purposeful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>mixed/middle-class</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

the media are referred to as a discourse. Suburbs disadvantaged by restructuring, for example parts of western Sydney, are often positioned by discourses constructing them as on the social margins, as different to the rest of society and its social norms, as 'other' (Hodge 1996). Mee (1994) identified the following language (see Table 9.4) and representations as commonly used in creating a discourse of western Sydney as Sydney's 'other'.

The following quotation, taken from the *Sydney Morning Herald* (5 October 1996: 6) portrays western Sydney as a blackened and uniform 'nowhere-land' rife with unemployment, the uneducated and disease:

in effect, Sydney's west starts where the money runs out, where the jobs get scarce and where the resources are stretched and the rest [author's italics] of Sydney loses interest. The west has always been Sydney's poor cousin, beyond the reach of the sea breezes and largesse of the city, but it is becoming a distant relative that shares little more than a road map with its elite eastern neighbourhood.

These constructions create a singular and negative image of the place and its people that ignores the diversity of the population and lifestyles, creates negative stereotypes of western Sydney and its people as dysfunctional, violent and dangerous. 'They' are imagined as a uniform group with a different set of social norms to the 'respectable' rest of Sydney. As a result, the social disadvantage that undoubtedly exists in the suburbs can be perceived, partly due to positioning within this discourse, as a 'natural' outcome of a failed place and people. Despite the persistence of derogatory and damaging discourses which further marginalise these suburbs, continual and conscious efforts are made by residents and local authorities in western Sydney to disrupt the stereotypes and to create new visions of the place and its people.

**Socio-spatial polarisation and the housing market**

Income and employment are combined in a matrix of inequality which creates differential access to the housing market. Since the 1970s, house prices in Australia have risen steeply, interest rates have increased while real income grew more slowly and at differential rates. As a result, housing affordability has been dramatically reduced and in many suburbs rates of home ownership are declining. For instance, in Sydney's Parramatta, Kogarah and Bankstown home ownership has declined whilst in other areas like Marrickville, Woollahra and Ashfield it had increased. Median house prices in major Australian cities increased between 1980 and 1992 by an average of 40 per cent, but by 48 per cent in Sydney (see Figure 9.10) (Bourassa & Hendershott 1993). In a similar pattern, Auckland has led house price inflation in New Zealand. Here prices increased by 56 per cent between 1991 and 1996 (Austin & Whitehead 1998). As Figure 9.11 shows, between 1990 and 1996 house prices in Sydney's eastern suburbs increased by 38.4 per cent, in the lower North Shore by 31 per cent, and in the inner west by 33 per cent. By comparison, houses prices in Liverpool/Fairfield, Canterbury/Bankstown and the western suburbs increased respectively by just 6–10 per cent (ABS 1997c). In the areas where prices are rising most rapidly, home ownership levels have remained stable. Meanwhile in some of the areas where prices have risen less steeply, like Bankstown, home ownership has actually declined. This indicates a division between households able to afford housing, where they can expect the value of their property to increase, and households distant from the city centre, where property values are likely to accrue far less quickly. Furthermore, access to home ownership is increasingly restricted to two-income households. For less well-off families, particularly those on a single income, owner occupation is increasingly difficult. Groups made vulnerable by the impacts of structural economic change, unemployment or falling average real wages are particularly exposed to rising house prices and declining housing affordability (see Box 9.7). Financial deregulation, and the accompanying
volatility in interest rates has made low income purchasers with maximum borrowing very vulnerable (Yates & Vipond 1991).

**Public housing and polarisation**

Government-provided services in healthcare, education, public transport and housing become increasingly important to social groups and neighbourhoods which feel the brunt of employment restructuring. In both Australia and Aotearoa/New Zealand the growing importance of such services has coincided with governments seeking to reduce public expenditure and to privatisate the provision of services as far as possible. Reforms to the welfare system have adversely altered the provision of the very services that are crucial to the quality of life, especially in marginalised suburbs where people are more dependent on social services provision. The impacts of structural economic change have created a growing differential in incomes which, when combined with the increasing ratio of housing costs to income and the changing structure of public housing provision, are furthering socio-spatial polarisation. The trends of social differentiation are entrenching spatially defined social and ethnic based division. In both Australia and Aotearoa/New Zealand, governments have moved towards requiring full market rents for public housing and to giving low income households accommodation supplements to assist them in covering their housing costs (see Box 9.8).

