

A stamping ground, the breeding arena of a single population of Kob, looks like nothing so much as a series of putting greens conveniently laid out for the benefit of idle guests behind a luxurious resort hotel ... Each little putting green with its close cropped grass is about fifty feet [18 metres] in diameter and is a territory occupied by a single male. A closely bunched cluster of a dozen or fifteen or eighteen such territories in a main arena may occupy an area of no more than two hundred yards across. Here the champion males out of a population of almost a thousand – a kind of sexual Olympic team-fight, display, and jockey for position ... Within the arena some properties have greater value than others. In a normal city, real-estate values increase block by block to the city's core; so on the stamping ground sexual values increase from the suburban market of the periphery to the flashing excitement of Times Square.

So what are the human equivalents of the arena? The prestige and consequent associated high land values of a city centre can be seen as parallels with the most desirable central places in the animal arena. An important company will require its offices to be centrally located not for convenience or necessity but for symbolic reasons. A quick tour around the central business districts of any of the world's great capital cities today tends to reveal many familiar names. These huge multinational banks, manufacturers, service providers and so on need to maintain the image of their potency and power through their location and address. There is, however, far more to it than just economics. We expect our cities to have an increasing intensity towards their core. This is where 'it all happens'. Great cities depend upon this central intensity for their very character and attraction. A respected colleague of mine who joined my university from a job in London left after only a few years without any job to go to, largely in order to return to London. He frequently told me that crossing one of the great bridges over the Thames gave him the feeling that he was 'at the centre of things'. Out in the suburbs we see much the same game played out on the domestic front. It is commonly said in the UK that there are three important factors in choosing your house; location, location and location. Nothing else, it seems, comes near in terms of social prestige; the address is all! The price of domestic property in this country is hardly related to the value of buildings at all, but almost entirely to the value of the land on which they sit. However, the price buys a social prestige that matters greatly to many people. In England your postal address is defined by a postcode, a parallel to the American zip code, and I know people who have changed their mind and decided not to buy a house once they learned that its postcode was an unfashionable one.

One can see parallels of arena behaviour inside buildings too. The competition for the best office and, even more dramatically in my experience, for the best desk in open-plan offices can be intense. The case quoted in the previous chapter by Edward Hall of the French colleague demanding a pay rise because his desk was in the middle of