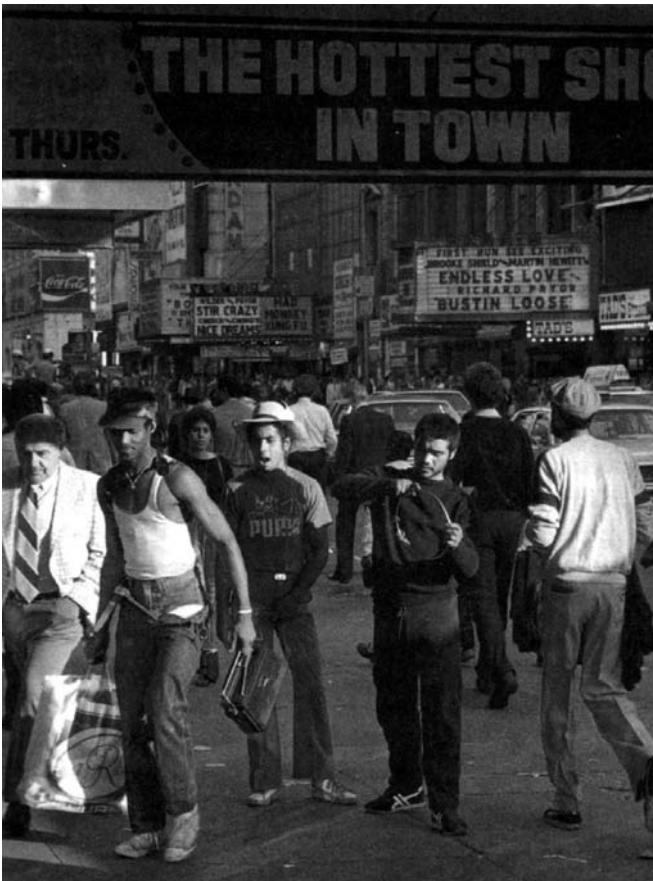**2.19** Times Square at night showing election results on Times Tower in 1952



**2.20** Times Square in the 1970s, perceived as dangerous and seedy territory (from Sagalyn 2001: 17)

and triumph; to celebrate the end of war, to wait for and share important news.

As such there is a duality to the square, offering a civic space (Figure 2.19) and also a consumer space.

Huxtable (1991: 358) observes that the square changed from 'news as advertising to advertising as entertainment', but also gradually declined as movie theatres replaced the theatres and real-estate values dropped after the Second World War. Increasingly the area gained a reputation as a sordid district of drug dealers and prostitutes, with the theatres being used for peep shows. The area was perceived to be the domain of the ethnic minority male, stereotyped as pusher and pimp, while 42nd Street became dubbed the 'dangerous deuce' (Figure 2.20) (Sagalyn 2001: 44–52).

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s various 'regeneration' schemes were created for the Times Square and 42nd Street district, only to be thwarted by real-estate slumps. In 1992 the Times Square Business Improvement District (BID) was created. Major corporate players were courted and the Times Square district now contains converted theatres with a Disney musical and megastore, a Madame Tussaud's museum, a Warner Brothers studio tour, an MTV store, a New York Yankees store, a Planet Hollywood restaurant and a Hilton Hotel. This is in addition to four high-rise office buildings (www.timessquarebid.org).

Reichl (1999) is scathing about the commercial and political motivations behind the regeneration of Times Square. Approaching the redevelopment from a cultural and racial standpoint, Reichl (1999: 171) observes that 'cultural symbolism' is being used as a vital component for including and excluding certain cultural groups in Times Square, and explains,

> cultural symbols inscribed in the urban form serve to establish and demarcate control over urban spaces. … Race and class are fundamental characteristics expressed in these cultural codes.

Reichl suggests cultural symbols are used through management and design to explicitly and implicitly control access to, and behaviour in, public space. This relies on users' perceptions and interpretations of urban public space and 'the other', this usually being a certain social group, within the space.

Once user perceptions of Times Square changed from those of an ethnic ghetto to those of a safe white-collar entertainment district, then the social as well as the physical regeneration was complete. Yet, for some, this 'success' has been achieved at a high social cost. The case demonstrates both close parallels to experiences across the Atlantic, but also that it is the ongoing management of spaces, often long after their original development, that determines how they are experienced by different users, and how, as a result, their character and clientele can change (often dramatically) over time.

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