**Education**

A brief examination of secondary education services and educational outcomes reveals how patterns of educational attainment reflect and reinforce socio-spatial polarisation. Educational attainment is an important determinant of employment in expanding and highly paid job sectors. However, the quality of education provision is uneven, with huge variation across schools in levels of educational attainment (see Box 9.9), in retention rates, along with variation in the quality of school facilities and in the quality and experience of teachers.
How has the relative increase in house prices influenced the process of socio-spatial polarisation? Why have levels of home ownership fallen in suburbs where house prices have increased the least?

Box 9.7

**Women and home ownership**

The trends of declining housing affordability and rates of home ownership have particularly harsh implications for women. This is particularly the case for single women who dominate two of the groups for whom home ownership is specially difficult. Two-parent households with dependent children now make up just 40 per cent of the households in Australia, and 38 per cent in Aotearoa/New Zealand. However, single person households now make up 11 per cent of the population and 55 per cent of these are female
For single people, and for women in particular, home ownership is particularly hard to achieve given women's lower average earnings and the growing difficulties of maintaining mortgage payments on a single income. Another vulnerable group is single parent households which now make up 14 per cent of Australian households, 86 per cent of which are female headed households (ABS 1996c). Single parent households have an average weekly income of $390 (ABS 1996d) compared to an average of $900 for couples with children aged under 5 years. Gregory & Hunter (1995) found that in the lowest 5 per cent of socio-economic areas in Australian cities the proportion of single parent households increased from 7 to 17 per cent between 1976 and 1991, but only from 3 to 6 per cent in the top 5 per cent of areas. A combination of factors — income differentials, lower capital ownership, child-bearing responsibilities, inadequate childcare facilities and discrimination have left women at a severe disadvantage in home ownership (Watson 1988).

Box 9.8

Public housing reform in Aotearoa/New Zealand

In Aotearoa/New Zealand the housing authority was replaced in 1991 with Housing New Zealand Ltd, a company established to manage state rentals (public housing) in a commercial manner which emphasised private rather than state provision of housing. This move was consistent with the direction of public policy reform that characterised the neo-liberal 'New Zealand experiment' (i.e. the movement from a welfare state to a competitive 'level playing field'). People in need of housing assistance now receive income support rather than direct provision of housing from the state. However, public housing 'tenants' now have to compete for accommodation on the private rental housing market in which price premiums are paid for well-serviced and accessible locations. This is likely to result in further segregation of public housing 'tenants' in cheaper and peripheral locations. One outcome of this change has been that public housing tenants are spending a significantly higher proportion of their income on housing since the housing reforms. This has particularly affected the Maori population. Though the national home ownership rate in Aotearoa/New Zealand is slightly higher than that of Australia at 76 per cent, home ownership among the Maori population lies at 51 per cent, reflecting a range of socio-economic disadvantages to which the Maori people are exposed. As a result, Maori representation in public housing is high, making up 26 per cent of state tenancies, despite their making up 14 per cent of the population. This emphasises again the complexity of socio-spatial polarisation as the housing market is interwoven with government policy and cross cut with considerations of ethnicity and gender.

Source: Murphy & Urlich-Cloher 1996.

In Australia, there is a widening gap in the distribution of tertiary education qualifications that mirrors the pattern of secondary education attainment. Not surprisingly, degree qualifications are increasingly concentrated in the highest status neighbourhoods (Johnson 1994). Undoubtedly then, various social groups, in different socio-economic circumstances, and living in various parts of the city, have differential access to educational opportunities. This pattern is very likely to be exacerbated by current changes to the fee structure of higher education and by the growing importance of private education in Australia (Baum & Hassan 1993).
The geography of secondary education outcomes in New South Wales

