



3.3 Car-reliant space: the American strip

detering other users from these previously shared spaces. For Roberts and Turner (2005: 190), the solution is the need for more active management and more sophisticated planning controls. Without suitable controls, they argue, the original ideals of a ‘continental ambience’, so admired by the original proponents of the 24-hour city, will not be achieved.

### Invaded space

Perhaps the most universal derision is reserved for the impact of the private car which Gehl and Gemzøe (2000) have described as leading to invaded public space. They argue that in old cities and urban areas where car traffic has gained the upper hand, public space has inevitably changed dramatically with traffic and parking gradually usurping pedestrian space in streets and squares. ‘Not much physical space is left, and when other restrictions and irritants such as dirt, noise and visual pollution are added, it doesn’t take long to impoverish city life’ (Gehl and Gemzøe 2000: 14).

The critique is nothing new, and manifests itself in four primary problems. Lefebvre (1991: 359), first, describes how urban space is often ‘sliced up, degraded, and eventually destroyed by ... the proliferation of fast roads’ so that ‘Movement between the fragments becomes a purely movement experience rather than a movement and social experience’ (Carmona *et al.* 2003: 75). Buchanan (1988: 32), second, argues that the remaining public space itself is too often dominated by traffic and has lost its social function as a result. Thus even when the number of car users is greatly outweighed by the numbers of pedestrians using a street, the space given over to road space far exceeds that dedicated to footpaths.

A third problem relates to the ease with which car owners can move from one unrelated place or event to another – ‘The in-between spaces simply fly past’ (Hajer and Reijndorp 2001: 57). In such a context physically distant places can be compressed into a single space, whilst others (in between) can be ostracised and allowed to deteriorate because of their perceived reputation or absence of attractors. Hajer and Reijndorp (2001: 53–61) characterise this as an ‘archipelago of enclaves’ and argue that unless these parts of the city also develop an attraction value, the new network city will ensure that they continue to be ignored.



3.4 Invaded public space

A fourth impact can be seen in the range of exclusively car-reliant environments that have spawned across the Western World, particularly in North America, where, in the same locations, external public space does not exist at all, at least not in any traditional form, but is instead replaced by a series of disconnected roads and car parks (Figure 3.3). This phenomenon is extensively covered in the literature (see, for example, Garreau 1991; Ford 2000; Duany *et al.* 2000; Graham and Marvin 2001), and although such developments are sometimes placed within landscape settings, these landscapes are typically designed to be experienced from the car, and rarely attract pedestrian traffic.

Such cities are not intended for walking. Sidewalks have disappeared in the city centres as well as residential areas, and all the uses of the city have gradually been adapted to serve the motorist.

(Gehl and Gemzøe 2001: 16)

Gehl and Gemzøe (2001: 14) argue that invaded space is generally impoverished space, and that most of the social and recreational activities that did or would exist, disappear, leaving only the remnants of the most necessary, utilitarian functions. In such places, people walk only when they have to, not because they want to. Collectively the invasion of private cars have led to a dramatic reduction in the space available to pedestrians, a reduction in the quality of the space that remains, significant restrictions to the freedom of movement for pedestrians both within and between spaces, and the filling of spaces with the clutter and paraphernalia that conventional wisdom has determined the safe coexistence of cars and people requires (Figure 3.4):

This panoply is generally owned and managed by different bodies. At worst, there is no co-ordination and the only functional considerations are engineering-led and car-oriented. The pedestrian is ignored or marginalised. Some of these items are introduced on the grounds of ‘pedestrian improvements’, yet the ‘sheep-pen’ staggered pedestrian crossings and guard rails impede pedestrian movement while allowing a free run for the car.

(Llewelyn Davies 2000: 102)