



3.15 Baltimore Inner Harbor

'placelessness'. Various writers have discussed the components of place, typically focusing on the sum of three elements: physical form, human activities and meaning or image (Relph 1976; Canter 1977; Punter 1991; Montgomery 1998). Others have focused on the qualities of successful places, such as Carr *et al.*'s (1992) view that space should be 'responsive' to five needs:

- comfort, encompassing safety from harm as well as physical comfort;
- relaxation, allowing a sense of psychological ease;
- passive engagement, with the surroundings and other people (e.g. people watching);
- active engagement, that some people seek out, but which is often spontaneous if the situation allows;
- discovery, reflecting the desire for variety and new experiences.

However, these very qualities help fuel the desire for, and spread of, entertainment spaces where, without effort, participants can indulge in leisure activities. At the same time, the spread of globalisation processes, mass culture and the loss of attachment to place (Carmona *et al.* 2003: 101–2), has led to a repetition of certain formulaic responses across the world, a classic example being Baltimore's Inner Harbor, which, since its regeneration in the 1970s and 1980s, has spawned copycat leisure spaces across the globe (Yang 2006: 102–27, see Figure 3.15).

Although many settlements have at some time been 'invented' by their founders, increasingly techniques borrowed from theme parks are being used to re-invent existing places, with the danger that elements of continuity and character that might have been part of the distinctive qualities of a place can be lost. Wilson (1995: 157) takes Paris as an example, arguing that the Parc de la Villette, despite its international reputation, is 'designed for tourists rather than for the hoarse-voiced, red-handed working men and women who in any case no longer work or live there'. Thus in cities around the world, 'not only is the tourist becoming perhaps the most important kind of inhabitant, but we all become tourists in our own cities'.



3.16 Manchester's Gay Village

Sometimes the process involves the creation of difference as a means to distinguish between places, for example the use of place marketing strategies to distinguish one city, neighbourhood or place from another (Figure 3.16). Sometimes the process involves the deliberate creation of sameness, copying a successful formula that has worked elsewhere – for example the emergence of formulaic China towns in many cities across the world, or the cloning of high streets with the same national and international brands (New Economics Foundation 2004). Criticism of such places is now widespread. Sorokin (1992: p xiii), to name but one, reserves particular bile for such places, arguing that America is increasingly devoid of genuine places, which are instead gradually being replaced by caricatures and 'urbane disguises'.

However, although such places can be criticised for being superficial and lacking in authenticity, all such places necessitate a considered and careful design process. Thus as Sircus (2001: 30), talking about Disneyland, argues, 'It is successful because it adheres to certain principles of sequential experience and storytelling, creating an appropriate and meaningful sense of place in which both activities and memories are individual and shared'. Zukin (1995: 49–54) agrees that Disneyland and its like represent one of the most significant new forms of public space from the late twentieth century, although she identifies different factors for its success:

- visual culture, through an aesthetic designed to transcend ethnic, class and regional identities;
- spatial control, through a highly choreographed sequence of spaces, allowing people to watch and be watched, and to participate without embarrassment;
- private management, aimed at controlling fear – no guns, no homeless, no illegal drink or drugs, promising to 'make social diversity less threatening and public space more secure'.