In 1994, the New South Wales Government taskforce reviewing the High School Certificate (HSC) performance found that students attending schools on the prestigious North Shore and Eastern Suburbs of Sydney gain Tertiary Entrance Rank (TER) scores on average twice as high as those in the city's south-west (70-84 as compared to 30-40) (The Sydney Morning Herald 16 October 1995: 1 ‘Schools: wealth wins out’). A range of factors contributes to the performance disparity including the fact that schools in the North Shore and Eastern Suburbs had twice as many teachers with more than ten years' experience than did schools in the south-west. These schools also benefited from far higher levels of voluntary parental contributions. With increased school privatisation, the more mobile and those who can afford school fees seek out the best schools. Secondary education outcomes are related to social class, and in turn influence participation in further education so that, ultimately, they influence the fortunes of students when they enter the labour market. Significantly, in New South Wales only 21 per cent of Aboriginal students reach Year 12, while only 5.9 per cent of indigenous people over 15 years of age have a degree, diploma or trade qualification compared to 23.4 per cent of the non-indigenous population (ABS 1996e).

The complexity of socio-spatial polarisation

Recent research on intensifying socio-spatial differentiation has called for broader approaches to understanding polarisation. This work has drawn attention to the non-economic processes through which social power and social advantage are created. Gibson et al. (1996) for example draw attention to processes and relations which have not been dealt with adequately in research on social polarisation to date. They stress, firstly, micro-scale processes — non-economic processes within the household, the division of paid and unpaid labour, state provision of services and resources — and secondly, social relations of ethnicity, gender and identity. Though these processes do have economic effects (e.g. women's over-representation in part-time, lower paid work due to their greater responsibility for unpaid domestic labour), most research on socio-spatial polarisation has concentrated only on economic outcomes as measured by social class indicators (occupation, employment and income). Such research pays little attention to gender, cultural and social differences which are also expressed in socio-spatial polarisation. Most academic studies, for instance, have concentrated on male employment or do not disaggregate men and women's employment statistics. They position women's work as something taken on, for instance, to cover for the loss of male employment ignoring the many other reasons for why women enter paid employment (Johnson 1996; see Chapter 10, 'Heteropatriarchial landscapes'). Using an approach that looks beyond the solely economic allows us to ask more complex questions about spatial, social and economic divisions, to better understand the experience of social disadvantage and to formulate appropriate strategies to mitigate the disempowerment associated with it (Gibson 1998).

A complex mixture of political, economic and socio-cultural factors lie behind the trend towards socio-spatial polarisation, such that causes and effects are not easily distinguished. Changes in the organisation of production and industrial structure, increasing integration into the world economy, government policy, growing unemployment, declining housing affordability, shifts in demographic structure, growing divisions along ethnic and gender grounds have all
played a part. There is little doubt however that social equity in the cities of Australia and Aotearoa/New Zealand is regressing. This is only being exacerbated by current social policy reforms in which governments are playing the role of a ‘reverse Robin Hood’ (Le Heron & Pawson 1996). In both countries, socio-spatial polarisation, which ensures that certain social groups are progressively disempowered and oppressed, raises questions and challenges about how to pursue economic growth while maintaining social stability and cohesion.

**Changing City Form**

The convergence of recent economic, demographic, socio-cultural and political changes is reflected in the urban built environment as cities take on new forms. The urban built environment reflects changes in the organisation and scale of production and investment; in technological advances; in the consumption patterns and cultural expression of an increasingly diversified urban population; in patterns of movement and use of urban space. It also reflects political changes as city governments’ efforts to be competitive and to restructure their economic base have resulted in the creation of new public bodies, such as development corporations, to oversee the publicly funded redevelopment of obsolete, often industrial, landscapes. These changes are also expressed in urban cultural landscapes by the range of diverse and often fragmented urban communities.

Newly emerging urban forms are associated with shifts in the consumption of housing, services, amenities, leisure and entertainments and the availability of employment. The more traditional patterns and dimensions of urban social differentiation are being overlain by something more complex. There is evidence of a growing sharp juxtaposition of ‘community types’ living in close proximity. These contiguous communities may live quite different lives in distinctive community spaces. Examples include gentrified communities alongside public housing complexes (for instance, Surry Hills, inner Sydney), gay spaces in the midst of the dominant heterosexual spaces (for example, Brunswick Street, Melbourne), ethnic concentrations alongside profoundly diverse neighbourhoods (such as Footscray, Melbourne) which are themselves in the midst of Anglo-Celtic dominated districts. Some of these community spaces may be almost self-contained in terms of social interaction and in terms of their physical partitioning from adjacent communities. The varied mix of these new communities and landscapes is now a defining characteristic of cities (Le Heron & Pawson 1996). Clearly there is a complex of interrelated economic, socio-cultural and political shifts behind the emergence of new landscapes and forms in the urban built environment.

**Gentrification**

One way in which economic, demographic, socio-cultural and consumption changes are expressed in the urban built environment is in the residential landscape. In previous sections, the long history of the sorting of residential populations by income, ethnicity and family status was discussed. This sorting is becoming more fine-grained and being compounded by growing income polarisation and the increased difficulty of accessing affordable home ownership. One outcome of this is the emergence in Australian and Aotearoa/New Zealand cities of housing forms which reflect both perceptions of, and actual increases in, socio-economic and occupational polarisation along with growing cultural diversity.

Gentrification is a term used to describe the moving of middle and upper income residents into inner city districts. It usually involves the renovation of existing property and an associ-
ated rise in property values as neighbourhoods, formerly inhabited by working-class populations, are upgraded to become middle-class residential areas. The term was first used to describe the phenomenon in London. In the late 1960s the process took hold in Australia, including inner areas of Sydney and Melbourne such as Glebe, Paddington, Carlton and Fitzroy (Figure 9.12). Later, gentrification spread to regional cities such as Newcastle. In Aotearoa/New Zealand, gentrification is evident in Parnell and Ponsonby, Auckland, along with Thorndon and Mt Victoria in Wellington.

Political economists argue that the availability of run-down inner city properties creates the conditions for profitable reinvestment. Capital is recirculated through the inner city with the aim of creating new forms of accumulation. Behaviourists, who stress individual and household choice, argue however that changing household structures give rise to new housing preferences (see Chapter 2, ‘Humanism’). Couples with no children or single parents, assuming their income is sufficient, often find that the opportunities of living in smaller dwellings in the inner areas, close to a range of entertainments and services, suits their lifestyles better than suburban housing estates. Economic restructuring is argued to have created a supply of gentrifiers in creating a booming professional and administrative class in producer services located in inner cities, while manufacturing and its workforce were increasingly located in the middle and outer suburbs. Feminist geographers have argued that women’s increased participation in the labour force, domestic responsibilities and the growth of single parent households have all contributed to the trend for living in gentrified inner city neighbourhoods which allow the roles of worker and parent to be combined more easily (Bondi 1998).

Negative impacts of gentrification include the

Source: Pauline McGuirk.

What are the aspects of city life that gentrifiers may wish to take advantage of by virtue of their location and residence in gentrifying neighbourhoods?
displacement of poorer households in rental properties as landlords upgrade and increase rents or sell on to renovators. Badcock's (1991) work on gentrification in Adelaide has traced the decline in lower income households and low status occupations in inner Adelaide and their replacement by middle to high income households and high status occupations. Much of the unskilled labour force has been displaced from the inner areas and almost no undercapitalised housing remains (Badcock 1991: 556). Gentrification has resulted in these poorer households losing their access to low-cost housing close to the public transport and services available in these inner areas. Many such households are displaced to less favourably located suburbs, often at a distance from the city centre, where rental values are lower.

Gentrification has contributed to the growing cultural and socio-economic diversity in the socio-economic status of inner area residential populations. These areas still contain some of cities' poorest populations. So gentrified neighbourhoods of renovated nineteenth-century housing are often surrounded by working-class districts and public housing, while being interspersed with 'neo-industrial style' warehouses renovated into stylish new apartments. The heterogeneous inner area of Fitzroy in Melbourne reflects this complex pattern. Many of its residential streets are extensively gentrified by the professional and managerial classes employed in the city. The main street, Brunswick Street, reflects the shopping and socialising demands of this population with a multitude of bookshops, cafes, clothes shops and restaurants. However a major Department of Housing high-rise complex exists at one end of the street where low income households contrast with the high income gentrifiers (Costello 1996). Brunswick Street also contains a range of resources serving the needs of the local lesbian community. This complex and diverse pattern of residential development reflects many of the multiple impulses shaping contemporary urban neighbourhoods, including globalisation and its associated social and economic restructuring. Ironically, this restructuring brings inequity to the fore by producing more fine-grained patterns that locate the haves and have-nots in closer proximity.

More recently, the trend for inner city residences to be sought after by middle and high income households is evident not just in gentrification but in the resurfing trend for high income households to purchase or rent in multi-storey, inner city apartment buildings. This trend partially reflects the downturn in the inner city commercial property market, resulting in the conversion of commercial developments to residential uses. It also partly reflects the relative affordability of residential investment property in Australian and Aotearoa/New Zealand cities compared to Asian cities. The trend also results from a socio-demographic shift. Purchasers are made up of elite workers in producer services industries, corporate managers, older dual career households in which children have left home, and a significant number of investors. In July 1996, at the peak of an apartment building boom, there were at least 27 major high-rise apartment projects under way in central Sydney containing more than 5200 units and another 2870 were 'on the drawing board' (The Sydney Morning Herald 13 July 1996: 7). This compares to only 1500 apartments built in Sydney CBD between 1979 and 1985 and only another 100 in the following five years (Walkley 1993: 27). These units ranged in price from a bottom range average of $220 000 to a top range average of $1.8m (Richard Ellis Research 1996). These developments normally offer high personal security and are self-contained. Many are serviced by gyms, laundries, underground car parks and roof-top gardens allowing their residents the convenience of inner city living but removed from the potentially threatening social and cultural diversity that is perceived in major cities.

**Gated communities**

The phenomenon of the 'gated community' or 'walled community' is another relatively new urban residential form emerging in a different part of the city. This residential form also reflects growing urban socio-cultural and
economic complexity. Originating in the suburbs of Los Angeles, gated suburbs are housing developments, normally built to serve a single social and cultural class with broadly similar housing requirements. They are enclosed, as the name suggests, within walls bridged only by elaborate entrance gates which in some cases require security swipe-cards to gain entrance. They are often developed in a consistent housing style, being master planned and constructed by a single developer. Within the suburb, community-owned recreational amenities, ranging from tennis courts and swimming pools to golf courses, are collectively used and maintained. These are suburbs tailored to meet the specific lifestyle aspirations and status identities of selected middle-class groups.

Gated suburbs offer their residents the status of living within a socially exclusive suburban setting but with the added feature of security and surveillance measures. Often these suburbs are protected by closed-circuit television cameras, security guards and alarm systems. In cities where expressions of cultural difference, of widening income gaps, growing unemployment and social unrest are present and are given widespread media coverage, these developments are marketed as offering protection from crime as well as the status of an exclusive social standing. Social distinction is offered both as a marker of social status but also as a means of deferring the social and cultural diversification that increasingly characterises urban life. Public discourse and media coverage of crime and the perceived threats of social polarisation (see Figure 9.13) is encouraging the proliferation of these developments in Australian cities where crime rates, and indeed social polarisation, are far lower than in the US cities in which gated suburbs were initially developed. Referring to the Buckland Hill development in suburban Perth, Hillier & McManus (1994: 91) described these suburbs as ‘exclusive residential ghettos . . . (and an) expression of the search for

Source: Pauline M'Guirk.

What kind of impacts might the development of gated suburbs have on community life?
personal and collective identity’. These authors could just as easily have been referring to the proliferation of such developments in the Gold Coast of southern Queensland. An advertisement for one such community gives a taste of these developments:

Golf course living, Gold Coast style... You could live in Australia’s premier residential resort, from just $300,000 (average price $405,000). Royal Pines Residences is an exclusive community set in the Gold Coast’s most magnificent recreational resort... Live beside two world-class championship eighteen-hole courses. Enjoy fine restaurants, or five-star hotel service to your home. Plus a private marina, tennis, 24 hour security, and more. Get the most out of the lifestyle only the Gold Coast can offer... Where living superbly really is par for the course. (The Weekend Australian 23–24 November 1993: 7.)

The Gold Coast also provides perhaps Australia’s most exceptional example of a gated suburb — Sovereign Island. Located just north of Surfers Paradise, this development is situated on an island of reclaimed land which has been subdivided into blocks valued at upwards of $500,000 each. The only point of entry on to the island is via the entry bridge. Stationed on the bridge is a 24-hour security guard who monitors constant video surveillance and can occasionally mount the sentry tower located beside the security base. The gates to the island are locked at midnight when residents are securely cocooned for the evening.

Gated suburbs not only represent an emergent form in the built landscape but are also a feature of the urban socio-cultural landscape which reflects a great deal about the social order producing that landscape. They can be thought of as a fearful reaction to social polarisation and cultural difference and they reflect a broader trend towards increased security measures and surveillance in public urban spaces (see Box 9.10). They represent a withdrawal into a wealthy and relatively homogeneous enclave in which the consumption of

Box 9.10

Surveillance in the city

Citiplace, a pedestrian shopping area in the CBD of Perth, became the first example in Australia of the installation of a public shopping mall video surveillance system (Hillier 1996). A network of over 50 cameras installed by Perth City Council were mounted above the street, scanning consumers and strollers 24 hours a day. The cameras are there, it is claimed, to protect the consumer and to prevent shoplifting and damage to property. Non-conforming or deviant behaviour, non-consuming behaviour such as busking, can be quickly detected and dealt with and moved on. These systems are increasingly prevalent in public spaces and more particularly in the common areas of private development such as large scale retail and convention centres like Darling Harbour in central Sydney which attracts around 15 million visitors per year (see Figure 9.14).

While the settings of major shopping malls with their variety of shops, food halls and plazas attempt to reproduce the vitality and spontaneity of daily street life, the increased use of surveillance regulates these spaces to protect the consumer from potentially troublesome non-consumers—groups of teenagers hanging out, unofficial buskers and street entertainers, beggars, demonstrators. Knox (1995) suggests that the object of such regulation is to produce a cleaner, more controlled, and more predictable environment in which spending is encouraged and exposure to difference, poverty, homelessness and any behaviour that is deviant or ‘other’ is minimised.
housing is used as a means of expressing status differences. Such a reaction is also visible in open spaces such as shopping streets and particularly in enclosed shopping malls (see Figure 9.14).

**Festival places**

Globalisation and economic restructuring have resulted in new patterns of capital investment and disinvestment which have had immediate impacts on city form. Thus, some urban environments are redeveloped while others become obsolete. The booming service sectors of tourism, along with entertainment, leisure and recreation and retailing have been the targets of major investment flows. Global tourism has expanded massively, entertainment and leisure have been increasingly commercialised, and growing proportions of disposable income are spent on eating out and recreational shopping. Many cities compete to attract the spending associated with these sectors by creating large-scale festival places capable of hosting special events and urban spectacles like conventions, rock concerts, major sporting events or outdoor festivals.

Purpose-built consumption landscapes — planned shopping centres, waterfront developments, convention centres and so on — are now common throughout our major cities. These places, like Sydney’s Darling Harbour and Cockle Bay, Brisbane’s South Bank Parklands, Auckland’s Ferry Building area and Wellington’s Lambton Harbour are packed with opportunities for consumption — restaurants, speciality shops, hotels, museums and art galleries, and recreated heritage settings (see Box 9.11). It is common for such developments to have a waterfront setting which can add greatly to their spectacular nature and to the value of their real estate. It is common too for them to be developed on large urban sites that were rendered obsolete by economic shifts, industrial restructuring and re-location, and changing technology. The site at Darling Harbour for instance became available when the cargo wharves that were there became outdated by advances in transport technology.

These festival places are indica-
Box 9.11

Brisbane's South Bank Parklands: the creation of a festival place

Brisbane's South Bank Parklands is an excellent example of a festival place. Located across the Brisbane River from the CBD, the site was a derelict port and industrial area when it was selected as the location to host the World Exposition in 1988 (Expo '88). After this temporary urban spectacle had been held, plans were made to develop the site into a permanent festival setting. A special purpose authority was established by the state government, the South Bank Corporation, with authority to plan and instigate the redevelopment. A total of over $1 billion of combined public funding and commercial investment was the target sum to complete the development. An artificial canal was created which hosts waterway rides, the banks are lined with restaurants, cafés, shops and markets, picnic and barbecue areas. There is an artificial salt-water beach and lagoon, a butterfly house and rainforest walk, a theatre and a Nepalese pagoda. The planning for a major extension and re-fashioning of the entire precinct has recently been completed.

tive of the globalisation of property investment and development. Financial deregulation opened up possibilities for TNCs to diversify their portfolios into property investment and for international property development companies to expand their interests. The sheer scale of investment involved has meant that public-private partnerships have regularly been part of the development of such sites as governments and private development companies have joined forces and pooled resources. The ‘mega-developement’ which transforms large chunks of urban land is a far cry from the more organic style of previous generations’ urban growth and change. The scale of the development projects, the risk of taking on the transformation of obsolete sites and the potential benefits that government’s perceive (employment generation, commercial opportunities, attractions for consumer spending) encouraged these partnerships. The investors/developers can gain government incentives, shortcuts through the planning system and often low-cost or even free development land as many such projects have been built on publicly-owned land — unused wharves, surplus rail land and old industrial sites. Harvey (1989) refers to these places as ‘the carnival mask’ of contemporary urbanisation whose function it is to attract capital and people with sufficient disposable income to support the consumption activities of the developments.

However, festival places like South Bank Parklands are not without their troubled sides. The use of special purpose authorities, such as the South Bank Corporation, operating beyond the control of local councils raises concerns over public participation and consultation. These corporations are normally not open to the same degrees of public input as local planning authorities are. It is often unclear whether the massive public investment can be justified because of the difficulty of monitoring the benefits of redevelopment (and weighing them up against its negative effects). Such places are also often excellent examples of highly regulated space. Indoor and open spaces at Darling Harbour, for example, are under constant video surveillance. Also, the profusion of festival places across continents exhibit a remarkable sameness in their composition. They share similar combinations of attractions and features, perhaps in the attempt to create a familiar setting for consumption. They even share common architectural styles (Darling Harbour was modelled on Harbour Place in Boston), and are accused of being strangely removed from any connection with their localities. Their critics suggest they produce a ‘blandscape’ that represents the
homogenising influence of a damaging cultural globalisation (see Chapter 11, ‘Production forces of popular culture’).

**Landscapes of consumption**

Production activity has been a vital force shaping city form: the location of manufacturing; the development of residential neighbourhoods of distinctive social status according to the location of employment and the ability to travel to work. However, in the contemporary globalising economy, consumption also assumes an important role in shaping city form. Much of our everyday life is structured around consumption. Many of our leisure and recreational experiences we also purchase at cinemas, in amusement arcades, in restaurants and bars. These consumption activities provide the demand for environments purpose-built to accommodate them. In Aotearoa/New Zealand for instance the number of cinema multiplexes increased from 140 in 1991 to 238 in 1995, while admissions have grown from 6.1 m to 16 million (Le Heron & Pawson 1996). Increasingly our consumption practices — the houses we own, which cars we drive, what brand of clothes we wear/wine we drink, where we buy our groceries, which restaurants we go to — are the distinguishing symbols of the social group we belong to, defining our social identity by expressing our social difference from other groups. The changing composition of the labour force, increased social polarisation and greater cultural diversity are creating more highly differentiated social groups. Along with this is a range of distinctions combining to create a range of lifestyle choices (and constraints) which are increasingly expressed through consumption practices.

The residential landscapes described previously illustrate one influence of consumption practices on landscape: the social consumption of housing. Professional and managerial classes can express their success and social distinction through their residential environments. Just like the brand of car driven, residential neighbourhoods can express social distinction and conspicuous consumption while excluding (through high prices or security devices) those of different social status. High-rise inner city luxury apartments are distinguished by expensive detail in their entrance foyer or roof gardens. In gentrified neighbourhoods, distinguishing heritage features are often drawn upon as symbols of aesthetic good taste by residents restoring heritage homes. Jaeger (1986) argued that gentrifiers were attempting to display their social distinction by drawing parallels between their social position and that of the Victorian gentry by restoring antique tiles, positioning Victorian coach lamps at the front door and utilising heritage colours in the restoration of their homes.

Consumption habits thus are an important influence on city form because they produce new landscapes that redefine significant parts of urban areas. Government and private capital’s attempts to capture consumer spending are reflected in the development of festival places built to fulfil consumer demand for variety in the goods and recreational experiences they purchase. Property companies are willing to invest internationally in transforming obsolete industrial landscapes into consumption complexes of shops, hotels, restaurants and a range of leisure experiences. These environments are specifically constructed for consumption and have become a conspicuous feature of the contemporary urban landscape (Le Heron & Pawson 1996).

**Urban activity patterns and urban form**

The term ‘post-suburban’ has been used to describe a city form in which the distinction is blurred between the commerce-dominated central city and the residential suburbs where